The Man in Grey
by evalentine99

Summary

Jack has gone to be with the Doctor. During his absence Ianto disappeared into thin air in the blink of an eye.

Warning: This Fiction contains references to and deals with the aftermath of the following rape, physical and psychological torture. It has also been written under the guide lines of the Trauma Recovery Fanfiction group on Live Journal.
Alternate time line.
Beta Milady Dragon.

This story was inspired by Danse Macabre’s ‘Innocent Damage’ which can be found on Teaspoon and an Open Mind.
Closing the door behind him, Jack stood silent. He was on his own. The others had offered to assist him but he had refused. If anyone was going to pack up the last remaining fragments of the life of Ianto Jones, he wanted it to be him and he wanted to be alone.

The flat was unchanged from the first time he was there, four months ago. On the kitchen table was a credit card statement with purchases half way being checked off, a pen lying on top. A DVD cover was on the floor, the disc still in the player. A plate and mug in the sink, unwashed. Up until now he could never bear to move them because to move them meant he would have to face the fact that Ianto was never coming back. He glanced around, if he ignored the thin layer of dust he could just imagine Ianto would be home soon. He closed his eyes; he could hear the key in the lock, he would come in and hang up his jacket and waistcoat. Return, wash up the plate and cup, grab a beer from the fridge, throw him on the sofa and start watching.

He laid the boxes along with the large roll of bubble wrap on the table. Removing his coat, he put it on the back of the chair and began to assemble a box. He pulled out the brown packing tape from a coat pocket and sealed the bottom. Turning it over, he started to pack up the kitchen.

He left the worst room to last; he stepped in and sat on the bed. How many nights had he lain here on his return, wrapping himself in the duvet, closing his eyes, remembering their last night together? One last wonderful night, and morning then his life had turned to chaos. First the incident with the dance hall, then Abbadon followed by his leaving with the Doctor. He took in a deep breath, wiped his face dry.

He had left a note for Ianto, scrawled in haste telling him where he was going, and he would be back. He had found it unopened on his return. In his haste to leave, he hadn’t noticed it had fallen down the side of his coffee machine. He caught a sob in his throat.

How many times had he gone over this and still the pain was as raw as when he found out Ianto had not found his note.

He took a deep breath as he went over the mystery as it had been told to him. Ianto Jones had disappeared into thin air. One moment he was there and the next he was gone. The team minus Jack had been at the Hub, preparing for their trip to the Himalayas. Ianto turned to his coffee machine to get everyone a last round of coffee. When they heard no sounds, they looked around and he had vanished. They had searched the Hub inside and out. They had pulled out old schematics of the place, leaving no corner unsearched, but he was not there.

Every possible situation and scenario had been ruled out. The CCTV footage was clear; he was there one moment and gone the next. They had sent the footage out to be analysed in case they had missed something, but there was no jump in the tape. Whatever had happened had done so in the fraction of a second. There were no rift spikes, no strange energy readings, no anomalies of any kind and no alien incursions. He was gone as if he had been erased from the present in the blink of an eye.

He had to admit the team had done everything in their power to find him. Their search was exhaustive, thorough and organised; they checked every possible sighting: hospitals, and dead bodies. The posted him as a missing person worldwide with every possible agency imaginable. They had pestered the police to such an extent Andy had been sent to see them to ask them to stop. The police had done everything they could; he told them. There was always the possibility that Ianto had killed himself, they said. This was dismissed, and Jack agreed. Ianto had had many blows in his life and he had always emerged stronger, he had a resilient personality and besides that Ianto had
purchased this flat not six months before. Things he had bought via his credit card had been delivered to him here, after the date of his disappearance.

The other possibility was he had engineered his disappearance, but he had taken no money, his bank accounts were untouched. He had just made a deposit to his already substantial savings account and just renewed an investment, not something someone did if they were arranging to disappear. Besides the CCTV footage showed he had never left the Hub.

He pulled open the bed side table and pulled out his photo album. He opened it. It was filled with pictures of his parents now dead. Being an only child he had no siblings but the pictures were of happy times of them, parties, birthdays, graduations, school and class photo’s, holidays, Christmas. Then of Ianto and Lisa and finally him and Jack. Jack had been surprised at just how sentimental Ianto actually was. He had taken far more pictures than he had been aware of. The album it seemed was full of moments special to Ianto which documented almost every step of their relationship. Jack closed it then held it to his chest, and then put the album to one side.

Pulling down a suit case from the top of the wardrobe he began to fill it with clothes. Checking the suit pockets just to make sure they were empty he pulled out some tubes of lube and a couple of condoms. A ghost of a smile touched his face; Ianto was nothing if not prepared. He kissed the condoms then along with the lube put them on top of the album.

Going in the bathroom he filled a box with various bottles of shampoo and shaving gel, along with the used razor he found. He picked up his after shave and he took sniff. Memories flooded into his mind and he braced himself against the wall. Pulling back he wiped face dry and put it on top of the album along with the other objects he was keeping. Taking the album and objects he put then on the kitchen table then returning he began stripping the bed.

Several hours later he looked around at the cleared flat, nothing remained to give any indication Ianto had ever lived here. Not much was left of the man’s life; a few cardboard boxes, two suitcases and mementoes to remember the vibrant, intriguing, enigmatic, witty intelligent, wonderful man he loved.

The doorbell rang and he pressed the buzzer to give the second hand shop people who were picking up his furniture, access to the complex. He stepped back as they began to clear the flat. He closed his eyes as they clattered around, he couldn’t bear this any longer. He picked up the album and few mementos he was keeping and walked out.
“Much more of this I am going to walk out,” Owen said quietly to Gwen as they huddled in the Hub kitchen each nursing a mug.

“I might join you,” Gwen agreed.

“Talk about a bear with a bad head. What’s his problem today, his mood is well out of order?” Owen grumbled.

Gwen shot a quick look across at Jack’s office. He had done nothing but stare at the same file for hours, any approach was met with a sullen brooding anger. They had been shouted at, glared at and then ignored. They had gone out on one rift alert earlier and Jack has scared them all with his driving. When they had arrived they had traced the Weevil in question into a derelict building, at which point Jack had killed it out of hand with a single shot to the forehead then stalked off. Gwen had confronted him and an almighty row had ensued. They had returned and Jack had retreated to his office slamming the door.

“I think it’s the date,” Tosh said sadly as she joined them pouring her a coffee.

“And what’s so special about today?” Gwen said over the top of her mug.

“19th August,” Tosh told them to blank stares.

“And?” Owen asked.

“Ianto would have been 25 today,” she told them.

“Oh God,” Gwen said as Owen swore under her breath.

“How the hell could we have forgotten?” Gwen added after a few moments, distressed.

“We could do something,” Tosh suggested.

“A bit late for that,” Owen pointed out as Jack stormed across the Hub towards the garage.

“How could we forget?” Gwen repeated.

“25 years old. Not much of a life when the people you worked with can’t even remember your birthday,” Owen told them as he gripped on to his mug so hard Tosh thought it would break.

“Don’t Owen I feel bad enough,” Gwen told him grapping a tissue out of her purse.

“I wonder if he ever knew how much he meant to Jack,” Tosh said sadly after a few moments had passed.

“I wonder if he ever knew how much he meant to Jack,” Tosh said sadly after a few moments had passed.

“I don’t think he had he any idea,” Gwen told her.

“He was very upset when Jack went missing. I know he tried to hide it but we all could see how much Jack’s just leaving like that hurt,” Tosh told them as they nodded.

“Didn’t help you calling him part-time shag,” Gwen added as she sipped her coffee.

“Look I said it in the heat of the moment, I was angry,” Owen replied.
“It hurt him,” Tosh said as Gwen handed her a tissue and she blew her nose.

“Well it didn’t exactly help you telling him all about the real Captain Jack,” Owen retorted.

“Let’s do something?” Gwen offered after few moments had passed.

“Like what?” Tosh asked.

“What were we doing this time last year?” Gwen asked thinking out loud. “I remember, we were on that terrible call out, chasing those tiny spider monkey things Jack hates so much,” she reminded them.

“That’s right we finally managed to cram them into those cat cages. Then we were all so hungry we stopped off near the wharf at that great fish and chip place,” Tosh recalled.

“We all sat on the sea wall, fish and chips spread on newspaper covered in curry sauce, “Gwen added wistfully in remembrance.

“When was the last time we had fish and chips out of newspaper?” Owen spoke up.

“Okay, For ianto, fish and chips,” Tosh spoke for them all as they grabbed bags and coats and locked the Hub down for the night.

“I’ll text Jack see if he would like to join us,” Tosh said as they were leaving.

“Yeah good idea,” Owen said as he put his arm around Tosh’s shoulder as they left.

Sitting on the sea wall, all three sat quietly enjoying the view. The fish and chips were as good as they recalled. Occasionally one of them would speak remembering a moment when ianto had said something funny or pointing out his love of punishing one of them with decaf. And the fact that one time Jack didn’t notice. After a week they had begged Ianto to put him back on full strength because Jack was so cranky.

“Let’s see how old this newspaper is,” Owen said pulling out the bottom sheet. “Western news roundup”. Christ this paper’s eight months old, he commented, “What was happening?”

“Let me guess...the usual pointless local politics, corruption, petty crime,” Gwen said as she brushed her fingers clean and threw a chip at a passing seagull as she lent in reading the same page,”

“And hopefully tits on page three,” Owen told her.

“Owen,” Gwen said bumping his shoulder.

“Owen turn the page over,” Tosh said her voice shaking.

“What tits?” Owen said as he looked up and saw she had gone pale.

“Turn it over,” she told him trying to control her voice.

“Better be good I was just reading the missing pet section, some one here has lost a black cat called fluffy,” he warned her good naturedly

“Just turn it over!” Tosh started to shout

“All right, all right,” he said as he turned it over then went completely silent.
‘Jesus Christ!’ Owen blurted out as he saw the picture and heading.

‘Does anyone recognise this man?’ the headline stated. Below was a grainy smudged picture of Ianto Jones.
Confrontation

Jack stormed through the doors of the Sunny Side Institute. The complex was a maze of small buildings and he along with Owen had been directed towards the secure wing. Owen followed close behind trying to keep up. They had spent the night trying to find out exactly where Ianto was being held. Finally they had found he was in this hospital. Owen had tried instilling some patience in to Jack without result. He had no idea what state Ianto was in and could get no information from the hospital. Visiting times were Saturday’s two till four otherwise with permission from the Doctor. However all visitors to this wing had to vetted first. They were asked to leave a message for Doctor Green who would get back to them. After shouting down the phone Jack had taken off driving like maniac, six hours later it was now mid-afternoon. The drive for the most part had been silent except for Jack swearing at motorists who got in his way. Owen figured it was lucky Jack wasn’t driving a tank because he would have rolled over the top of them without a second thought.

He moved over to the glass window that was in the wall before the secure section and almost shouted at the woman standing there demanding to be taken to Ianto Jones, now.

She asked him to calm down as he repeated his request and said she would call Doctor Green, as they had no one here called Ianto Jones but they did have an unknown man who they had called James.

Jack looked confused. “The man I want to see is Ianto Jones,” he told her

“Unknown man brought in here eight months ago,” Owen interjected.

“I think you mean James,” she told them.

“Ianto Jones,” Jack corrected her as he showed her a picture.

“Well that might be his real name, he’s never told us his real name so we called him James,” she told them.

The phone rang and she picked it up, after listening she turned to them.

“Doctor Green apologises he’s been held up he’s asked if you could wait…” she started to say as Jack moved towards the locked screened doors.

“You can’t go in there,” she told him as he lifted his wrist and touched his wrist strap, hearing the door click Jack pushed his way through.

“Look you need to wait,” she shouted out as Owen looking embarrassed hesitated then followed looking back to see the receptionist pick up the phone dialling with speed.

Racing down the hallway of the unit Jack, his heart pounding, looked in every room searched every face, coming to a large room filled with several tables and chairs. He looked across at the screened window and saw a familiar shape. His heart leapt and he raced across and spun him a round.

‘Ianto!’ he called out. ‘Thank God I’ve found you; I thought I had lost you. How did you get here? How long have you been here? Have you been here all this time? What happened to you?’

“STOP!” he heard a voice bellow behind him, startled he turned around he was about to speak again when the man shouted pointing at Ianto.
“Look at him!” the voice commanded. Jack turned to see that Ianto was terrified. Jack pulled back to see a growing patch of wetness growing around his groin.

He instinctively moved forward to comfort him only to see Ianto start to shrink away from him and begin edging along the window heading to the far corner of the room.

Jack went to speak again, but was prevented by a large man in casual clothing who moved towards Ianto. Opened mouthed he turned to face the man behind him.

“Move away from James, do not ask another question, especially in front of him and not to him,” he commanded.

Jack backed off numb as he observed Ianto who on reaching the corner of the room looked like he was trying to claw his way out. As the big man approached him he collapsed on the floor in a heap and curled himself into a tight ball.

“But?” Jack started to say

“Not another word,” the man charged as he pointed towards the door.

Following the man they were directed to a small office. Once inside the man shut the door and immediately launched into him.

“Who the hell are you and by what right do you think you can come into this unit? “ He roared at them as Jack tried to stutter an answer.

“This is a unit for our most stressed and traumatised patients. You have stormed in here without a briefing, approached him without any warning, or any preparation,” he took a deep breath. “God only knows who you are, for all I know you could be the very people who did this to him. How dare you barge your way in here, and upset him!” Both Jack and Owen saw he was controlling himself with difficulty.

“Doctor Owen Harper,” Owen said as introduction as the man glared at them both.

“Captain Jack Harkness,” Jack said subdued, still reeling from Ianto’s reaction to him.

“I have called security, to escort you out,” he told them both bluntly.

“You have Ianto Jones in there, I need to see him and I need answers,” Jack said a desperate edge to his voice as he realised they were being thrown out.

“What you need is not important. Unless you are a family member or next of kin or have some proof of a relationship you are going nowhere near him,” the man spat out.

“Ianto worked with us, we thought he was dead, we just found out he was here,” Owen tried to explain.

“As a fellow Doctor your behaviour is inexcusable. Have you any idea of the damage you have done him today”?

“What happened to him?” Owen asked.

“We believe he is the victim of severe physical and physiological torture, the worst I have ever seen. For all I know you did this to him. Now get out!” he told them pointing to the door.

“I need to see him, I…” Jack tried to say as Dr Green interrupted him
“Unless you are a family member or next of kin, I intend to make it my life’s work to ensure you will never come anywhere near James now or in the future,” he told them as a knock interrupted the conversation and three security guards stood in the corridor.

“I am family,” Jack burst out in a stutter desperate to get some answers.

“Let’s not make this any more difficult than this already is. Leave now, or I will call the police,” Doctor Green told him sternly as Owen grabbed Jack’s arm who shrugged it off.

“I’m his civil partner is that family enough,” Jack said trying to keep control as Owen stared at Jack as if he was mad.

“Prove it!” Doctor Green spat at him and indicated the door.

“This is not over,” Jack told him as he pulled out his cell phone as he headed for the door

Proof

Jack stood by the SUV; his arms crossed as he saw a white courier van drive up the long drive of the institute. It approached them and stopped.

“Captain Harkness?” the voice asked as the window was wound down. Jack nodded.

“I’m going to need I.D,” the man said as Jack pulled out his wallet.

“Sign here,” the man said holding out a clipboard then handed over a buff package.

“Thank you,” Jack said as he pulled out the contents to check them over.

“36 hours that’s got to be a record for Gwen and Tosh,” Owen commented.

“Civil Union Ceremony 12th April 2007. You, Tosh and Gwen attended.” Jack handed him a photograph of the Torchwood team standing in front of the Cardiff registry office. Jack and Ianto had their arms around each other looking very happy.

“Like the button hole, red rose very classy,” Owen said as he was handed another photo this time Jack and Ianto embracing with a sweet kiss.

“This has better be watertight,” Owen told him as Jack now handed him a certificate. From what he could see it would be impossible to tell it was not genuine.

“Tosh has filled in the gaps. Anyone checking the appointments for that day will find us booked in and attended. The celebrant won’t recall us as there were 17 other couples that day, several were same sex couples.” He opened another envelope and pulled out a cork and couple of other small things.

“Mementos we might have both kept from our honeymoon,” Jack told him as he now strode off towards the building.

“You had better know what you’re doing,” Owen muttered under his breath as he followed behind.

Doctor Green looked through the documents with care. He was still furious; James/Ianto had had a difficult disturbed afternoon, and night. The confrontation and questions had caused him to regress, triggering a flashback. He had had to be heavily sedated and he knew it would take days to get
James/Ianto settled.

Looking at the documentation he could not fault them but they were fakes; they were very good almost indistinguishable from the real thing but fakes none-the-less. He knew this because of his own investigation overnight, via his contacts at UNIT. He had uncovered some information about Jack Harkness and Owen Harper. Owen Harper was a surgeon of some repute. Jack Harkness was the head of an organisation called Torchwood based in Cardiff for whom Doctor Harper was associated with. Ianto Jones was a fellow employee, some kind of support person.

They had not imparted much information but said they were sure Jack Harkness was not in any Civil Partnership, if he was it would have been recorded. He pulled at his lip as he continued to study the photographs. Now he had to consider Ianto, since the day he had been brought here no one had taken any interest in him and yet this man if he was to be believed had within hours on finding him alive had been so desperate to see him, he had acted with complete recklessness. Carl had reported the captain’s questions the day before to Ianto were the sort one asked someone who was missing. He looked at the Captain who was the picture of anxious misery as he picked up the birth certificate and Civil Union certificate and made his decision.

“Let’s say for now I accept you are his civil partner,” he said leaning back and looking at the two men in front of him, as he saw Jack almost fold into himself in relief.

“I will allow you to see James, Ianto,” he corrected himself, “but only under certain conditions. Before I do there are some things you need to know. He arrived here by ambulance eight months ago under escort by UNIT under the orders of Colonel Brandon. He had been found in a tiny room on the lower decks of the fleet vessel Valiant; no one knows how he got there.

“Do you have any ideas how ended up there?” he asked them. Seeing them both shake their heads he continued. “He had been found during a security sweep after the American president had been assassinated. He was in terrible shape and had spent several weeks at a UNIT hospital before coming here. They had no idea who he was, he has no finger or palm prints and his DNA was not on record. He had been severely beaten suffering long term deprivation including starvation and sexual assault.” He saw them both blanch. “UNIT determined that due to his condition and timing he would have been incapable of being involved in the death of the American president and it was also clear he was damaged mentally.” He took a breath and continued.

“Searches of all records pertaining to the Valiant have not been able to uncover how he got there or who tortured him. All indications indicate to months of incarceration rather than weeks; this was determined by the number of healed and partially healed fractures. After being released from hospital he was transferred here because this unit has been set up to cater for survivors of torture. Ianto is the worst I have ever seen. We have done our utmost best; but he has not made any significant improvement in all the months he has been here.” He took a deep breath to allow them time to come to terms with what he said.

“I will arrange for you to see him the afternoon at 2pm. He will be in the day room at that time. I will tell him he has visitors and your names. Only one of you may approach him at any one time,” he told them categorically.

What can we expect?” Owen asked, seeing that Jack was incapable as speaking at that moment.

“He is non-responsive and non-verbal so he will not reply to anything you say or look at you. If you push him to respond he will look away and start to become agitated, so- don’t- do -it. He will ignore you because he has developed this as a defence mechanism to cope with the torture he endured. Be prepared for the fact he may not remember you. We have no idea how much of his memory he retains or how fragmented it may be. I do not have to explain to you that after the events of yesterday
he is emotionally extremely fragile.” He looked at the subdued men in front him thinking how 24 hours could make such a difference.

“Finally, Ianto has multiple triggers under no circumstances are you to ask him any questions, you saw the effect yesterday, this we believe is another aftermath. You must also not ask him to choose anything; if you do he will freeze and begin to panic. Other than that talk to him as you would anyone else, quietly and calmly, stick to general topics only?”

“Why this afternoon?” Owen asked curious thinking how extraordinary it was to ask Jack to wait considering the declaration of his relationship.

“Ianto only feels secure within a very strict routine; he does things in a particular order without variance every day. He has lunch at 12.30am; he draws for one hour after lunch, in the afternoon you will find him in the main day room. Here he spends his time looking out the window. This lasts two hours after this he has afternoon tea. He will then go and have a shower, he will then study his books and gets ready for his evening meal,” he told them as he looked at their serious faces.

“While you are in the unit you will be escorted by Carl who will keep an eye on you,” he saw the look on Jack’s face. “Considering your behaviour yesterday you can hardly blame me, and I have to consider your safety. Carl is strong enough to intervene if Ianto goes into one of his moods.”

“Moods?” Owen queried

“He has a tendency to throw things around if he’s of a mind,” the Doctor said as an understatement.

“Now the grounds are lovely. Go and take a walk and I will meet you here at 2pm and I will escort you in,” he told them

“I prepared these for you, Doctor Harper,” he handed over several thick files which Owen took.
Pain

Entering the room Jack saw Ianto standing in the same place as he was the day before. Owen had briefly shared the contents of the folder as they had sat in the grounds. It was sober reading. Ianto had been on the Valiant for god knows how long. Jack knew from bitter experience how evil the Master was. Whatever he had endured had been profound; the man at the window was a shattered remnant of the man he once was, trapped in the nightmare of his own mind.

“Hello Ianto,” Jack said kindly as he approached Ianto who did not acknowledge him.

“I’ve come a long way to see you,” he added after a few minutes.

“Tosh, Owen, and Gwen all send their love,” he tried again.

“It’s a lovely day out there today,” he offered as Ianto continued to ignore him.

“The gardens are lovely. Owen and I had a walk earlier,” he stood there trying to find something anything to say.

“Ianto I love you. I am so sorry this has happened to you,” he said as Jack stood for a while longer then turned away. Ianto did not react to his leaving any more than he had to his arrival.

Walking out he went the corridor and broke down. Owen put his arms around him and led him off to the same office they were in earlier.

Several long moments passed before Doctor Green joined them.

“Why does he spend so much time looking out the window?” Owen asked as Jack composed himself.

“Ianto loves being outdoors. The problem is once he is outside he will not come back in. As dark approaches the stress of having to come back inside and the darkness trigger him into an episode. Aside from that when he is outside he wants to get higher, he will climb trees, ladders, anything for a better view, or he attempts to escape, any approach and he becomes incredibly difficult,” Doctor Green told them.

“Why has he so many bruises and he so thin?” Jack asked as he now recovered.

“Ianto is terrified of the dark, and locked rooms, but for his safety he has to be put into a secure room at night. We try and sedate him but it is always a fight, if it’s a very bad night we have to restrain him,” he told them sadly.

“Like last night?” Owen asked.

“Yes he had a terrible night, screaming, nightmares, nothing would calm him down. Eventually we were left no choice but to restrain him,” he told them.

“Why does he need a secure room?” Jack asked thinking the Ianto he knew was never violent.

“Late at night he wanders around and starts looking for something. We have never ascertained what he is looking for and to be truthful I don’t think he does either. Once he starts he becomes more and more agitated, then he starts pulling things apart. We only have limited night staff so he has to be locked up for the night,” the doctor told him.
“Can I see where he sleeps if that’s okay?” Jack asked barely able to speak as he used a handkerchief to wipe his face dry

“Certainly, but before I do that, I was hoping you could give me any insight into these,” he handed over several drawings all of blue grey blobs.

“Does several a day, they are clearly they are something of great importance,” he told them.

“Sometimes they have a small blue shape,” he added as he saw them shake their heads and hand them back.

“Is this all he draws?” Owen asked.

“Every day. We’ve counted over 700 of them, all different shades of grey,” he told them.

He stood up and let them out as he indicated to Carl to give them a tour.

Jack was silent as he was shown the bleak world Ianto now lived in. He had two rooms, one he used during the day; it held a few jigsaws and books people had brought in for him mostly of how things worked. A blackboard with some maths on it. Carl explained that Ianto loved numbers puzzles and they wrote at least one a day to give him a challenge. He was very good, you could leave a complex maths problem on the board and Ianto would scrawl up an answer after only a quick glance.

His night room was very austere being only a mattress on the floor, Jack shuddered as a cold chill ran down his back because it reminded him of his own incarceration on the Valiant. It was not surprising Ianto did not spend any time there let alone at night. Terrified of the dark and being locked away it didn’t take much imagination to work out that Ianto might believe he was still on board. Nodding quietly they saw Ianto heading for his afternoon tea.

“It will be juice and two chocolate biscuits today,” Carl told them as if that explained everything.

Dr Green stood with Carl as they watched their visitors exit the main building and head for the parked SUV in the distance.

“Do you think they will be back?” Carl asked

“I think they went a lot of trouble to fake a union. Never seen anything so good, so he is clearly someone of great importance to them and yes I think they will,” he told him.

“Good. I think they really care about him and he could do with someone giving a damn,” Carl said reminding himself of all the patients here Ianto was the only one without any support.

“I agree. For his bluster Captain Harkness loves Ianto very much,” Dr Green said as he headed back inside.
The Full Horror

Jack sat on the edge of the bed in their hotel room and took a large whiskey from Owen.

“Tell me?” he asked.

“Ok I scanned him and it confirmed the medical reports,” he put his hand on Jack’s shoulder

“Sure you want to hear this?” He saw Jack nod.

“What they did to him was terrible,” Owen told him “He was found with a severe skull fracture, broken jaw, right wrist broken along with every finger on his left hand, dislocated elbow, partially dislocated shoulder. He had 4 broken ribs, punctured lung, three fractured vertebra.” He put his fingers to Jack’s spine to indicate which ones. “He had evidence of multiple healed fractures; he has multiple contusions old and new across his back, buttocks, and backs of his legs consistent with use of a bull whip. He has multiple small burn marks around his genitals which look like cigarette burns and,” he took a deep breath,” he has damage consistent with severe and prolonged rape.” He saw Jack go pale and drink the whiskey in his glass in one gulp. Owen took a breath.

“Right now, he has several medical matters that are due to his condition are on-going. He is underweight, and anaemic. His worst issue is a bowel rupture caused by the rapes. I concur with the assessment that this was most likely caused by objects or pack rape of some kind. This was patched up when he was first hospitalised however at some time in the future he will need further surgery to repair the damage permanently. His teeth are in terrible shape evidence of being smashed in the mouth, but in light of his mental state the staff here have been loath to address them until they have too. From the notes they are hoping he will improve enough so they can get these attended to without triggering him to into an episode.” Jack took a deep breath.

“Then there’s the mental aspect of all this. From my scan it would indicate that some kind of mind probe was used on him; best guess it has scattered his mind. You were there Jack have you any idea what it could have been?” Owen asked.

“I was kinda in the same situation Owen, I really wasn’t paying much attention being the Master’s personal stress release,” he replied.

Owen continued. “I would say his mental state is a complex mix of damage from the probe and the torture. The notes say that Ianto is triggered into flashback situations where he experiences an event as if he was back on the Valiant. It’s the most severe form of PTSD, whilst it is happening he will be feeling all the physical reminders of the stress he felt at the time.”

“So when we rushed up to him yesterday he believed we were going to drag him off and…” Jack said grimly as he took another gulp of whiskey.

Owen nodded. “On top of that there is memory damage. It’s extensive; he may not know who he is, where he is, or why he is there, for all he knows this is just a continuation of his imprisonment. From his stress levels and reactions he is living moment to moment with the expectation he could be taken and tortured at any moment. His nightmares are an indication that every night he is reliving his worst memories repeatedly. Whatever the Master did to him totally fucked his mind, and I will add one final thing: I think the mental breakdown of this most likely had one more element.” Jack looked at him trying to think how this could be any worse.

“His blood tests when he was first brought in all showed a high level of a number of drugs used to
break down resistance, and some compounds no one recognised. The drugs combined with the torture and the probe, reduced him to what we saw today.”

“There has to be something we can do,” Jack looking at Owen as he tried to come to terms with what Ianto had endured.

“Jack I have no idea, no idea at all,” Owen told him.

“There has to be,” Jack said. “There just has to be.” Standing he moved across the table and refilled his glass with whiskey.

“Should we move him? Get him into private care? I mean, restraints, sedation…” he struggled with the day and all its implications.

“I’ve made some calls,” Owen told him. “Everyone I spoke to told me Geoff Green is a world expert on the treatment and care for victims of torture. Ianto is in the best hands he could be, if he was somewhere else the place to bring him would he here.”

“I just can’t bear the thought of him being in there, dragged into that room every night,” Jack said as he threw the whiskey down his throat on one gulp.

“It’s hard Jack but for right now Ianto is in the right place,” Owen said putting his hand on Jack’s shoulder.
“He’s in the dayroom,” Carl indicated to Jack, who raised his eyebrows in greeting because Ianto was always in the dayroom this time of the day.

“Hello Ianto,” Jack said as he went and stood next to him. “I brought you something you might like,” he said as he showed him a large book filled with technical drawings of how things worked.

Ianto did not pull his gaze from the garden. “I’ll put this in your room, for later,” Jack said not at all surprised by the lack of response as he put the book down on the chair. He knew that Ianto would pore over the book later with obvious pleasure. His non-reaction was not an indication of his enjoyment of such gifts. Jack understood this now and had come to accept that Ianto would not react but later if he found the book in his room he would accept its appearance; then and only then would he give it any attention. If not taken to his room Ianto would ignore it.

“I added another puzzle to your blackboard. I think you’ll find this one a real challenge,” he added as he now sat down to just watch Ianto. He smiled; Tosh had sent him up something to really get him thinking, it was one of many of increasing complexity as they tried to determine the limit of his ability as well as give him something to think about.

He had sat back to watch him garden gazing many times trying to put himself inside his head. He had spoken to Dr Green about it, said his best guess was Ianto had been held in a dark enclosed place where he could not see the outside, and now he could all he wanted was to be outdoors. Jack had tried and failed to convince the staff to allow him to do just that, but they had refused point blank. In his current state he could take off and where would they be then? He was safe in here and he could see out.

Jack was not convinced so he had started to bring the outside into the unit, starting with a few small plants brought in and left in his dayroom. Ianto tended them with great care, and made sure they had enough light and water. He also enjoyed the flowers Jack brought on a regular basis, staring in wonderment at their colours and smell. He did this seemingly un-observed, and if he thought anyone was looking he dropped his interest immediately.

Afternoon Tea was handed out. Ianto moved across to the table and sat down where a juice and two plain biscuits were put before him. Jack watched, his arms crossed as he now understood Carl’s comments from the first day. Ianto had a routine; a routine that could contain no variance. The same things had to be done to the second every day. This included food. There was a seven day cycle for food: breakfast, lunch and dinner. Compounding this was the need to make sure each meal was exactly as recalled. If it was mince and mashed potatoes with peas being served there had to be two scoops of mashed potatoes, a mess of watery mince and exactly 26 peas which Ianto counted out. It meant feeding him was a nightmare.

Ianto should be on a special diet to boost his weight and to improve his overall health. The hospital was only too willing to provide this, but the first week here had seared into his mind what should appear at each meal and nothing could persuade him to change it. What was so baffling to Jack was that some of the things Ianto was eating he loathed with a passion. Take tuna for example; tinned tuna was something he abhorred, along the terrible powered orange drink provided. And yet if on Wednesday lunch time a white bread tuna sandwich spread with margarine and complete with beaker of sickly sweet orange juice did not appear on a red plastic plate at exactly twelve minutes past twelve midday all hell broke loose.

Being witness to one of Ianto’s tantrums had scared him. Ianto really lost it and it surprised him and
he told Geoff Green that Ianto was not one for such pettiness. Geoff had explained it was about Ianto
feeling he had some control in his life, what he ate had become part of his desperate need for
predictability. It was also possible from what Jack had told him that Ianto was already predicated to
needing control and order in his environment. He was a careful man who had taken a great deal of
pleasure in getting things exactly right. Here Ianto had no control at all; keeping that in mind his
reaction wasn’t that out of order.

Once you understood this need for predictability then some of his other behaviours became clear, his
fascination with number puzzles for example. Jack and Geoff had both been standing in front of the
blackboard in Ianto’s dayroom as they pondered his ability that very afternoon.

“How does he do it?” Jack had asked as he saw the answer to the equation on the board from the day
before.

“I think it’s proof his mathematical intelligence is unaffected,” Geoff told him. “Did he show much
talent in this area before?” he asked

Jack shook his head. “I never saw any evidence. Could this be an effect of the brain damage?” Jack
asked.

“I can’t answer that. This could be a latent talent, or something he has always been able to do. I think
it comes back to the need for reliability; one plus one always equals two. But this is beyond the
basics,” he commented looking at the equation on the board. “What is astounding is he figures it out
in his head and just writes his answer up. Longest time so far is eleven minutes.”

“Where did you get this one?” Jack asked looking at the complex equation and answer scrawled
underneath.

“Beth Roberts is a doctor in one of the other units who loves math. We told her about Ianto and she
gave us a whole book of them,” Geoff replied.

Jack pulled at his lower lip. “I have a staff member, Toshiko Sato, who has a master degree in
applied physics, and she told me that even she would have difficulty working out a equation like this
in her head.”

“It’s a puzzle,” Geoff admitted as their conversation turned to Ianto’s obsession with jigsaw puzzles.
Geoff explained they could be assembled and one piece fitting into another exactly the same every
time. Although he had to admit they only gave him new ones now as he had become very upset
when he couldn’t find the last piece or pieces, which was true of many of the puzzles left behind in
the dayroom by previous residents. The first puzzle had taken hours and on finding he couldn’t
complete it he had thrown the table containing the puzzle in frustration across the room. Even now
Carl always got a bit stressed as the last few pieces were put together in recollection and anticipation
of a major outburst.

The only variance was his drawings which lately had taken on more form. It was clear the grey
object and small blue object were of great significance. He was sure there was a connection between
them and Ianto’s endless night searches. He was looking for something, but what?

Jack had looked at Geoff in a whole new light after this conversation and taken a greater step to
understanding exactly where Ianto was and the care the staff were taking over a very damaged and
difficult patient.

He walked over and kissed Ianto on the top of his head as he drank down the last remaining dregs
form his beaker.
“See you tomorrow,” he told him kindly.

Ianto watched the man leave as he grimaced at the sickly tang of the drink. He didn’t quite know what to make of him. He smelt good and brought him things that were interesting. The puzzle he had left today had really made him think; it had taken a whole half an hour before he had the answer. The clocked ticked over; time to look at his books. He glanced around, stood up, glanced around, sidled over, flicked his eyes around, snatched up the book and took it to his room.

Carl cleared up after him and watched with interest. He was not sure if even Ianto had realised it but for the first time he had done something he had never done before: he had taken something to his room rather than wait until it was taken and left there. Ianto might think he was unobserved but he had not taken his eyes off the book the whole time he was eating. He smiled; it looked like Captain Jack might be having an effect after all. He was surprised at his persistence; he turned up here every day for weeks without fail at two pm. He often brought something interesting for Ianto; he took an active role in his care where possible or just stood with him keeping him company, and despite a very bad beginning had come to terms how the unit was run. There were aspects he did not approve of but didn’t want to cause any problems for the people who cared for the man he loved.
Flicking his eyes warily around the room Ianto watched to make sure he was unnoticed. His eyes kept coming back to the book on the chair. He could see a machine on the front; he was not sure what it was but the word motorbike came into his mind. From what he could see a motorbike had only two wheels and he wanted to know how it remained upright in the picture.

This could be a trick, but the nice man who smelt good had brought it. He said it was for him, but it could be a deception, to make him drop his guard. So far the man had never hurt him and brought him nice things from outside like his plants and the flowers that smelt so nice and jigsaw puzzles. He stood with him every day and looked into the garden. He wondered what he wanted.

Looking around he saw there was only Mad Mike in the corner taking to the guard. His heart beating wildly he snatched the book and headed to his dayroom. Entering the room he paused at the blackboard, glanced over and saw a new equation. Picking up the chalk he wrote out the answer. He wasn’t sure why his captors wanted him to do this but better play along. He could never let on how much he enjoyed the maths puzzles because if they found out, that would be the end of that. He looked at the clock and felt his stomach clench in dread. The day guards would be going soon and then he would be taken for questioning.

He looked across at the nice guard, who spoke to him gently and only hurt him sometimes. He wondered if he should tell them about what happened to him at night but dismissed the idea. He must already know because he had seen him talking to the night guards and he felt a shiver of despair as he realised how was trapped he was.

Moving to his chair he sat down and he opened the book to the first page. He took a deep breath to remain calm, as he felt panic rising. Why had he taken it? If they knew what he liked they would only find some way of punishing him and taking it away or worse: turn his enjoyment in some new torment. Maybe he could have a quick look and put it back before anyone noticed it was gone. He looked at the first page and saw it was a cutaway all the insides were exposed and he could see how they all fitted together one each part like a giant puzzle he found he couldn’t take his eyes of the page.

He felt a deep rumpling and saw a flash. He dropped the book as his worse fears were realised. They knew he had taken the book and were coming to punish him. He cried out involuntarily as the room around him dissolved and he found himself back in his cell the Valiant.

His mind screamed out as the guards came towards him. He tried to plead with his eyes but he knew they would show no mercy. He could feel the engines rumble and vibrate the floor as he tried to back away from them. He tripped, fell backwards and hit his head on the wall, jarring his jaw.

One of the guards reached out grabbed his arm and he struggled against them. Falling to the ground, he tried to press himself to the floor. He stiffened up in an effort to make it impossible to move him but the nice guard was laying on him and had a syringe in his hand. He fought tooth and nail to stop them because the drug stopped his ability to fight back. In seconds all his strength would be gone so he fought with every ounce of muscle he had. His heart pounded as he jabbered at them and struggled only to find his face pressed into the floor and his arm locked into his back. In a final effort he drew on his remaining strength before it leaked away. He threw them off and managed to get away, running headlong into the main door, smashing into it.

Stunned, he fell backwards, hitting the floor as the guards threw themselves on top of him. Writhing
he felt himself being manhandled, and dragged forward. He threw his head back and went limp to become a dead weight. He saw the room, as finally the full force of the drug hit him and he felt his strength leave him. He knew why they had destroyed his resistance because he had fought back in the beginning. Now he had no hope; it would be agony and humiliation. He prayed to die as they belted him into the position and all he could do was scream for the torment to come.
As soon as Jack entered the unit he knew something was wrong because Geoff Green was waiting for him.

“What’s happened?” he asked Carl as he was taken to Dr Green’s office.

“I’m sorry you can’t see him today,” Dr Green told him.

“Why not?” Jack asked putting down the small plant he had with him on Geoff’s desktop.

“We’ve had move him, he had major episode last night. As you know there was a thunderstorm last night, it hit just as we were serving dinner. He became increasingly terrified and started to wreck the place. He then started throwing himself about trying to get out, smashing in himself into the walls. We had to call down the heavies and he’s in the safe room,” he explained.

“That was last night. Why is he still there?” Jack asked as he felt his stomach twist in fear.

“We can’t calm him down. We’ve tried everything. He’s sedated but remains in a highly agitated state,” Geoff told him.

“Let me go to him,” Jack asked as he felt a terrible feeling grow for Ianto’s safety.

“I’m not sure that’s a good idea,” Geoff told him.

“If you’ve tried everything, then why can’t I try?” Jack asked trying to remain calm.

“He’s very disturbed, currently he’s in lock down,” he told him

“Lock down,” Jack repeated as his concern now hitched up another notch.

“It’s full body restraint in the safe room,” Geoff explained sadly.

“It’s not something we like doing,” Carl told him.

“Please,” Jack asked, “if nothing’s worked I can’t make it worse. Maybe I can reach him. I’m not part of the establishment here, please let me try,” he pleaded as he saw them hesitate.

“I’ve gone along with everything you have asked of me, except for that first day have I challenged you in any respect?” He saw Geoff shake his head as he continued. “Then I am asking you please let me try.”

“Jack,” Dr Green said as he let out a huge breath.

“I’m begging you please, please, let me see him,” Jack tried one final time.

________________________________________

“Press the buzzer when you’re ready to come out,” Geoff told him pointing to the grimy pale object on the wall as he opened the door to the safe room.

Jack entered the bleak padded room. On the floor in a straitjacket, Ianto was secured with side belts holding him to floor.

Ignoring the stench Jack knelt next to him and put his hand on his back. Ianto was shivering
violently, urine soaked, struggling to breathe.

“What have they done to you?” he asked as he saw the wild look of terror looking back at him.

Ianto was murmuring something over and over again. Jack put his ear to his lips in an effort to hear and tried to work it out. It sounded like a jumble of words but as he listened he realised Ianto was begging.

“I am not going to rape you,” Jack reassured him. “I am here to help you. To start with I’m going to undo the floor buckles, so let’s start by undoing some of these straps,” he said as he started to unbuckle the floor straps. As they came free Ianto brought his legs up to his chest making himself as small an object as possible and backed himself into the furthest corner.

Being as gentle as he could Jack knelt next to him. Stroking his hair he kept telling him he was here to help him.

“I want to get you out of here,” he explained.

‘Get you out of here.’ Ianto jerked his face towards the voice at the words and saw it was the nice man. He shook his head in disbelief; it had to be a trick he felt so confused and disorientated.

“Outside of this room, outside of this building and into the garden,” Jack explained trying to keep his voice steady and fighting to control the rage he felt at Ianto’s treatment.

His heart pounding, Ianto realised this man was here to rescue him and this was why he had been coming. He forced himself to concentrate as he listened more carefully but kept his eyes to floor in case this was a trick.

“To take you outside I have to take off the jacket,” Jack said as he examined the straps and realised one went under his groin. Any touching in that area might be taken he was going to be assaulted, so he kept up a monologue of what he was doing.

“I’m going to release the first buckle; it’s around your groin and backside. I will only touch you as much as I need to,” he explained as he reached down, undid the buckle and pulled through the leather strap.

Ianto felt fumbling and true to his word the man released the crotch strap pulling it forward.

“I have to reach over to your back, if you could turn,” Jack suggested and Ianto to his surprise twisted enough to release the back and arms straps. Standing now and with a large jerk Jack pulled the jacket off and threw it into the other corner of the room. He saw Ianto make a sudden move and wrap his arms around Jack’s waist. Trembling he buried his head in Jack’s shoulder, gasping short ragged breaths as Jack pressed the buzzer.

“I’m taking him outside,” Jack declared as the door opened and he found he was faced with Doctor Green and Carl.

“This is not a good idea,” Dr Green told him.

“I’m taking Ianto outside to the one place he has been desperate to get to for months,” Jack argued forcefully as Dr Green stood his ground.” I promised him in this fucking horrible room, I would get him out,” Jack shouted at them. “Now get out of my way,” he demanded as Ianto shivered in his arms. Seeing the look of fury on Jack’s face Geoff stood aside.

With slow steps they made their way to the main entrance and headed into the garden, where a light
rain was falling. As they stepped out the door Ianto broke down into howling sobs as Jack drew him close. The heartrending sounds were hard to listen to. Jack knew this sound. He knew the sound and recognised the wail and the feeling it represented, because he had made the same sound once himself. He knew one torture victim to another, this sounds as it was made could never be explained or understood by anyone other than a survivor. It was the relief of being freed.

Minutes passed as Dr Green and Carl watched the pair. They had never seen Ianto show any emotion other than fear or blankness. Neither was sure what had actually transpired but Jack had some insight into Ianto’s plight that had touched the damaged man.

Rubbing his back Jack continued to tell Ianto he was safe and loved. As Ianto’s sobs eased Jack manoeuvred him under a large tree whose branches spread out providing a canopy, as it began to rain in earnest.

Finding a dry spot under the spreading branches they stood. Ianto had his arms tightly around his waist. They stood there in the rain for some time when Ianto put his hand out to catch the rain drops and licked them off sucking off the moisture with a desperation born of thirst.

Pulling out his mobile Jack made a call, and several moments later Carl appeared with a jug, glass and plate with several sandwiches on it. Jack turned to greet him and felt Ianto stiffen in his arms as he saw him. Jack soothed him telling he was just bringing some water as he must be thirsty.

“Thanks,” Jack said as Carl poured the plastic glass full of water and handed it to Ianto who refused to take it. Carl handed the beaker to Jack who then handed it to Ianto who took the glass, drank the water down greedily and nosily then handed it back.

Several full beakers later he belched. “I think we might try food next,” Jack indicated and took a sandwich off a plate and offered it to Ianto who looked at it with suspicion.

“Cheese and tomato,” Carl told him and Ianto stuffed the entire sandwich in his mouth. “It’s Thursday,” Carl commented as Jack nodded his understanding.

Clearing all the sandwiches Ianto started to look uncomfortable and to wiggle.

“He needs a toilet,” Carl told Jack who looked at him and the building and he realised that going back inside was not an option at this point.

Moving Ianto towards the back of the tree, and with difficulty Jack unzipped his own trousers, pulled out his own penis and started to pee.

Watching his actions Ianto now followed suit one-handed.

“Now what?” Carl asked as he observed the pair.

“Now we wait until it starts to get dark,” Jack told him as Carl raised his eyebrows.

Ianto watched proceeding with wary eyes. He was so muddled; one moment he had been in the room waiting in dread and now he was outside, being held and comforted by the nice man. He had actually shouted at the guards and they have moved aside. Then he’d got him something to drink and helped him pee so he didn’t wet himself. Maybe this was a trick. He broke down again as he felt overwhelmed at being outside with the nice man’s arms around him. The nice man would save him...safe, save, saved, saved, safe with the nice man became a mantra in his mind.

They had stood holding each other for at least two hours and Jack could feel Ianto buckling slightly every now and then from exhaustion. Jack was glad they were outside in the open air because Ianto
was rank from a mixture of stale urine, sweat and body odour. It was going to get dark soon bringing with it a whole new level of fear for him. He looked at the building and took a breath.

“Ianto listen this is important. We got outside but now we need to get back inside,” he said as he felt Ianto shake his head.

He lifted Ianto’s face by lifting his chin, “I know you are scared of going back inside but you will be with me.” He saw Ianto start to shake his head with more force and start to lose it.

“I know you’ve not had a lot to trust Ianto, but I am asking you to trust me. I will be with you every step of the way and you can keep hold of me all times.” Ianto looked up at him then at the building and at the gathering dark.

Ianto started to sob again as Jack decided to take charge. “This is what is going to happen. We are going to walk back, we are going into the unit, you are going have a hot shower, change into some clean clothes, then you are going to have some dinner,” Jack told him strongly.

“Let’s make a move before it gets dark, and I promise we can come out here again tomorrow.” He looked around for a feature of the garden. “See the wall over there? Tomorrow we will get to the wall.” Ianto looked at him trying to make sense of what was happening. He could see the dark coming; he could see the unit, He closed his eyes, ‘safe, save, saved, saved, safe,’ was going around in his mind so with reluctant and slow hesitant steps he allowed Jack to lead him back inside as he listened as Jack repeated his promise of safety, outside and trust.

Entering the unit Carl indicated where they should go. Jack led Ianto to the bathroom. As they passed, Carl handed him several towels and some clean clothes. Entering the room Jack turned and locked the door and they were alone. Ianto let out a huge breath, and felt his knees buckle, but instead of falling he found the nice man had caught him and he looked deep into his eyes and the realisation came to him that the nice man would not let him fall.

The next biggest challenge for Jack was getting Ianto into the shower, without having to get in with him, because he understandably refused to let go. Jack continued talking to him describing his every action, as he assisted Ianto out of his clothes. Once undressed he moved to hold onto Jack as close as he could.

Jack waited a moment before speaking as the room filled with steam. “I promise you can have me back, but let’s get you cleaned up first,” he said gently as Ianto’s eyes locked with Jack’s then he backed into the shower only letting go of Jack’s hand when he was under the spray. Jack soaped up a flannel and handed it over.

Watching as Ianto washed himself down, Jack noted Ianto’s physical condition was worse than he had feared; underweight, his hip bones, ribs and back bone were sticking out. He knew that was due to his terrible diet. He was covered in both recent bruises and fading. His back, buttocks and legs were covered in a crisscross of raised scars and by the look some looked like they were branded on. Jack had read the reports but the sheer savagery of the scars took his breath away.

Ianto, not taking his eyes off Jack, now followed instructions and washed his hair. Turning off the shower Jack handed him a large white towel. Seeing a tear run down Jack’s face, Ianto lifted it off with his finger licked it then threw his arms around Jack and clung to him.

“Come on,” Jack said as he pulled away slightly, “let’s get you dressed,” he said gently as he stroked Ianto’s face, “And tomorrow we will get you a shave.”
Siting on the tatty sofa in the dayroom, Ianto was curled up beside Jack his legs tucked up, his head in Jack’s armpit fast asleep. Jack watched as Dr Green approached.

“We need to get him settled for the night,” he said quietly seeing Ianto was asleep.

“Please don’t put him in that room,” Jack asked as he glanced toward the room where Ianto was locked away every night and fought an involuntary shudder.

“We do it for his own safety. We only have limited staff on at night and I have other patients to consider,” he told Jack.

“I know but I am begging you, please don’t put him in there, not tonight,” he asked again trying to keep his voice down.

“Are you suggesting he stays out here all night?” he said.

Jack nodded. “He’s asleep right now. He sees me as some kind of security. He’s had such little comfort, don’t take this away from him,” he pointed out.

“You can’t stay there all night, Captain Harkness,” Dr Green told him disapprovingly.

“Why not?” Jack retorted quietly not wanting to wake Ianto up.

“Look we are not ungrateful for your help, but we need to take over and get him back into his routine,” he told Jack.

“What possible harm could it do if he sleeps here tonight?” Jack replied just as strongly. “He hates that room, he fights you every night. He’s asleep right now, why can’t he stay?” Jack told him.

Dr Green struggled with himself. Jack had never seen him at night or experienced the nightmares that tormented Ianto. On the other hand Jack had got Ianto calm, moved him out of the room, back into the building, given him a shower, encouraged him to eat something, and settled him down.

“What if you fall asleep, he wakes up and starts acting out?” Dr Green pointed out.

“I don’t sleep much,” Jack told him. “And I will sit here all night keeping him safe if I have to.”

Geoff let out a deep sigh and made a decision. If Jack wanted to stay there all night then let him. Let him experience the very worst, then tomorrow night there would be no more arguments.

“Very well, I will leave sedation and instructions. If Ianto wakes and becomes agitated then he will have to be put into his night room.” He stalked off to give his staff instructions and to leave himself on call.

Hearing the dayroom double doors click shut and seeing the lights dim Jack felt a wave of trembling start in his jaw then spread throughout his entire body. His breathing quickened as the dark shadows that had been threatening to overwhelm him since Geoff had led him down the corridors to the safe room now came full force and crashed into him. Through sheer force of his will and some bio-control he had held this off.

As they had neared the room the walls had begun closing in on him as he felt like his heart was going to burst out of his chest. For a split second he was back on the Valiant, being dragged towards
what the Master had called his ‘room of delights’. It had only lasted for a fragment of a moment but he had nearly lost it when the safe room door was opened and the sight and smell hit him. He had gagged and re-swallowed what felt the entire contents of his stomach as he had seen the state Ianto had been in. To help Ianto he had forced it into the back of his mind as he wrestled to remain outwardly in control. However he could not control the involuntary shudder as he battled to remain in the now. He had used what little mental strength after the flashback in the corridor to force himself to focus on the task at hand.

Now that feeling began to break like the crest of a wave... His hearing, over-sensitive to even the minutest sound, startled at what sounded like flapping wings began to circle. He felt a wave of terror because he knew the hard dark creature who had been slowly consuming his soul was coming for him. Like the Vashta Nerada who lived in the shadows hungry for flesh, this creature was hungry for his very being. He had tried to name this force but no name in any language seemed malevolent enough. It felt like a force of nature akin to a hurricane which came without warning and was a jumble of fragmented remnants of his worst recollections: vulnerability, helplessness, mixed with pain and rage.

He reached down with his hand to pull Ianto closer to him. He could not let this happen now. ‘Please,’ he begged inwardly, ‘let me find the strength I need to overcome this for his sake’. Several desperate moments passed as he struggled to keep his mind when a feeling began to warm his stomach. It was so faint it took sometime before he recognised its strange calming effect. He felt himself come slightly back into balance in a way he had not felt since before the Valiant. In all the months since his return he had not had a moment of calm. He had felt this once before today; it had occurred the moment Ianto had reached out for him and he to him. It had been so fleeting that he has not recognised it until now. The feeling grew and he felt its effect as the roaring in his mind eased and the shadows moved back. He drew strength from this focus and his heart rate lessoned and his breathing eased.

Opening his eyes he had no idea how much time had passed; looking down at his wrist strap he saw it had been about two hours. To his relief Ianto was curled up on his lap still fast asleep. He tucked the blanket around him and caressed his forehead as the new feeling began to grow in strength and became combined with a steely determination that he would never leave Ianto’s side willingly ever again. He was his armour, his protector, his voice.

Walking into the unit Dr Green fully expected to be met with an update from the night staff that confirmed all his worst fears for leaving Ianto out of his room. To his surprise he found, for the first time since entering the unit Ianto had slept through the entire night. He had cried out a couple of times but finding himself with Jack had gone back to sleep. Whatever Jack was doing had worked, he had to admit. He strolled into to the dayroom to find Ianto sitting at the table calmly eating his breakfast while Jack stroked his back calmly talking to him. He noted Ianto was sitting as close as possible to Jack, no doubt had he been able he would have sat in his lap.

“We need to talk,” Jack said as Dr Green joined them. Looking up at Dr Green he took a breath. “I want him out of here permanently,” Jack told him.

“We need to talk,” Dr Green repeated as he geared himself up for a fight.

Getting enough space to talk to Dr Green over the next few days proved to be extremely difficult. True to his word, Jack took Ianto outside each and every day thereafter and they walked around the garden and the unit like co-joined twins. To his relief as he now became Ianto’s full time caregiver he felt more of the calm he had felt that night develop into must stronger feelings of peace. As each day passed Jacks determination grew, he had to get Ianto out of here.
Ianto had settled each night to sleep next to Jack. As long as he was not forced to sleep in the secure room at night, he slept all the way through without sedation. As far as Jack could tell, the room represented a return to the Valiant; triggering a regression to the torture he had endured. This then had a knock-on effect which affected his behaviour during the day, keeping him in a hyper-vigilant PTSD mindset. It meant Ianto was trapped in a cycle he would not be able to escape without help. This was not to criticize the efforts of the staff. They had done the best they could, but it was also clear their efforts were not helping. The staff seeing his determination and Ianto’s improvement began to accept his presence as he became a permanent feature of the unit.

With much reluctance, the staff set up two mattresses side by side in the dayroom and they had slept there ever since. There was only one night when things could have turned sour. Ianto had woken up and started his searching. A behaviour the staff had pointed out was the cause his being locked in at night.

Jack had watched for a while then pulled Ianto around, to see he was confused and distressed. Talking to him Ianto had gone to his dayroom and pulled out one of his endless pictures of the grey blob he drew every day, and gesturing Jack understood this was what he was looking for.

Jack reminded him he had searched this room already many times, and whatever it was, was not here. As there were many other places left to search maybe they could search this room one more time, and then mark it off as searched. Ianto had stopped what he was doing as he thought deeply; after what seemed an age he nodded. Once searched Ianto headed for his day time room, brought out the large sheet of paper, and recorded via a drawing that this room had been searched and put a cross through it. Much to Jack’s relief he took a final look around then settled back down to sleep.
Suggestion

One evening as Ianto slept, Dr Green listened with some trepidation to Jack’s plan. Seeing the improvements in Ianto had convinced him Jack was right. Ianto had not made any significant changes until recently and under Jack’s care was beginning to stabilise somewhat. Partly he knew it was because Jack could give him the one-on-one care the unit could not provide.

However moving him to a new location was fraught with difficulty, let alone the ongoing day-to-day care of someone who was clearly emotionally fragile. Ianto had a huge list of triggers, adding thunderstorms to the list it included sudden noises, raised voices, asking questions, offering him a choice, to the hated bedroom.

The major factor that ruled Ianto’s life was his schedule. Dr Green explained that the schedule represented predictability. As a victim of torture, knowing what comes next was vital because it made it possible to predict what happened next. In other words, if event A happened and was followed by B then C would follow and so on. It made him feel safe and was seared into his memory by his hyper-vigilant state. Even the most minor of changes could bring on a pout to rival any two year-old and if not attended to could lead to a major tantrum. Jack had been witness to this; Ianto had thrown a chair across the room when one night the dinner menu had been changed. After much foot stomping, he had refused to eat the dinner provided, crossing his arms and throwing himself on his mattress in the dayroom. No amount of persuasion could entice him to take a single bite. Jack was taking on a huge responsibility and work load. It meant the end of his life as he knew it, because Ianto would need supervised 24 hour-a-day care, 7 days a week.

“What support do you have?” he asked Jack when he had finished talking. “By your silence, I take that as none,” Geoff replied after several moments passed. “And we have to take Ianto into account. What does he want in all this? We can hardly ask him,” he continued.

“I promised I would get him out of here. I have some ideas. I do have some support; I am not wanting to take Ianto to anywhere. I am prepared to wait until I find exactly the right place that would fit all his requirements. Once found he could start to live a normal life or as normal as I can make it.” Jack told him. He saw Geoff relax and wondered if he thought he was going to kidnap Ianto which was the last thing in his mind.

“His regression could be permanent,” Geoff warned him. “As he is now might be as good as it gets.”

“Ianto can only become more institutionalised. He’s only 25 years old, let me at least try to give him some kind of life,” Jack told him. Dr Green remained silent so Jack continued. “He has this schedule, maybe using that as a tool we can move him from one place to another, set up his routine, allow him the space to feel totally protected, safe and loved. I know it all sounds like a kind of fantasy but I love Ianto very much.”

Dr Green pulled his bottom lip. “But this could be for life. He could remain just as he is right now. Any improvements are going to be hard won and a long time coming. Before I give my support the question I am asking you is, are you here for the long haul? Long term care for someone like Ianto with all his difficulties burns people out. It takes mental fortitude and stamina. It’s clear you love Ianto, but love is not always enough. He needs time, space and a great deal of patience, if you do this I want you to understand the commitment this is going to take. I don’t want him dumped back here in two years’ time, because you found it all too hard. I would rather you leave him here right now, than promise him he can leave only to have you walk away at a later date and he be returned.”

“I wish you could have met Ianto before all this happened,” Jack said with a wry smile “He was a
wonderful man; witty, funny, courageous, resourceful, careful, hard-working, intelligent, devoted, and passionate; he could be stubborn, difficult and sarcastic and could without doubt make the best cup of coffee in the universe. I know the man Ianto was may be gone forever. What I want to do is allow him the time and space to grow into the man he needs to become to get his life back on track. I know it’s not going to be easy, there are going to be tough times ahead. I know his entire care and well-being will fall onto me. I will admit I have never taken on a responsibility like this before but I pledge to you right now, once he leaves Ianto will never step through the doors of this facility as a patient again.”

“And what if something happens to you what then? You have become his entire focus. It will leave a huge hole if something happens to you,” Dr Green said bluntly.

“Won’t happen,” Jack replied just as bluntly.

“You can’t guarantee that,” Dr Green told him as Jack raised his eyebrows and a stubborn look crossed his face.

Crossing his arms he took a deep breath. “All right I agree in principal, on one condition: we prepare this move with extreme care, and we will only mention it once all preparations are confirmed. He will need time to come to terms with leaving, because no matter how stressful and difficult things may be for him here, it represents what he knows. Once everything is set to go we need to ensure he knows exactly what is going on every step of the way.”

“A agreed,” Jack said as he pulled out his mobile and a massive list and started punching in numbers.
Issues

Five months later Jack stood in the garden holding Ianto in what had become known as ‘the position.’
Ianto’s arms clamped around Jack’s waist, standing as close as he could get, his head buried in
Jack’s shoulder. As Jack held him he ran one hand down his back, the other massaging and stroking
the back of his neck. Ianto was having a bad day; he had woken in a grump and things had gone
downhill from there.

The last five months had been very difficult. It was clear Ianto saw Jack as his security blanket. Ianto
would do nothing unless Jack was right there with him every moment of every day which made
doing seemingly simple things like going to the toilet a challenge.

Jack didn’t care. He was determined to prove to everyone here that he could look after Ianto, and
secondly Ianto needed this. He needed Jack like a drowning man needed air. He could still be
triggered into a flashback. However with Jack’s presence, attention and their new sleeping
arrangements these had begun to lessen. As a consequence, the brain damage was now becoming
more evident.

Geoff Green had explained that for Ianto it was like he had multiple complex competing parts of
himself; one was the part that was hyper-vigilance PTSD and the other was dictated by the degree of
regression. On top of all this was the brain damage.

His brain damage was significant, affecting his memory in a jumble of confusion. It was clear from
his first moments at the unit that he needed help to do the simplest tasks, like feeding himself and
using the toilet. All indications as Jack suggested that he may have had an eidetic memory were
gone. The few tests they had managed to give him showed that all and any instructions had to be
endlessly repeated before Ianto fully understood. However even after all this hard work Ianto would
appear to have only the bare basics. How much he actually knew was open to question. He remained
in his blank state unless directed to do something within the confines of the routine. Geoff explained
that at the beginning Ianto was like a living moving doll; it had taken weeks before he’d started to do
the simplest things for himself. The day he lifted a spoon from a bowl to his mouth was a noted
breakthrough. It was heartening to see how he responded to Jack but he had a long way to go.

Jack asked if this might be Ianto resisting their efforts because it was possible Ianto saw himself still a
captive. Geoff agreed it was a possibility; on the other hand Ianto was showing classic symptoms of
someone with brain damage, which was evident in his physical co-ordination for example. The scans
he had had at the UNIT facility showed that memory areas of his brain had been severely disrupted.
His brain had taken a severe knock not just from the torture but he had been assaulted chemically,
and the side effects of whatever had been used on him meant they had left Ianto fighting to retain and
recall anything.

In light of his memory loss the staff told him the names of objects around him including colours
because Ianto could not speak and tell them what he knew. They worked from the premise that he
needed to know everything. Geoff told Jack that after they had begun this they had noted a small
improvement in Ianto’s behaviour and he was observed picking up objects and moving his lips as if
repeating what the object was over and over again as to not forget. From the beginning they had
always interacted in a way that allowed Ianto to name parts of himself and those objects around him;
‘I’m putting your jumper over your head’ types of conversation like you would anyone who had
forgotten the basics. Geoff smiled, noting that Jack had continued with this almost without comment
and every interaction was interspersed with telling Ianto as much as they could about what they were
doing in an attempt to get him to interact with the world around him.

In light of the difficulty in just observing Ianto without him flicking immediately into his blank state the staff had used a whole range of tactics to observe him. What appeared to work best was to ignore him and just pretend to be doing something. Geoff added that he had started to sit in the dayroom working on reports, trying to gain some insight to how to help him further. It had given him an understanding that Ianto felt direct focused attention was the equivalent of someone pointing at him shouting ‘You!’ . This behaviour of remaining or trying to blend into the background was a way of avoiding being picked for torture; as a consequence they never put him on the spot if it could be avoided. Until the breakthrough with Jack the only interactions they had managed with him was in direct relation to his schedule. All other actions he did only if he was seemingly unobserved.

What was disappointing was it appeared he had no recollection of anyone he had known up until that point. Tosh and Gwen had visited and they had shown him some of the photographs of his parents, Lisa, and all of them. However it was not certain Ianto even recognised himself let alone anyone else. Once they had left and he was alone in his room he had only glanced at each photograph and not paid them any attention since.

On the other hand he had retained aspects of his personality and as far as they could tell his intelligence was unaffected, especially his mathematical ability and love of anything mechanical. To say he was confused as he tried to make sense of the world around him would be an understatement. His link to sanity was the routine and now Jack.

The emotional overload and frustration was much like a two year old, but one that could not be sent to the naughty step or to his room. Ianto felt intense emotion but with no words or any other outlet to express it, it came out like a tantrum. If he got into a major strop things tended to escalate until the staff were forced to intervene. Today Ianto had gotten upset because lunch was late. Once it had arrived he had refused to eat it, and had thrown it and the table across the room. Another resident had then started to act out so Jack had led Ianto outside in an effort to calm him down. He looked at his watch and saw it was their time for being outside so hopefully they could get him back on track for the rest of the afternoon. He knew once he was through this Ianto would continue as if nothing had happened.

Jack took a deep breath as he saw Dr Green coming to speak to him. They had decided that any discussion about Ianto’s future would be discussed in front of him. It was an open policy because, despite his confusion, he had the right to be part of the process towards his recovery. Jack had insisted on this. Ianto was an adult; this was his body, his mind, his life. For him to move forward there had to be 100% transparency with no surprises.

“There you are,” Dr Green said as he saw Jack and Ianto under what he called the comfort tree. It was where Jack brought him every time he got out of control, being the first place Jack had taken him when he had rescued him from the room.

“Ianto is feeling much better,” Jack told him as he joined them and felt Ianto give a tiny almost imperceptible nod.

“I have joined you today because there are two things which need to be arranged before Ianto can leave.” Jack felt Ianto stiffen, because despite appearances Jack knew he was paying attention to every word. How much he understood was one thing but the one word that always got his attention was the word ‘leave’. “When Ianto was brought in here he had two ongoing issues that needed attention, both of them serious and with his departure it is now essential they be dealt with,” the doctor explained.

“Basically Ianto needs his teeth fixed and he needs some surgery to fix the damage to his lower
bowel,” he told him. Jack nodded in agreement. He knew Ianto’s teeth were causing him pain, several needed repair and at least one needed to be removed. The other was the damage caused by the rapes; whatever they had used had caused a pocket to form in his lower bowel, called the sigmoid colon. The interior sphincter which had also been ruptured at some point also needed some repair, and all this led to abscesses. They were affecting his general health, were painful and caused a certain amount of leakage which Ianto was acutely embarrassed by.

Jack and Geoff looked at each other, knowing what was in Ianto’s best interest was one thing. Getting him to understand and cooperate was another thing.

“I see he needs fixing both ends. How many days involved?” Jack queried as Ianto shifted his head to Jack’s other shoulder.

“Teeth can be done in one day; we have a dental unit on site. He will need an oral surgeon. I suggest he be fully anesthetised. We do it late afternoon, bring him back here, and he will wake up in the unit. Once he wakes up and realises his mouth feels better then all well and good.”

“The other?” Jack asked.

“Minimum three days in hospital, approximately one month after care, means sticking lots of creams and enemas up his bum, which will be messy but soothing. I don’t need to tell you that this scenario and particulars of this surgery is the most likely to trigger an episode.”

“I know this is going to sound odd but what do they do when a child needs serious surgery?” Jack asked.

“We use medical play. Set up a doll or something and we walk them through every step,” Geoff told him as he saw where Jack was going.

“I think that’s what we need to do. I can arrange for the surgery to be done privately. He needs to know every face, the buildings, the works. We explain exactly what we doing every step of the way, every medical wipe, every injection,” Jack told him.

“At the same time we can also address his anaemia and get him a transfusion,” Geoff added. Jack nodded as he pulled out his mobile.
Owen waited outside of Ianto's room holding two cartons of coffee. He had gone to find the café just as the nurse arrived to start getting Ianto ready for surgery. He could hear Jack speaking softly and he didn't want to disturb the conversation as it sounded important. He knew once he entered Ianto would go immediately into his blank state.

"I am so proud of you Ianto you are so brave, you handled that brilliantly. The cannula will feel strange sort of achy and cold and tomorrow it will help to make you all sleepy. It's in your vein; see those blue lines on your arm. See I have them too. Now we need to talk about what happens next. Then I thought we could look through some of your books and see if we could find some trucks like we saw on the way here."

Owen took this queue and walked in to find Ianto sitting on the side of the bed his legs hanging over the edge as Jack stood between them. Seeing Owen Ianto buried his head into Jack shoulder and Jack wrapped his arms around him.

So far so good. Ianto had settled in his room been weighed, had had his blood pressure taken, a cannula had been inserted into the back of his hand and he had given a blood sample.

Owen was more than relieved, with so much that could go wrong. Ianto was handling this really well. There had only been one moment this could have turned sour. It had happened just as they left the institute and hit the open road.

After all the weeks of preparation the fact this was Ianto's first car journey had never crossed their minds. It had been touch and go, as Ianto clung onto Jack terrified, as vehicles came towards them.

Owen had pulled over quickly as Jack explained how the road rules worked and pointed out all the different vehicles. Taking off Ianto had brightened considerably when he saw a bus; several trucks followed by a motor bike and spent the remainder of the trip fascinated by vehicles that caught his attention.

"Thanks," Jack said as Owen placed the coffee on the high table at the end of the bed.

"Yeah you look like you could use a coffee," Owen stated as Jack raised his eyebrows in agreement.

"I need something a lot stronger than coffee but it will have to do, my heart rates still slowing down," Owen quipped.

"Never crossed my mind either," Jack admitted.

"Other than that he appears to be handling this very well."

"That's because everything is as expected," Jack replied as he lifted Ianto's chin and looked into his eyes. "That what we like isn't it, no surprises."

"Well it goes to show what good planning and hard work can do, and it's all good practice for when you actually leave."

"Yeah" Jack said as Ianto held him closer.

"Talking about surprises, the team put this together for him," he put down the coffee took off his back pack and pulled a small wrapped box.
Opening it Jack saw it was an iPod. "We took the liberty of downloading a few songs we thought he might like, nothing too heavy like the shit he used to listen too."

Owen handed him over a print out of the contents as Jack looked down the extensive list.

"There's some light classical music, along with mix of funny and popular songs. I think Flanders and Swann feature a bit, along with the Element song and the 'Rainbow song', 'Hamster dance' stuff like that. The girls and the newbie's had great fun selecting what songs to include. Bloody hours… listening to the 'Macarena' and the 'Ketchup song,' I swear to god I thought my ears would bleed. I don't know what was more scary the fact they knew all the words or could do all the moves. Needless to say I can confirm they have compiled the longest list of the most irritating songs in history," "he stopped when he saw the bemused look on Jack face.

"Being head of Torchwood Cardiff is a tough job but someone's got to do it," Jack teased him.

"It took me weeks to get that 'Barbie Girl' song out of my head only to have it replaced with that bloody stupid 'chicken dance song'," he continued as Jack laughed.

"Anyway we tried to add as many songs that had plays on words that sort of thing, we hope he enjoys it."

"Owen it's wonderful tell them a big thank from me I am sure he will enjoy this very much."

"Well I'm off; I need a beer to recover from the car trip, thank god for motor bikes and fucking great trucks."

"Thanks for this," Jack said.

"I'll catch up with you just before he goes in," Owen gave Jack a thumbs up. As he left Jack scanned his eyes down the list.

"I think there's a song on here you will really like," Jack placed the jack in the iPod and found the song in the menu. Pressing play he listened to check the volume on the ear pieces then placed them gently into Ianto ears. Ianto opened his eyes wide and a ghost of a smile passed across his face as he started to nod his head in time with the music.

Lying in a hospital bed Ianto watched the screen in front of him with fascination. Jack had brought the DVD player for him from the second bad place. It was a thin metal oblong that opened and sang to him. Then Jack put in a shiny circle and pictures started to appear.

Jack had given him the DVD player after his mouth was fixed, as a treat. He had woken groggy and his mouth felt all strange and had holes where there were no holes before. He had spent a lot of time mapping out how different it all was with his tongue. Then the next day he found could eat hard things and he could use his whole mouth for chewing and not just one side.

He was very happy because he was watching his favourite 'Nemo'. The first time he had watched all he’d seen were colours and shapes; everything moved so fast he was a bit overwhelmed. But each time he had watched it he had found something new, but the same. It was like as he saw bits that could be added to the whole until he knew everything. The story never changed. Everything was always exactly the same, every time. It made him feel very happy that it was always the same. Jack promised the stories on the discs could be repeated as many times as he wanted, but only if he was good.

His face creased for a second because he hated not being good, because it meant missing out on his discs. He had quite a list; he couldn't understand everything as he kept getting them all mixed up but
he could remember names. There was one with Scrat and his nut, Many, Sid and Diageo. Another had Woody and Buzz Light-year, Donkey and Shrek. King Julian, who liked to move it, move it, and the naughty penguins who escaped by using a spoon.

Maybe tomorrow he might watch one of other discs but today was 'Nemo' day. Jack saved this disc for when he was especially good. He smiled; he loved Dory, she kept forgetting things just like him. He always got a bit worried that Nemo's dad Marlin wouldn't find Nemo and that they would be lost to each other forever but to his relief they always found each other at the end.

He wiggled a bit to get comfortable. His bum was very, very sore and he had to lay on his tummy or his side. He had tried his side but found the best place was his tummy. That meant staying in bed and he was not allowed to get up even to piss. Jack had found something for him to piss in; he had never laid down to piss before except for accidents. It was awkward but Jack had helped him in what he called 'hose control.'

Poos was the only thing he was allowed out of bed for and he used a special toilet thing the nurse brought and after he had to have a special bum wash, it was all warm and strange and Jack it called an nenama.

He was worried the poos might really hurt because when he woke up from his operation he really hurt deep inside. At first he thought he was back in the first bad place, but he heard Jack's voice and opened his eyes, looked up and saw Jack holding his hand and stroking his forehead telling him he was okay and reminding him where he was.

So he had been worried about using his bum again. But it was all right because poos were all sloppy because of the stuff he had been given to drink. He shuddered when he had first taken a sip and he was going to refuse but Jack said they had made a deal, if he was good, he got rewarded. Being good meant following the plan. Jack explained everything in great detail, making sure of everything, and part of the plan was drinking the thick drink. He trusted Jack because he had never lied to him once. If Jack said it would hurt it would and he always explained what the hurt was for. He was okay if he knew the pain was coming he could prepare and Jack understood this.

And being good he now got his treat, his reward. Jack had promised a treat because they couldn't do their normal things so lots of watching discs and Jack reading to him and maths puzzles, and books on how things worked which Jack explained to him, listening to music and drawing. He felt unsettled and they tried to do everything the same but Jack had explained that just for now things had to be just a bit out of order. And there was a big reason for this; Jack had promised that they would be leaving the second bad place soon, away from the guards, away, away, away, to a new special place called home and getting ready meant fixing his bum.

Jack had promised that after this was over no-one would touch his bum again in a bad way, unless they had to fix things. After this nothing should go up there again ever except medicine; it was exit only. Ianto was pleased to hear that, because putting things up there really hurt and his mind began to swirl with horrible images and sensations. He swallowed as he felt the room whirl but he focused on the film and brought his attention back as he watched Nemo got stroppy and touched the boat's butt. Fixing his bum meant they could escape to home sooner and never have to come back. He thought about the huge folder of all the details of their move to home, in the locker beside him, which he went over and over and over again checking if anything had been added and how it all fitted into the move. He stifled a laugh as the big creature with all the teeth Jack said was a shark had Dory…

Jack looked up from his book at the strange sound Ianto had made…he heard it again he went over and kissed the top of his head as Ianto laughed. Tears rolled down Jack's face as he watched Ianto's enjoyment; no one here would understand the significance except him. Ianto had laughed for the first
time, not just laughed but his whole body was wiggling in enjoyment as the biggest shark got upset and erupted into a major strop causing things to explode. He kissed the top of his head again and Ianto glanced up at him, a huge smile on his face. Jack knew in his long life he was never going to forget this moment, the moment he knew Ianto was on his way back.

The first time he had heard it Carl thought he was mishearing things, but there was no mistaking the sound; Ianto was laughing. For Carl who had seen Ianto through some of his worst times it made all his hard work worthwhile. He daren't put his head around the corner into his dayroom because he knew as soon as anyone other than Jack approached he clammed up, returning to his blank state. Carl didn't care. Ianto was showing someone that inside there was a man fighting to regain what he had lost. A man who could show something other than unresponsiveness or dread, that something could make him laugh. Ianto didn't realise it but something very special had been returned to him while he had been in hospital: his sense of humour.

He was relieved to hear him laugh because Ianto had been none too pleased to come back here yesterday, and almost lost it a couple of times. Jack had had to use every tactic he had to get Ianto to cooperate with his after care. Jack didn't know this but Carl was impressed with the control Jack had over Ianto, with only words and a few cuddles Jack had managed to get him to calm down and to do what was needed. At this point Jack held all the cards, they couldn't leave until such time as he was healed enough to need only visits from the local district nurse and or local doctor, until then they had to stay. Sitting for hours in a car with a sore bum was no fun even with great music to listen to and a rubber donut to sit on. So put up and shut up Jack had told him. To Carl's amazement Ianto had acquiesced, doing exactly what was needed.

"How many times now, Jack?" Carl called out to Jack joined him as he could hear the credits of the film began to sound out. Jack threw him a filthy look. "Not long now and you can enjoy 'Finding Nemo' in all its full glory on your new wide screen TV," he added. Carl approached him and pulled out a DVD case. "I was in the supermarket the other night and came across this. Reckon he might enjoy it," he said as Jack took the case.

"Robots," Jack read out the title.

"Seeing he likes mechanical things I was thinking you could add this to his collection," Carl said seriously.

"Good thinking, and it's one I have not seen," Jack told him with a sigh that only a veteran of 50 plus repeats of 'Finding Nemo' could make, as Ianto his eyes down to the floor came up behind Jack and put his arms around him so his head was laying on Jack's back.

"'Robots', what do you reckon?" Jack said as he showed him the DVD case and they watched as Ianto lifted his hand and took it, glanced at it with wide eyes, and walked back to his room studying the cover with intense interest.

"Bloody Nora," Carl burst out. They both stood looking at each other as they listened to the sound of the film as it began.

"Did he just…?" Jack said as his own face reflected the look of disbelief on Carl's face.

"Jack, today I have experienced two things I never thought I would ever encounter. The first was to hear Ianto laugh and the second was to see him openly take independent action," he told him seriously.

He looked at the time. "Now which one of us is going in there to tell him his dinner's ready?" Carl asked handing him a plate. Jack carefully counted the number of beans and headed back the room to
find Ianto wide eyed as he watched his new disc and pointed at the screen.
Arrival

Pulling up to the house Jack let out a huge sigh and put his head on the steering wheel of his car. As he did he let out all the tension he had been holding onto since they had left the institute 17 hours ago. Being so far north it was only now getting dark.

Ianto on the other hand looked completely calm because the car had become a symbol of safety. It had been the drive from hell, and despite all their preparations, laying out the route they would take along with photographs of things they expected to see along the way, maps, deadlines, meal and toilet breaks, there had been a major upset. Owen the new head of Torchwood Cardiff has set this up as an induction exercise and first mission for the four new members of the Torchwood team. They had had spent a great deal of time considering every possible contingency: from road works, to bad weather. They had even worked out possible detours and secondary routes. All carefully labelled and added to Ianto’s substantial folder under Plan A, B and so on.

They had left as per the schedule at 4.30 am. As he got into the car Ianto kept to his blank state ignoring the goodbyes from the staff who was genuinely happy he was leaving with someone who had chosen to care for him. As they had left the gates and got further and further away Ianto had started to relax, and Jack could see the tension leaving his face. As they hit the motorway on time, Ianto had actually taken a sharp intake of breath and clapped with joy, his face radiating a huge grin.

An hour later disaster struck; a major pile up further down the motorway meant they got stuck for two hours in a huge traffic jam. At first Ianto had sat quietly then started to tap his finger on the map and kept looking at the car clock. He refused to be diverted even by offers of ‘Nemo’ and spent the time slavishly going over the alternate routes in his folder.

Eventually they were back on their way and as the car started up, he saw Ianto relax; moving his finger along the map and pointing out the features captured in photographs as they passed them.

Jack knew they were seriously delayed and gone was the nice leisurely drive. He was left with two choices: pull in and stay somewhere for the night - he considered this for one micro second before dismissing it - or drive hell for leather. They had only had one deadline to meet the ferry crossing as it only had only had one sailing a day. They made it with minutes to spare. Ianto had been persuaded to leave the car, and joined Jack. They had stood on the deck, Jack’s arm around his waist to steady him. Jack glanced at Ianto’s face; he was lost in wonderment at the scene as the ship left the harbour hitting the green deep water of the open ocean. The seagulls following at the back of the ship really caught Ianto’s attention. This however was nothing compared to the churning of the water by the propeller. Ianto was fascinated and pointed out to Jack several times with sharp intakes of breath. Jack was so happy he hugged him and kissed his cheek, and was rewarded as Ianto kissed his cheek and hugged him back.

And now they were here. It was almost evening; the twilight causing the sky to bleed a deep red and Jack had to get Ianto inside and safe before it got dark. Undoing his seat belt he got out and stretched, then went around and opened Ianto’s car door.

Ianto turned to the last section of his folder labelled ‘arrival’. He pulled out several photographs in sleeves and studied each intently, making sure the house and garden matched the pictures he had been given. Several moments passed then he reached down and undid his seat belt.

Walking down the path, Jack used the electronic key to deactivate the internal and external security system he had had installed. Using a more standard brass key he unlocked the door. Jack held his breath, they had prepared Ianto for this moment, and everything - he meant everything - had to be
exactly as described. He took a quick look around and it appeared to be just that. Handing the folder to Jack, Ianto consulted his pictures and found everything he saw matched the photographs in his hand. Jack led Ianto into each room allowing him time to settle before moving on.

They entered the lounge-kitchen area first; here was a state of the art kitchen that flowed into a large comfortable lounge complete with comfy sofa, and two large Lazy Boy-type chairs. The room also sported a large wide screen TV and sound system. Ianto ignored these and approached the large French style windows which Jack now opened and they folded away to the side. Once opened it made the room feel twice the size. The doors opened onto a large pink paved area complete with wooden pergola with a substantial wisteria cover. There was some outdoor furniture to complement including a swing seat.

This led into an extensive garden with tall solid stone walls; the house and garden were on a rise so the walls did not obstruct the extensive view of the sea.

With patience he led Ianto through the house as he consulted his pictures, finally they made it up the stairs. Here there was a spare bedroom with extra-large single bed, another room filled with art supplies and other things they might need on shelves and finally a large bedroom complete with en-suite.

As they entered Ianto gasped because one whole wall was all window, being one story up it took in the view of the garden and hill as it rolled down towards the sea. The hill was spotted with several sheep which Ianto pointed out in the fading light. Jack smiled at Ianto’s reaction; having a photo was one thing, experiencing it was something else.

Ianto turned to him blinking as he saw the double bed. Jack put his arm around him.

’’We’re home,’’ Jack told him as Ianto turned to him his eyes filling with tears. Ianto was overwhelmed. Jack had not lied to him, it was all true, every word, and he felt like he’d come full circle. He had promised he would get him out of the room, out of the bad place, trust me he had said. Seeing he was becoming upset Jack just held him. Ianto felt himself held in Jack’s arms, as he broke down. He had escaped, he was safe at last.
Butterflies

Jack turned to see Ianto race to towards him, something in his hand, and throw his arms around him distraught. He had been in the garden a short while ago enjoying the sunshine and he wondered what had happened. Jack was used to Ianto’s swings of emotion; they had been here a week and he was very much up and down as per normal. The schedule still ruled but Ianto had far more to occupy him. The first major change had been that Ianto had found a tiny measure of independence. As long as he could see Jack he was happy to go and wander around the garden which he spent two hours in every day after lunch. He kept an eye on him as if he didn’t fully trust the situation and Jack might disappear. That said all his other problems remained and he could switch form one emotion to another in an instant.

Jack heard a soft knock on the door and he called out softly for them to enter. He knew exactly who it was. It was their new G.P making an expected house visit to introduce herself. Noticing the scene as she entered, she quietly closed the door behind her.

Ianto pulled back and slowly opened his hand to reveal a dead butterfly. Ianto had discovered butterflies on his first day in the garden. The island was very windswept hence the solid enclosed garden. Its sheltered nature meant it was a haven for butterflies attracted by the few tatty beds of flowers and a couple of cabbages. He had watched completely absorbed as one had fluttered around him. Catching one on his finger he had brought the creature to Jack for explanation. They had then spent their book time going onto the internet to find pictures of every kind of butterfly they could come across and printing out several pictures.

“Ianto’s discovered butterflies,” Jack said in explanation as she looked around to see a large notice board almost covered in drawings of butterflies in every conceivable colour and size.

Ianto lent and whispered something in Jack’s ear.

“It’s dead Ianto, a kiss is not going to make it better,” he told him. Ianto whispered something else then looked up expectantly at Jack.

“Yes, you can have a kiss to make you feel better,” he said kissing him sweetly on the lips. Ianto turned now and saw they had a visitor and he stiffened immediately and dropped his eyes to the floor.

“This is Doctor Veronica Singh. Remember we talked about this? Today she’s coming to visit to meet us and say hello,” Jack told him. Ianto turned away to look into the distance.

Veronica did not react. Jack and Doctor Green had filled her in with great detail about what to expect.

Whispering again in Jack’s ear he listened. “I think that’s a wonderful idea Ianto,” he said as he leant over and tore off a handy kitchen towel from the caddy. Holding it out Ianto carefully put the dead butterfly in it and wrapped it up. Leaning over he whispered again.

“I’m sure it would be very happy to be buried there,” Jack agreed. Ianto now headed down and went back to the garden.

“I understood he was non-verbal?” Veronica said as Jack placed some water in a kettle and turned it on.

“Yes he was until three days ago. We had that storm that blew in. Ianto was sitting on the sofa in a
bad mood…”

Three days before

Ianto sat, his arms wrapped around his legs. He sat on the sofa as he looked outside. The doors were closed and he was in a grump.

No outside today, and he was seriously put out. He wanted to count the number of caterpillars on the cabbages, chase the butterflies and sniff the flowers, then do some digging. He liked digging, it was fun. Jack had said once the digging was done they could plant the flowers that had been delivered. They were all pretty; there were red ones, white ones, yellow ones, pink ones and purple ones. He really wanted to plant them in the garden all spaced out because he knew they hated being all squashed up in the little pots. Now he was stuck inside.

Jack noted the expression on Ianto’s face as he looked out of the window. A storm had blown in from the Atlantic and it was raining in great sheets, the wind was howling around the house. There was no thunder but it was cold, wet, dark and miserable.

“I’m not in control of the weather,” Jack told him as Ianto huffed and put his head on his knees. “You only have thin summer clothing. Once you have some wet weather gear you can go out when it’s raining,” he explained as another gust of wind and rain hit the French doors.

Turning he went into the kitchen to set up Ianto’s afternoon tea when he felt a cold rush of air. He turned around to see the pile of clothes next the wide open French doors. Ianto had stripped himself off and was racing around naked in the storm.

He was going to call him back when he realised Ianto had resolved the issue; Jack had laid out a particular logic which Ianto had solved. If it was just clothes that were the issue then he had taken them off. He was now standing the rain, his eyes closed, his arms stretched out as he turned around in the rain.

A few moments passed and he began racing up and down. A particularly strong gust hit him, and he turned started to scream, Jack’s stomach flipped for a moment thinking Ianto had been triggered into a flashback but he realised this was something different. Ianto was screaming out his pain, anger and torment, into the wind. The look of Ianto’s face was one of glorious release. Minutes passed when Ianto suddenly fell to his knees then laid out on the ground. Face down he began to kick and punch the ground with his fists and feet, sometimes coming up on all fours and howling into the earth. Over the howl of the wind Jack could hear the screams were now words; profanities as Ianto cried out his rage in one long deep primal outburst. After what seemed an age Ianto just lay there panting with the exertion. After about five minutes he pulled himself up and headed back inside as Jack stood aside.

As he came in he wrapped a towel around Ianto who was shivering. “You’re all wet,” he said stating the obvious as he rubbed him down. Ianto had leaned him and kissed him on the cheek then whispered in his ear.
“He whispered ‘wet’ in my ear,” Jack told her. “I just stood looking at him, then realised he was covered in mud from head to toe, so I took him up and gave him a bath,” he said smiling as he handed a cup of tea to her.

“And the kissing things better?” she asked taking the cup.

Jack looked sheepish. “That’s my fault. His first time in the garden he was examining the one rose bush we have when he pricked his finger. He looked at the rose, then at me. I think he thought it had bitten him. I just said ‘let me kiss it better’. His reaction was immediate; he squirmed with delight holding out his finger, and now every time he gets hurt inside and out he expects it to be kissed better.” He saw the look on her face as she looked over her mug.

“Look, I’m not taking advantage of him,” he replied as he thought he interpreted the look her face.

“No, please that’s not what I was thinking,” she spluttered.

“Listen; cards on the table. Ianto and I are civil partners and all that entails. That said he has no recollection of me. I’m Jack the nice man who rescued him and brought him here. We sleep in the same bed because right now that’s what he needs and that’s all we do is sleep. When I bought this house I extensively remodelled it so amongst other things there was an extra bedroom. So any time he wants I will take that room,” he told her honestly.

“I didn’t need to imply anything. Truthfully Ianto is the most damaged person who has ever come under my care. I know that you report back to Doctor Green weekly and I’m here as back up, so thank you for setting me straight,” she said taking a sip form her mug.

“How developed is his speech?” she asked as they both watched Ianto who was following a butterfly around trying to catch it.

“One and two words sentences,” Jack explained. “‘Kiss it better’; ‘What is this?’ Things like that.” He saw her nod.

“How is his recovery from the surgery?” she asked.

“His health has improved considerably now he is not plagued by constant abscesses and his anaemia was resolved with two units of whole blood,” Jack told her.

“Diet...I see it’s pretty abysmal. His anaemia will only return if we can’t improve it,” she told him.

“I agree. The hospital staff and myself have tried but it’s stuck and nothing they or I have done have been able to change it,” he said.

She nodded her understanding. “I read the notes,” she told him raising her eyebrows.

“So you know what I’m up against. We give him what he thinks is medication, but in truth other than his anti-anxiety medication it’s all vitamins and supplements,” Jack explained.

“My biggest concern is that his diet is lacking in vitamin B…” she looked towards the garden and choked on her drink. Jack followed her gaze to see Ianto had stripped himself naked and was digging with gusto.
“Sorry I should have warned you. Since the day of storm he has taken to the habit of taking all his clothes off when he goes into the garden,” he explained. Jack was about to apologise again when he saw Veronica’s eyes widen as she saw the scars on his back. She let out an expletive.

“Did they ever catch the bastards who did this to him?” she asked not able to tear her eyes away from the mass of scars on his back which extended from neck to ankles.

“No, and they stole from him more than he knows right now; because if he ever recovers there will some things he will never be able to fully experience again and considering how important that something was to him, I curse them all to hell,” Jack told her with bitter anger. “They destroyed his life; they stripped him of everything and his identity, and stole from him…” he took a deep breath, “everything that was vital to him.”  

“Including you,” she said after a few moments as he composed himself.

“Including me, all his friends, his parents, his previous girlfriend; they took his life. He remembers nothing. Anything he does is a huge jumble of confusion, and parts of his mind were wiped clean,” he replied.

“And yet there is so much hope,” she told him. The continued to watch as now Ianto looked round smiled and began to dance around, swinging his arms in arcs until he got dizzy and then fell down laughing. Jack and Veronica both broke into laughter at his antics.

“Let me tell you what I think. I see a man beginning to enjoy the rediscovery of his body, and the world around him, and I think we should honour that and allow him the safety to do so. I agree with Geoff Green here, that Ianto is in some respects is like a young child, his intelligence unaffected.” She looked at him curiously. “Geoff Green had some interesting things to say about you.” She saw him take a sharp breath. ” It’s all good. He said if there was one person on this earth who could bring back Ianto Jones it was you.” She touched his arm. “So if and when the time comes and I believe it will be a long time off, we will need to find some alternatives for him.” She saw Jack looking at her. She turned and picked up one of the drawings.

“And when has he been into drawing coats?” she asked him. She handed the drawing to Jack who looked at it and his mouth dropped open.
Jack waited until after he had settled Ianto into bed before he considered the full implications of Veronica’s observation.

His heart pounding he now examined the drawing more closely. Ianto drew several every day, that had become something that he did. They were always the same: blobs, sometimes there was a blue spot bigger or smaller on the right hand side. Sometimes Ianto drew the spot first then covered it with grey.

But as he turned it around in his hand and looked at it from different angles he realised that the blobs had taken on far more form and she was right; it was a coat. He thought back as the drawings had become squarer, the grey the exact colour of his coat from the moment he had turned up at the unit.

‘Why had he not seen this before?’ he berated himself. It was right in front of him all this time. The blue shape now made sense: it was the TARDIS.

It was Jack running away to be with his Doctor. The picture represented Ianto’s last memory of him. All Ianto’s agitation, the desperation of his endless searches...Ianto was looking for him. The objects in the room seemed to take on a life of their own as they flew around him and he found himself on his knees, a wave of nausea hit him as a nightmare of thoughts came together in one instant. On his hands and knees he swallowed, tasting bile; he pulled himself up he raced into the laundry and he emptied his stomach into the sink.

‘It was my fault; all of it,’ he spat into the sink. ‘Every blow, every rape.’ He slid to the floor as he felt the pain of his revelation cut into him deeply.

He pulled himself up as he felt an overwhelming desire to hold Ianto. He rinsed his mouth out and headed up the stairs.

Stripping quickly he slid on his pyjama bottoms and white tees shirt then slipped in next to him. He placed his arms around Ianto who snuggled into him and kissed his forehead as each tears dripped down and rolled across Ianto’s face. “Please forgive me Ianto, I am so sorry,” he whispered. ”I should never have left you. If I hadn’t the TARDIS would never have gone so far into the future, and none of this would never have happened.”

Holding Ianto close he felt an overwhelming feeling of anguish as he came to terms that it was his actions and his alone that had led to the damage Ianto had suffered and he felt a heavy weight settle on his soul.

He choked down a sob. He had been feeling so good just being here, away from the institute with its smells and institutional grey look; he had felt such hope that he found some equilibrium. The calm he felt by focusing his attention on Ianto combined with the peace and quiet meant he felt far more in control and had only been triggered twice. But this was a blow, and he was flooded with images and felt himself begin to tremble and he heard the flapping of wings.

How could he help Ianto if he himself became incapacitated? His mind tumbled forward into a future where Ianto was a hollow shell, never able to overcome what had happened to him, lost and alone. He must not fail Ianto. He had suffered enough and the pledge he had made Geoff Green echoed in his mind. Rocking himself he came to a decision: the bleed-throughs had to stop. They had to stop now!
Picking up the jumper Jack moved to pick up the tee shirt. ‘The one good thing about all this was that if ever he needed to find Ianto all he would need to do was follow the trail of clothes. Every morning without fail he helped Ianto dress, and every afternoon as he walked to the French doors to go outside he took off each and every piece of clothing until he was completely naked.

It had started the day of the storm; the release of shouting into the wind also appeared to have also released Ianto’s inhibitions. The good thing was that Ianto was getting a fine tan. After being so long indoors he had been very pale, now he was a very healthy colour. Jack looked out the window Ianto was watering the garden. This was an aspect that Jack had never known about Ianto because he had never shown a love of the outdoors before the year that never was. He watched as he to used his fingers to make a spray with the hose and watched as rainbows were formed.

When he had remodelled the house he had wondered if he should also develop the garden. He was glad he had not; Ianto revelled in the outdoors. His two hours outdoors involved a lot of digging, weeding and watering. It was early summer so not much point in planting a lot but they could prepare. Next spring Jack wanted to plant multiple beds to encourage butterflies as Ianto loved them so much. He also wanted to set up a vegetable garden in the hope Ianto might be encouraged to eat them. Right now all there were was a couple of cabbages which attracted white cabbage butterflies. Ianto kept a running log of how many eggs and caterpillars were on each every day and how many butterflies he had seen. This is what he appeared to be doing now, as he laid down, then went onto his hands and knees followed by checking the leaves to double check exactly how many there were.

Jack got out his pad ready as Ianto came towards him. Leaning towards him Ianto whispered into his ear ‘eleven and forty two.’ Jack knew what this meant; there were eleven caterpillars and forty two eggs.

“Not as many as yesterday then. Some of them must have hatched,” Jack said as Ianto grabbed his arm and led him to the cabbages. With extreme care Ianto looked though the leaves and picked up a particularly large caterpillar into his palm and showed it to Jack.

“Greedy, biggest,” he told Jack as he stroked the caterpillar gently with one finger then placed it back on the leaf.

“Fattest,” Jack told him. Ianto smiled at him, then stood up and dusted off his hands. Picking up his spade he now moved the back of the garden and started to continue digging the beds they had laid out.

Jack went to join him. He had never seen anyone enjoy outdoor labour like this. Ianto was doing what he always did now: when he found something he enjoyed doing he did it with complete abandonment. He was horribly thin, still refusing to eat anything but his rubbish diet, but aside from that his health was much improved and he was getting more toned.

Talking about health...tomorrow was going to be their first expedition into the small village about four miles down the lane. It was a good hike and was part of the new routine. Tuesday and Thursday mornings they were going to walk into the village. There was also the wharf where several fishing boats were moored, supporting the local fishing community. Ianto should enjoy the fishing vessels, being mechanical in nature, and the bustle of activity. A fine white sand beach ran along the shore line away from the harbour and according to the tourist information on the web, otters were rumoured to be in residence. It was good exercise and every two weeks they would meet the library bus. It came over from the mainland and visited the village here as well as two others, Jack let out a
long sigh and he contemplated the battle ahead, like all change with Ianto it was hard work and preparation.
Jack knew he had to pick his battles with Ianto and he had thought long and hard about what exactly he was going to change. Since they had arrived they had followed the schedule from the unit. It kept Ianto safe but also kept him stuck. To move forward things had to change. Their trips into the village were non-negotiable and at this moment the immovable object had met the unstoppable force.

Standing with his arms crossed Ianto pouted. He did not want to leave. He liked it here. He never wanted to leave again. But Jack had that look and he knew what it meant; it meant he was going to lose. Jack had laid it out. They were here now that meant some things would change. He hated change; at this moment he should be drawing, he had found more butterflies on the internet he wanted to draw. Tosh had sent him a new maths puzzle; a real good one, and he needed to look at it and do some thinking. Then there was morning tea followed by his jigsaws. He had just got all the edge done and sorted all the pieces into colours.

Lunch followed and then it was the garden if the weather was good. After afternoon tea, Jack would read to him, and then he studied his books on how things worked. Dinner was followed by a shower. Early evening was TV time. They didn't watch the news because it upset him so he could watch one of his discs, right now it was ‘Robots’. Followed by cleaning teeth, a bed time story, then bed. He lay awake half sleeping until Jack joined him and then he went to sleep proper and it all started again next day at 6.30am when the alarm woke him up.

He kissed Jack and gave him a big hug, kissed him again because he was always grumpy in the mornings, went and had a piss then it was downstairs for breakfast. What followed was free time which he hated so he played the cool game Jack had found on the internet, called ‘The Incredible Machine’ where he could make things happen. He loved it because unlike the math which was easy, he really had to work out how to put each part together and work out the solution. He would then clean his teeth, they had a tidy up then it was drawing time at 8.30. And that time was right now.

This was outside, not outside like in the garden but outside the garden. He looked out the front door his gaze following the garden path to the gate and the lane. But this was different, this was outside, outside. No he didn’t like it one bit, and he stamped his foot.

“Ianto, has it ever occurred to you, you might actually enjoy it?” Jack told him.

“No,” Ianto replied so quietly Jack almost missed it and he kept his face neutral.

“Listen mister, we are going, so you need to put one foot in front of the other,” Jack said as Ianto narrowed his eyes. “Have you got the map and the photographs?” he asked. He saw the folder under Ianto’s arm.

“Okay off we go.” He saw Ianto waver and step forward. Jack let out the breath he was holding onto as he closed and locked the front door. ‘Well that only took two hours,’ he said to himself.

Trying not to huff in frustration they walked with extreme slowness down the lane towards the village. He swallowed down several sarcastic comments, because he knew they would be taken literally. ‘Could you walk any slower,’ would be met with Ianto actually walking slower. If nothing else he had managed to get Ianto out of the house. It had been a hard won victory after a marathon of sulking, passive resistance, a strop and then downright refusal followed by Jack’s ultimatum of no computer time for his game, or any other treats. He had finally calmed down and got ready. Even that was a battle, Jack had literally had to dress him like a mannequin, a live one.
Jack was well used to this because it happened whenever there was change. He looked at Ianto who was showing absolutely no interest in his surroundings, keeping to his blank state. He was like moving statue. They reached the farm gate of David Morgan’s Farm. Their property bordered on to the bottom of their garden and he was the owner of all the sheep Ianto had pointed out first day. He moved off and a few steps later he realised Ianto had not kept up. He turned and saw he was standing transfixed. Coming towards him was a huge pink pig. As she made her way across Ianto did not take his eyes off her, and he squirmed with excitement as he pointed towards her.

As the pig got closer Ianto’s eyes got wider and wider, until she was at the gate looking up at him. The pig snuffled and Ianto reached out his hand, as he did she made a sharper noise. Ianto took a sharp breath which was an indication he interest had been piqued. He looked at Jack his mouth open in utter amazement.

“It’s a pig,” Jack explained. As he did she looked up and Ianto leaned down and touched her head. She made a grunt.

As she did Ianto took in a sharp breath. “She spoke,” he said, speaking out loud for the first time.

He leaned down again and she made a snuffle. “Can you speak pig?” he asked looking at Jack expectantly.

“No,” Jack replied.

“I think I can,” Ianto announced.

“I see,” Jack commented surprised at his reply.

“She said hello,” Ianto told him seriously and put down his hand again and was rewarded with another snuffle.

“She said she’s hungry,” he told Jack after a few moments has passed. Jack looked down at the huge animal thinking her bulk suggested that she wasn’t hungry just greedy. His thoughts were interrupted as Ianto took off his backpack and brought out his morning tea of two biscuits.

Before he could stop him he had poked the two biscuits through the bars and she snaffled them up with typical pig enthusiasm, grunting happily then looked at him expectantly.

“All gone,” he said showed his hands were empty. Seeing nothing more was on offer she waddled away.

“I’ll bring more next time, promise,” Ianto called out after her as he turned to Jack who put his arm around Ianto and they watched her move her vast bulk down the solid wall of the field.

“Wooooh,” Ianto said in a long breath, once she was out of sight. Looking at Jack he took hold of his hand and now moved eagerly down the lane, almost skipping.

“I never knew I could speak pig,” Ianto admitted.

“I didn’t either, you’re very clever,” Jack commented enjoying his enthusiasm.

Jack was a curious being; he had been the recipient and giver of many kisses. In his long life he had kissed many beings, some kisses bestowed were wonderful, others were divine, the odd one was nasty and some were just plain disgusting. As they walked down the lane he found himself flooded with a strange desire because for first time in his life he wanted to jump a fence and kiss a pig.
Standing by the side of the bus Ianto stood, trying to work out how the tyres stayed on the wheels. Jack was having a conversation with Scott the library bus driver as he got some books out. He knew the ones Jack had taken to be stamped and he was always amazed Jack chose the ones he was interested in. He made very sure he put back the ones he looked at very carefully on the shelf so no one knew the ones he had been looking at. He knew no one was watching him because Scott was busy in the front and Jack was going through the books he wanted to take out for himself. So he knew that no one was looking. To make double sure he sat his legs crossed with his back to them. Yet every time Jack came out with exactly the books he had been looking at.

He saw a flutter as a butterfly, a big brown one, pass by. He followed its path with his eyes to a large stone building. He watched it as it disappeared into the large area around the stone building. It was a funny building, dark stones with arched windows which had broken up coloured pictures in them and a tall spikey bit on tip. He moved down the path and up the steps and saw the butterfly had come to rest on a stone slab. He looked around and saw there were loads of stone slabs.

It looked like huge garden, with wild flowers, long grass and short grass which he knew was mowed, because Jack mowed theirs with the mower; another thing he hated because it was too noisy. Jack had gotten him some ear muffs which helped a lot as he hid in their bedroom.

It was very sheltered there and with the sun on his back he felt warm as so he took off his coat and laid it carefully over the stone slap. He liked his new coat; it meant he could go out on cold days. The butterfly moved and a thought came to him as he realised this was a garden. Jack has said he could take his clothes off in the garden and the only way to chase butterflies was… He saw the butterfly launch itself. Deciding there was no time to waste he shed his clothes leaving them in a pile and moved forward his hands outstretched.

Chasing the butterfly he noticed there was another, following them he found they landed on a plant in a tall pretty hedge. The plant was covered with little golden eggs and he began to count them, then he saw several black fat caterpillars. He took a sharp intake of breath and clapped, jumping up and down. He was so excited he decided to do some running. He wanted to see how fast he could run around and in and out of the stone slabs, waving his arms to see if he could take off. It was a mystery how butterflies could fly but he couldn’t because no matter how fast he ran or flapped his arms he stayed firmly on the ground. Jack had even helped him make some butterfly wings which he had pinned to the back of his jumper, but even that had not worked. Maybe he needed to run fast faster, faster and faster like a rocket…he took off.

“If you could get some more books on pigs that would be great Scott,” Jack said as he picked up the books he had had checked out.

“I’ve ordered breeds of pigs and made sure it has a lot of pictures along with several children’s stories he should enjoy like ‘Charlotte’s Web,” he told him.

“Thanks! See you in two weeks,” Jack said. As he stepped outside he saw that Ianto was missing. He looked up the street; Ianto was not one to wander off it was the one thing Jack could rely on when they were out. He always waited for Jack just outside of the bus normally bent over looking at the large bus wheels which he found endlessly fascinating. But today he was nowhere to be seen.

“Ianto,” he called out. “Ianto,” he called out louder as Scott came out the bus.

“He’s in the church yard,” he said trying to keep a straight face as Jack stepped into the bus to get a
higher view. As he looked across and he handed the books he was holding to Scott. Racing down the path then up the steps and into the church yard he saw Ianto running about his arms out wide completely naked.

“Ianto,” he called out as Ianto raced up to him his eyes all aglow.

“I found more butterflies,” Ianto told him as he grabbed his hand and started to pull Jack along.

“Wonderful, but you need to get dressed,” he told him as he glanced around to see where his clothes might be and saw his coat across one of the grave stones.

“The caterpillars are all black and the eggs are yellow and I counted seventeen,” Ianto told him as he now began to pull Jack’s hand in earnest.

“Clothes first,” Jack told him firmly.


“We need to get you dressed,” Jack said as he tried to pull him in the direction of his clothes.

“They are over here, there is this pretty plant with pink flowers and it has loads of butterflies, eight caterpillars and seventeen eggs.”

“Yes butterflies first, get your priorities right,” Jack heard a voice from behind him turning he saw several older ladies standing enjoying the view.

“Magnificent,” one of them said.

“I’m going to attend these meetings more often if this is what’s on offer as lunch time entertainment,” another added as she fumbled to put her glasses on.

“I going to have sweet dreams tonight,” a voice chirped in.

“Ianto,” Jack said through his teeth in exasperation as he backtracked to find his clothes.

“That man’s got a gorgeous bum. A bit thin, he needs feeding up,” another voice chimed in as Ianto now bent over to check the plant with the butterflies.

“Poor man; look at the scars on his back,” a voice tutted.

“Ladies,” Jack said in passing with as much dignity as he could have he reached Ianto who now proceeded to pull him to the plant and show him every caterpillar and egg he had found.

Looking back Jack watched the ladies now all retire back into the church hall as he slowly helped Ianto dress; thankful Ianto had not seen them.

“Remember what I said Ianto, clothes off only in the garden,” Jack told him.

“This is a garden. It has flowers grass, birds, trees, everything” Ianto told him. “And the only way to chase butterflies with no clothes on,” he added as if this made perfect sense.

“This is a sort of garden but it’s not really a garden” Jack tried to explain as he helped Ianto do up his belt.

“I like it here. Can I come here next time and run around while you talk to Scott?” Ianto asked
“No!” Jack told him categorically. Ianto’s face dropped.

“No fair, I did as I was told, you said clothes off only in the garden,” he said crossing his arms.

“Well I meant clothes off only in our garden,” Jack told him, as Ianto looked crossly at the ground as Jack noted a tear fell down Ianto’s face.

“I’m sorry, this was my fault, I should have made myself more clear,” Jack said as he took Ianto into his arms.

“I was trying to be good,” Ianto said. Jack stroked his back as he cried.

“I know you have been so good,” Jack soothed. “A very good man, it’s just taking your clothes off is special and should only been done in some places.”

After a few moments Ianto looked up. “Kiss,” he said. Jack kissed him on the lips.

“Let’s go and get our books. I know there’s one on pigs,” Jack said. Ianto brightened as he took out a handkerchief and wiped Ianto’s tears. “And on the way home, we can get something for Marigold. I’m sure Morag will have some stale bread we can buy,” Jack added as Ianto gave a happy smile.

“Oh yes she loves stale bread, she’s so greedy,” Ianto said as they now disappeared from view.
Tongue Twister

His hands behind his head stretched out on the warm sand Jack lay allowing the sound of the small waves and gentle hush of the wind to wash over him. Taking in a deep breath he let out a gentle growl of contentment. He could not recall the last time he had felt so relaxed or at peace.

They had found this sheltered spot on their third visit to the harbour. Ianto had become unsettled at the activity. Too many people, tourists mostly, and he had led Ianto along the seashore until they had come to this beach. The angle of the bay meant it was protected from the almost constant wind and was a suntrap. It was perfect; there were not many things that were perfect in this world but this was one of them. It was a small curved bay, which contained every element that was essential for a perfect beach. On the left side the cliffs began to build which was a feature of the western side of the Island. A sharp outcrop of rock had eroded and when the tide retreated it exposed a number of rock pools of varying depths. There was a narrow edge of sand dunes followed by a wide band of white sand, the bay sloped out so that the waves just rolled in gently.

He smiled to himself as he recalled their first time here and he was grateful that for once Ianto had taken to something in an instant. He had looked around then settled on the sand. To begin with they had just sat enjoying the view and then with hesitant steps he had begun to explore. It was not until their third visit that Ianto had been persuaded to take a paddle. Holding Jack’s hand they had made their way to the water’s edge. The water had been freezing as diminutive waves just lapped over their feet until they went bright pink. Ianto - so starved of simple experiences like this - had revelled in every aspect, from watching as the tide crept in and out, to playing in the sand and searching about in the rock pools.

Now every Tuesday and Thursday if the weather was good they made their way there. It was a respite no matter how short that allowed Jack to recharge a little. He could lay back; take in the sun knowing Ianto was completely safe and occupied. He felt a warm sensation grow filling his being almost as bright as the sun. When was the last time he had felt this happy…he thought back over the past months. Looking after Ianto, months of trying to find the perfect place, all the bureaucratic fuckery about getting the permits to alter the house, builders, preparing Ianto, the stress of the move and now they had settled within a tiny slice of heaven.

This Island was heaven. The team had scoured the entire United Kingdom for this place. The house itself had been a mission. He had seen and rejected so many, mostly because of location. Finally they had found ‘Rose Cottage’ in such a state for disrepair the state of it suggested no maintenance has been done on it for twenty years and for some reason no one had explained to him why the current owner had removed all the internal downstairs walls leaving the floor above sagging. He had hesitated because it would need so much work, delaying their leaving the institute even longer but then…he had gone online and knew they had found the place he was looking for.

The Island had an old fashioned feel about it, a great community which had not lost its own traditions and a proud people with a sense of what counted and were prepared to fight to keep it that way. He hoped over time the locals would forgive the toes he had to tread on to get things done. It had certainly helped that he had used only local builders and bought everything he needed through the agencies there as he renovated and furnished the house. He understood their concerns; they had complete distrust and hatred, if that was not too strong a word, for people who used the Island only for holidays, visiting only a few times a year. Interlopers who left an empty house robbing the Island of the true population it needed to thrive. He loved the deep sense of community here and was determined to get as involved as they could; they were going to be here for a long time. Another feeling came to him, a surprising one as he mused...one of community he had lived on the edge for
so long being here with Ianto was something new. Belonging, when he last time he had belonged? He smiled… it had been on another beach a long time ago…

Putting the small spade aside Ianto lay down in the long hole he was digging and wiggled; nope, still not deep enough. He moved back onto his knees and kept working. He felt his tummy turn over in excitement, he loved this game but the hole was not big enough; his feet needed somewhere to go or Jack would see his knees. As he removed several more spades’ full of sand he practiced words; “She sells shells on she sells shore, she sells shells, shore, sells sea shells on the sea shore,” he repeated out loud; it was a tongue twister and he loved tongue twisters. ‘Even the words tongue twister was a tongue twister.’ He laughed out loud as he lay down and measured the hole again. No, still not long or deep enough. He looked up to see Jack lying on his back taking in the sun. As he returned to his digging he looked down and a shell caught his eye. He brushed off the sand and ran his fingers over the shape. Pulling himself out the hole he took the shell and stood beside the sandcastles he had made earlier deciding which one he would put it on.

He had made them using the bucket and spade Jack had bought for him at Morag’s shop; it was bright blue with a yellow handle and the spade was red. You filled the bucket with sand then tuned it over and you had a sandcastle. He had made loads; they were all together near his hole. He loved making sandcastles and he made some every time they came here. This time he had covered them in the shells he found. Shells were so pretty, he had collected so many he had filled the bucket then he had lined them all up in order of size. He started at the smallest and he worked his way to the biggest. There was widest, smoothest and roughest as well. Some in the middle and some in bits. Putting things in order that’s what he liked. Tiny to extra-large. He loved it when Jack helped find the words for him, it really helped and later he found he could use the words, from tiny, mighty to massive, gigantic, and huge to explain things. Then he forgot and Jack started all over again. He looked at Jack; he loved how he had Jack, instead of being all lonely and scared. Now he had Jack and they had the garden and the bigger garden in the village and the bus with the wheels, Morag’s shop, Marigold, butterflies and home.

He looked around. This was their special place because he could just have fun. Lots of fun without having to worry that he had to do things in order as a way of preventing the bad things from happening. It was very special because whenever he was here he had flashes of happy memories. They were of two people who had played with him making sandcastles and paddling in the water. He had no idea who they were, there was man and a lady and every time he came here he remembered them. Remembering them was special because they made him feel safe.

He made his choice and placed the shell on the top of the biggest sandcastle. He hadn’t used his bucket for this one except on the very top. Jack had helped him pile of loads of sand and put shells all over it and seaweed. Best things about sandcastles came last when he would smash them down with his feet. He smiled to himself; he loved smashing sandcastles with his feet. Once flattened he could start all over again and make different ones and smash them and never get into any trouble. Looking around he saw the tide was coming in. He raced back to the hole, better hurry or his hole would fill with water like a bath, not a nice bath all warm water and bubbles but cold and nasty.

Jumping back in he dug some more then tested it for size again. At last his feet fitted and he lay down.

“Where is Ianto?” he shouted out then went completely still as he listened.

“Ianto, Ianto where are you?” Jack said as he looked about.

“On no,” he heard a reply. “I can’t find Ianto, where can he be?”

He heard footsteps. “Where is he? He’s disappeared.” Ianto saw a foot and he put his hand over his
mouth to hold in the giggle he felt taking him over.

“Naughty rascal he was here a moment ago digging a hole,” he heard Jack say as he stood there, his foot right by the hole. Glancing down he could see Ianto was holding both hands over his mouth, shaking with laughter, his eyes open wide.

“Maybe he is gone swimming with the seals, naughty man.” Ianto found the laugh escape as he listened to Jack searching about and huffing.

“I’ve warned him those seals are up to no good they are only here for the fish and if he’s not careful they might think he was an extra big fish and gobble him all up.”

Ianto glanced up to see Jack by the water’s edge. Jack called out again using exaggerated movements as he looked about; from the howls of laughter he was playing the game just right.

“I know where he is,” Jack stated, “I bet he’s over by the sand dunes.” He walked back to where he had been laying down.

“Nope he’s not here,” disappointment in his voice ringing out.

“I’ve got it! He’s run off with those blasted seagulls. I know he’s been practicing trying to fly,” looking into the sky his hand shielding his eyes. “I can’t see him flying about,” he turned and Ianto popped his head up.

“I’m over here,” Ianto shouted lifting his head slightly in Jack’s direction.

“That came from over there,” Jack said walking away from Ianto’s voice as he heard another laugh. “Wait till I get hold of him, I give him such a sorting out,” Jack warned as Ianto suddenly popped up.

“I’m here,” he said trying to speak but laughing so hard he struggled to get the words out.

“There you are! I’ve been looking for you everywhere.”

“I was right here all along,” Ianto told him gleefully.

“Hiding! You were hiding, how could you hide so well?” Jack narrowed his eyes.

“I dug a hole, a great big hole,” Ianto told him.

“Wow that is some hole,” Jack congratulated him.

“I can fit my whole body in,” he added proudly as he demonstrated, laying down his arms straight by his sides.

“That is one mighty hole; I think it's your best one yet.”

“Later the sea will come and fill it all up,” he told him “but it won’t be all nice like a warm bath because the water will be all cold.” Jack put out his hand and pulled Ianto up.

“You have dug a wonderful hole, look how deep it is,” he said, putting his arm around Ianto.

“I know,” Ianto told him proudly nodding. Jack went back to where he had been sitting and started to pack up. Ianto joined him picking up the bucket and looking in.

“I better put the crab back,” Ianto said as Jack peered into the bucket to see a small crab huddled at the bottom.
“Yes better put it back,” he added as he saw Ianto walk towards the rock pools with great care not to spill any of the water. After what seemed an age as he chose a pool then gently tipped the contents out.

“Only one more thing to do,” Ianto said as he re-joined him. Taking a running leap he jumped, landing on top of the biggest sandcastle. Jumping up and down he demolished each and every one.

“Done.” he said grinning as Jack handed him the backpack and they made their way back towards the harbour.

“When we get home I really need a sorting out,” Ianto added.

“Hiding like that you rascal. I am going to give you a long hot bath, and then I am going to tickle you all over.” Ianto skipped ahead as they turned the corner.
Birthday

Looking the calendar on the wall Jack was not sure how to approach Ianto’s coming birthday. This time last year he was lost, trapped in a nightmare. Although he had freed him Ianto was still trapped. The passing of each day just melded into another, sometimes the only seeming difference was the meals he prepared. He knew the schedule was partly to blame for this but without it Ianto could not function.

On hearing Ianto’s story the kind ladies Ianto had surprised with his race around the church yard had created a wonderful brightly coloured cloth appliqué wall calendar. Every day he and Ianto stood in front of it and added the dates, the season, and the weather. The ladies had also added a large number of icons representing the weather so if it was sunny they added a sun, or clouds, rain, wind and so on. Regardless from what Jack could make out it was meaningless to him because he had completely lost his sense of time. Jack had to admit this was not completely true; Ianto understood how each day worked but that was because of the schedule, which had one week but was nothing more than a seven day rotation. For Ianto there were no months, seasons or years just one day following another. In five days it was his birthday; he would be twenty six years old and they had marked this out on the cloth.

If it was in his power Jack would love to make it as memorable and special as it was possible to be. But there was no point in trying to cook him something special to eat because he would refuse to eat it. They were making contacts with the locals who were wonderfully supportive but none of them were friends as such. Not any he could invite here, even if he did Ianto would most likely become non-responsive. The same was true for the team. He knew Tosh, but only via email, and Owen fleetingly. The others he had no recollection so any visits would have to be carefully prepared. Ianto wouldn’t get any enjoyment out of them anyway because he wouldn’t be able to interact on any meaningful level.
Mac

Mac had no idea what to expect as he looked down the street. He glanced at his watch: eleven thirty, and it was almost that now. He had seen the pair them walking about holding hands. He wasn’t sure how he felt about that. This was not something you saw every day on the Island. He had heard about men holding hands on the mainland. He supposed he could ask about it but he was not one to speak with folks here and kept much to himself.

He ran his workshop, fixing cars and motorbikes. He had no time for idle chat and had no times for fools and there were a large number of fools he had to deal with. He hated folks and they hated him simple as that. They tolerated him because the only other choice was to take their vehicle to the mainland which many did, but if they needed something right there and then they had no choice. If he didn’t love fixing motors so much he would remain home and ignore the lot of them. But this workshop belonged to his father and his uncle and he had worked here his whole life. So when Jack rang, this American asking if his young man could just come and watch him work he was surprised to say the least. He had explained that Ianto, the young man in question, was recovering from an ordeal, and he asked him to spell it out. Well that had been the kicker. His Uncle had been a prisoner of the Japanese in the Second World War and he had never been right after he had returned. At first he had refused but then he got to thinking what harm could it be if the man just came and watched him work. He turned as he heard a knock on the door, and saw the American standing with the young man.

Jack introduced Ianto and reminded Mac not to ask any questions or offer him a choice and Mac nodded and pointed for Ianto where to stand.

His eyes wide open Ianto couldn’t take his eyes of the motorbike which was in pieces. It was like one of his puzzles and as he studied it he could see how it fitted together. Mac went to take the piece he was fitting as he saw Ianto point to it. Taking it without a word he slotted into place as Ianto pointed to the next part.

“Has he ever had a motorbike?” Mac asked in his thick Island accent as Ianto pointed to the next correct part.

“Not that I’m aware, he’s got a few technical manuals,” Jack replied. “He likes how things work and motorbikes in particular,” he added.

“You better come closer you lump, if you really want to see,” Mac grumbled. Jack was about to react when Ianto nodded and moved forward to get a better look.

Pointing, Ianto watch in fascination as Mac worked. It was like magic he knew exactly where everything went.

“Jack tells me it’s your birthday,” Mac asked. He saw Jack shake his head as he thought Mac was about to ask Ianto a question.

“Yes,” Ianto replied. Jack looked at him and let out the breath he was holding in.

“Well this is an odd birthday present,” Mac pointed out.

“I love motorbikes,” Ianto told him. Mac now indicated where he should stand as he moved to the other side of the bike.

“Is that right?”
“My first real motorbike,” Ianto told him and pointed to the bike Mac was working on.

“So you love motorbikes and have books but you’ve never seen one up close,” Mac reflected back.

“Like the bus wheels,” Ianto told him as Mac pushed back his cloth cap and looked at him.

“Was he a city boy?” Mac asked Jack who was standing watching by the door.

“Yes, we worked in the city. Ianto had an Audi, but not a motorbike.” He saw Ianto smile.

“I like Audis, too, but I like motorbikes better,” Ianto stated.

Watching, Jack leaned back and observed as Ianto enjoyed being near a real motorbike. He had been wracking his brains for ideas of making today special, when he had recalled the local garage. He had asked Morag about it but she had warned against it. Mac MacDonald was a miserable excuse of a man; rude, grumpy, he would run over you if you got in his way. He was a known recluse who spoke to no-one. Now in his 70’s no one knew why he kept going. The locals only used him if they were desperate. Jack weighed up the risks, and decided there was no harm in asking.

His request had been met first with silence then a demand for an explanation. As most locals now had an edited version of Ianto’s ordeal they were only too willing to offer assistance in one form or another. In fact Jack was constantly amazed at their kindness, the ladies and the W.I being one example. Despite this Mac had refused, but then called a day later advising he had changed his mind. Ianto could come for one hour on the specified day.

Today that hour had flown past when Jack interrupted and indicated they needed to leave.

“Thank you for this,” Jack said. He held out his hand as Mac wiped his cleanest hand down his soiled dungarees then took and shook it

“Thank you, I loved seeing a real motorbike,” Ianto added as he also shook Mac’s hand.

“Well you were no trouble and didn’t rattle on like most folks,” Mac told him and Jack stifled a smile. Ianto had never said a word above a four word sentence the whole time he was here.

He saw Ianto was hesitant to leave and he turned as Mac now continued to work. “I really like you Mac,” Ianto said as he left.

Mac pushed his flat cap off, and scratched his head as the pair now headed back towards the harbour. ‘Well if that didn’t take the cake,’ he thought. ‘Maybe not all folks on the Island were fools after all.’

Jumping over the potholes Ianto looked and smiled at Jack.

“I really like Mac, he’s my friend, I hope I can go another day, I love motorbikes,” he declared.

“Well next time we go into town we can go and say hello,” Jack offered not sure if Mac would tolerate another visit due to his statement this was a one off never to be repeated event.

“Okay,” Ianto said as they took path that led to the beach.

Much to Jack’s amazement that is exactly what Ianto did. The next Tuesday Ianto popped his head inside the garage door and said, “Hello.”

“So you’re back,” Mac said sliding his cap back off his head. “You had better stand there then.” He pointed to a spot close to him. Ianto stood and watched Mac work.
Ianto liked Saturdays. It was one of Jack’s big changes. It was one day of the week they had set up a new routine. Jack had argued that there were seven days in the week and one day had to be getting things ready for the other six. It had taken some getting used to, and he had struggled with the idea, but as long as they did everything in order he could handle that.

Saturdays meant helping. He liked helping with even the little things because it made him feel good. He didn’t like it when things got too messy and always put things away, but he also liked them clean. So cleaning and tidying up were good fun.

His first job was to gather all the dirty towels, and things off the bed. Then he took all the things that needed washing to the laundry where he helped separate everything. Loading the washing machine was fun but you had to be careful you didn’t put too many things in otherwise the machine made a funny noise. Carefully Jack showed him how to measure out the powder. He still got confused sometimes and Jack had to remind him many times how to do it. He always checked he had it right and he felt all warm inside when Jack gave him the thumbs up sign. He loved the way the washing machine worked and sometimes he pulled up a chair and watched everything sloshing about. The machine worked very hard getting all their clothes clean.

If the weather was good he hung the washing outside. This was his job and he liked it very much because it was outside and he got to use the pegs. There were so many colours, and he made special care not to drop any on the lawn otherwise they disappeared without a trace. He took a long time making sure everything was spaced out just right with two pegs for everything except socks which only needed one each.

If it was too windy or wet they put all the washing in the dryer. Well not everything, because if you put some things in they came out smaller. Which he thought was very funny until it was his favourite jumper. He had tried to fix it by trying to wear it but Jack said it was ruined. He hated that word. So now he was extra careful checking everything he put in.

Some things never went into the washing machine or dryer because they were too special, like Myfanwy the large plush yellow and green dragon Jack had given him which he really loved. Jack said it was a birthday present. He had seen her picture in the Big Store Catalogue and put a big ring around it with his pen and folded the corner of the page, to make sure when he was looking through he didn’t forget which page she was on. He had no idea what a birthday was but he loved the present anyway and carried her around the house where ever he went. He had given Jack a big thank you kiss after he took her out the box. It never ceased to amaze him how Jack knew exactly what he liked. He could never dare ask for what he really wanted because that was choosing but he had wanted to choose her very much. She looked so lonely on the page like she needed to be cuddled and loved. She was so much bigger than in the picture and from head to tail was 36 inches long. He was so happy she was here right now sitting watching on the chair keeping him company. She was all soft and she never minded if he laid on her a bit or used her as a pillow.

Jack had asked him why he chose to call her Myfanwy but he couldn’t think. All he could say was Myfanwy felt like the right name. She never went in the washing machine and dryer because Jack said she was delicate. Good because she wouldn’t like it in the washing machine being all sloshed about in the water getting bumped. If she got grubby Jack cleaned her very carefully with a damp cloth. He tried very hard not to get her dirty because he wanted to keep her forever, because she was his special birthday gift from Jack and something he had wanted with all his heart.

It would take some time for the washing to be done so he picked up Myfanwy and took her to the
lounge where he started his next job. Placing her down on the big chair so she could see him, he left for a moment to get the long duster that Jack had bought off the television. Ianto had pointed out the duster during an infomercial. Jack bought it with his magic card. Another thing he didn’t understand. All he could remember was Jack had spoken on the telephone and pulled out his gold card. Then after several days the duster arrived along with loads of others big and small dusters. Ianto had been right; they were perfect. Making sure he took real care he dusted all the surfaces. He made sure he included all the tops of the picture frames and other hard-to-reach places.

Just as he finished he heard the washing machine stop. Picking up Myfanwy he went to hang the washing out. He was glad to be outside because Jack was getting out the vacuum cleaner. He hated it. It was too loud, and he made sure he was as far away as he could get. Sometimes he had to stand at the end of the garden with his fingers in his ears. He concentrated hanging out the towels and lining them up in order of size.

He smiled as he chatted away to the dragon, telling her exactly what he was doing and what colour pegs he was using. He like everything colour co-ordinated. The wind was just right; not too windy. Once one of the sheets had been blown off the washing line despite him using twenty pegs to hold it down. It flew over the wall and down the hill. He has gotten upset but then he and Jack had walked around and rescued it. It was all dirty and has to be re-washed. The basket was empty and now he could hear Jack stopped using the vacuum cleaner and he knew it was time to help Jack make the bed.

Taking Myfanwy Ianto made his way upstairs two steps at a time. He was only allowed to do this going up because it was too dangerous going down, so he only did it if Jack wasn’t looking. He saw Jack had all the sheets and new duvet cover out. He like this one, it was blue with seashells on it. Working together they stretched out the fitted sheets and placed the ends over the corners. Then he put on the new pillow cases.

“How is Myfanwy today?” Jack asked knowing how Myfanwy was feeling was often an insight into how Ianto was feeling.

“She’s happy, she liked being outside while I hung the washing out,” he said as he now picked up a pillow and put on the pillow case. He took a deep sniff. He loved the smell of clean things.

“So she’s not feeling like she could flame everyone today?” Jack said as he saw Ianto pick her up and put her mouth to his ear and listened.

“No she loves helping so no flaming today,” Ianto told him matter-of-factly.

“Tent’s,” Ianto called out, now handed the duvet cover and holding a corner each they made it billow up, forming a dome. Ianto ducked his head so he was underneath and got wrapped up as Jack tickled him. He burst out into a fit of giggles as he rolled around on the bed.

“You are a rascal,” Jack told him as he untangled him.

“I know I’m a big rascal,” Ianto agreed as he now tried his best to wrestle the duvet into the cover.

Fluffing it Jack let it settle. Ianto threw himself on it to get all the air out of it and he joined him wrapping his arms around him as Ianto leapt up grabbed Myfanwy and jumped back.

“She gets lonely if she misses out on a cuddle,” he admitted as Jack who now wrapped his arms around both of them.

Jack held Ianto close with the dragon between them giving Ianto a quick tickle. It was hard to believe
that finally Ianto had gotten around to enjoying Saturday clean ups. Jack’s determination has won out over Ianto’s stubbornness when it came to change. It had been a battle royal helped in part by a fabulous stuffed toy called Myfanwy. He had been wracking his brains on what to get him for his birthday. Ianto had no concept of birthdays and or presents. Unable to ask for anything, he couldn’t ask Ianto what he wanted outright. Any kind of questions that led to a choice were out of bounds, but it had all been solved by the arrival of a shop catalogue.

For many of the islanders it was a bit of trek over to the mainland involving a ferry trip, so they relied on ordering off the internet or by catalogue. It had been late one evening when he was looking through the one Morag had given him to order some clothes because she held an agency, when he saw Ianto had marked out several things. One in particular had been marked heavily and the page corner was turned down. He realised Ianto had looked through and noted something he liked; in this case a large gaudy yellow and green plush toy dragon.

He smiled in remembrance of Ianto’s reaction at finding the box on the floor of the lounge. He had looked at Jack in wonderment as he opened the box. He immediately hugged the toy then burst into tears telling the toy she was now safe and immediately named her Myfanwy.

Ianto only put it down to shower, eat or go to the toilet or if they left the house. Ianto had a new friend like Marigold. This friend however could live with him at all times. He told Jack she was special because she also wanted to flame the whole world and hated being locked in the book. She never argued back, agreed with everything he said and liked everything he did. He talked to her; most of it was dialogue of what he was doing. ‘I’m going to watch a disc’ type conversation but some of it Jack noted was Ianto working through the change in their routine. As each week rolled over, Ianto seemed more able to cope. He had gone from hiding in the bedroom in a sulk while Jack worked away to wanting to help. When Jack asked Ianto about it he said Myfanwy reminded him cleaning was good and her telling him that made him remember.

Deep in thought he found himself being dragon attacked as Ianto now chased him around the house and as Jack begged not to be flamed. Laughing, he kept moving, ducking and diving just out of reach. He saw Ianto racing towards him so he ran into the garden…suddenly he found himself on his knees curled up with Ianto standing over him looking worried.

“Myfanwy says sorry she was not really going to flame you,” he said his eyes wide with worry.

Taking a moment Jack brought himself back. ‘Damn that had not happened for a while,’ he said to himself as stood up shakily. He closed his eyes for a moment while he suppressed the memory. His heart beat wildly; for a moment he was back on the Valiant with the Master standing over him a flame thrower in his hand. He cursed; sometimes the smallest thing would trigger a flashback. Clearly his control was slipping. Tonight he must make sure there was no more bleed throughs. He would put Ianto to bed and strengthen the blocks so they couldn’t break down not now, not ever, Ianto needed him and his pledge to Ianto was absolute.

He took a deep breath and pulled Ianto into a hug. “Jack is fine and I think it’s time for lunch,” he declared as he led Ianto into the kitchen.
As the seasons turned Jack and Ianto settled into their new life. Early summer passed in to early autumn when Jack noticed that Ianto appeared to be influenced by the change in weather. It was like he was somehow linked with the seasons. Autumn, with its change to less settled weather, Ianto became more sullen. Each passing day the tiniest change could bring on a monumental strop very much like any of the storm fronts that passed over the Island during this time of the year. The only thing Jack was grateful for was that the majority of his behaviour was passive resistance rather than the explosive outbursts of old but they were unsettling nonetheless. Jack was unsure of what brought these on and sometimes Ianto just woke up in a bad mood. He had spoken to Geoff in length about it. He advised it was consistent with Ianto’s continued frustration at being unable to express himself. As good as Ianto was with numbers, it was words he struggled with the most. He felt it came back to control. The routine was something that gave the illusion of control. Weather was something he could not control under any circumstance and it upset his routine.

Geoff had pointed out this was evidence of the physical and emotional damage to Ianto’s brain. He felt intense emotions but was unable to express how he felt so it came out as a strop. It appeared to be partly connected to vocabulary. Ianto had been a master at finding exactly the right word or expression, but now he was reduced to not being able to find a single word or phrase to tell Jack what the matter was. In light of this Jack had asked the lovely ladies who had made the appliqué calendar and weather icons to also make up some emotions as well; happy, sad, angry, confused, and so on.

This had worked to begin with and several times a day Ianto would go and change how he was feeling on the board. But as the weather turned and each day became colder they spent more and more time in doors. The only emotions were angry, sad, unhappy, and crying.

Ianto often just sat on the end of the bed looking out to sea, Myfanwy his only comfort. Jack wondered if this regression was contributed to him feeling trapped. Forced indoors, did he see this as a return to being in the institute, left in a situation of look but don’t touch? If it was, with winter approaching it was not going to get any better.
Christmas

Jack knew by the look on Ianto’s face that regardless of the enthusiasm others, including Jack, were showing, Christmas decorations were out.

In the hope of easing Ianto’s winter of discontent. Jack for the first time in his long life was prepared to attempt Christmas. In his time Christmas was not an event his family ever celebrated so he had always been happy to take on Christmas duties to free up others so they could spend time with family and friends.

His plan was to lift Ianto’s spirit with a good old-fashioned Christmas. However he had not counted on Ianto’s stubbornness. He hated change, saw decorations as an intrusion into the house and with folded arms, pouting and large number of posts of angry, unhappy and sad on his board made it clear. He felt he was being invaded. Jack looked at Ianto wanting to scream then shake him. It was so frustrating; he was left with same dilemma he had with Ianto’s birthday, he wanted to make this special. Shower him with gifts; make this a happy wonderful time. Again his plans were thwarted, no point cooking something special, Ianto would refuse to eat it. Wrapping things as gifts was met with suspicion and greeting cards just made him sad. As for Father Christmas Ianto saw this as some kind of threat. Just the idea that a man dressed in red could enter the house and leave again was terrifying. Any fake Santas were met with suspicion with Ianto clinging to Jack for protection. With a long sigh Jack added this to the list of objects and events along with all the others that caused Ianto to regress. He couldn’t believe that the Master had resorted to torturing Ianto dressed as Father Christmas so it was possible his reaction to Christmas was something from his past or not as the case may be Jack argued with himself.

The only highlights in Ianto’s life at this point was Myfanwy, Marigold and Mac. There were days when the only person, if a stuff toy could be called a person, he spoke to. For some reason Jack couldn’t work out Ianto had an affinity with Mac. Mac never spoke more one word or two words to him and just handed him tools. To Mac’s amazement he could always anticipate what was needed. Mac tolerated Ianto, never spoke a word to him above a grunt, all words being reserved to tell him where to stand. Yet Ianto was always glad to visit and was pleased to be in his company. It was a strange friendship but along with Marigold were the only three high spots in Ianto’s life at this point. The positive for Jack was he could leave Ianto with Mac for a couple of hours every week. It gave him a break no matter how small of which he spent his time in the local café reading the newspaper over a coffee or chatting up the locals. Like all small communities, the local grapevine had an ability to find out the goings on in each family that would put an investigative journalist to shame. Jack loved to talk, this being his only outlet for company and was now on hand waving terms with many of the locals.
Hammering a nail into the front door, Jack was preparing himself for a battle. He had decided he was going to celebrate Christmas in one small way. He was going to hang on the door that faced the lane the wonderful wreath he had found in Morag’s shop. It was a feature of the village here that everyone had one on their door. After seeing the wreath he had decided as members of the community they were going to join in and Ianto’s wrath he damned.

Ianto was currently sulking on the floor of the lounge glaring at him whispering to Myfanwy. Standing back Jack now picked up the wreath and hung it on the door to see Ianto standing before him and with one movement pulled it off.

“No!” Jack said sternly as he picked it up and checked it was not damaged.

“Angry,” Ianto told him handing him the picture that represented how he was feeling.

“I can hear and see you are angry, but everyone one else has a wreath, even Mac has one,” Jack argued picking it up and hanging it back.

“No Christmas,” Ianto stuttered as he went to pull off the wreath again but Jack grabbed his hand to prevent him.

Jack looked at Ianto and could see his eyes were wide with fury.

“No!” Ianto told him loudly.

“Well we are going to have Christmas. I have not put up any decorations in the house we have no tree or anything else, but this is going on and staying put,” Jack told him taking Ianto’s arm and trying to move him back inside. It was late afternoon and it was getting dark, freezing and Ianto was only wearing thin clothing. After a struggle Jack managed to bodily move him into the kitchen and quickly closed the door.

Ianto glared at him as he struggled to express himself, his lips moving as he fought to find the words he needed. He turned and went inside and came back out with one of his drawings and pointed at it.

It was a fury of thick black lines and deep reds in spikes. Ianto had pressed so hard with the pens and crayons he had used the paper was ripped.

“Does the picture represent how angry you are?” Jack carefully worded the question as he tried to work out the meaning of the drawing. Ianto shook his head.

“So this picture is about how angry you feel?” Jack tried again. He saw Ianto shake his head. He watched as Ianto went into the lounge and pulled out a large roll of news print paper they had been using for a project. He tore off a large piece then taking several thick crayons began to draw furiously with great strokes. Then after a short while Ianto began to tear the paper up into a tight ball shaking with anger.

Watching Jack tried to piece this together. “You are angry,” he said carefully. Ianto nodded.

“So the drawings represent you are angry,” something dawned on him, “but not how angry you are.” Ianto nodded as he picked up Myfanwy and held her close.

“Ianto draw me how big your anger is,” Jack suggested. Ianto shook his head. Jack could see he was visibly shaking.
“I think you are feeling a lot of anger, Ianto, not a cup full, or house full but maybe a volcano full,” Jack moved to the computer and found some footage of exploding volcanos.

“Volcano,” Ianto said as he now sat down and started drawing a volcano with black sides and flames of deep reds and yellows coming out the top.

Watching as Ianto drew he saw he was putting his whole energy into the drawing. He completed it and he picked up another and then handed them both to Jack and stood up.

“This has something to do with the coat and blue box,” Jack said. Ianto looked at him then nodded.

“Man,” Ianto added with a long face as he held Myfanwy for comfort trying very hard not to get his dirty hands on her.

Moving quickly to the kitchen Jack helped Ianto clean his hands.

“The picture is a man in a grey coat,” Jack said carefully. Ianto nodded holding his toy close.

“Ran away.”

“The man in the grey coat ran away,” Jack reflected knowing full well the true significance of the drawing.

“From Ianto,” he added as he became distressed. Jack moved to comfort him but resisted because Geoff had told him to stand back and allow Ianto space to express himself. He needed to express how he felt without it all being hugged away in an attempt to make it better. Jack had to admit he was right, if he held back, Ianto was able to go further into his emotions so he waited.

“Angry, and sad with bad things,” he battled to tell him then handed him the sad square.

“So you are feeling angry and sad all mixed up,” Jack saw Ianto nod.

“Mixed up together, angry, sad, with Christmas, with the man in the grey coat who ran away from you,” Jack added carefully and saw Ianto nod.

“That’s a lot of things all racing around inside,” Jack reflected back his understanding.

“How is Myfanwy feeling?” Jack asked after a few more moments had passed knowing often Ianto could express how he felt through her. And he had to admit she was a godsend because Myfanwy could handle the odd question.

“She’s the volcano, she wants to explode, fly and burn and smash things,” Ianto expressed.

“So your anger inside you is the size of a volcano, and you want to explode and smash things,” Jack attempted to express. To his relief he saw him nod.

Jack had a moment of inspiration, taking a risk to ask Ianto a direct question. “Would it help if you actually smashed something?”

“Smash, Christmas,” Ianto told him.

“I’m not sure I understand the connection to Christmas Ianto but I understand you feel so angry you want to explode and destroy things,” he saw him hold Myfanwy closer.

“Well maybe we can find something for you to smash,” he saw Ianto think deeply then looked at Jack.
“Yes,” he replied with a long face.

“Okay, I need to make some calls and see what I can do. I can’t promise it will be today but I will find something you can smash,” he said as he let out a breath.

He saw Ianto move and throw his arms around him and sobbed. It was clear something had happened; a connection had been made. Ianto had never given the drawing a name, before it had remained a coat with a blue box for months. He wished he could see what was going on inside him so he could help him though this. All he could do was help him as best he could and pray he could deal with the guilt.
Handing the sledgehammer to Ianto, Jack stood back. A quick phone call around and an ancient shed which was falling apart had been offered. Jack had spent a while just making sure there was no glass. Ianto was now standing at the ready in old clothes and a pair of eye protectors.

He hoped this worked. Something deep within Ianto had triggered his feelings of anger. He had spoken to Geoff about this and he approved, advising Jack that he spell out the rules to Ianto, in terms of anger as best he could. The anger would be volcanic as indicated by the drawing and its release would be a good thing, he was to encourage him to vocalise if he could. He looked around; it was pretty isolated so there were no restraints other than the shed. The rules were very specific: it was okay to be angry and to express that anger as long as no people, objects other than that designated (in this case the shed) or yourself got hurt.

Looking at Jack for approval, Ianto gave a tentative swing. The wall wobbled a bit so he put some more force into it.

Ianto gritted his teeth as he swung the hammer, a determined look grew on his face and he smashed into the wall. The whole frame shook. He lifted up and using all his strength the hammer collided with the wall with a satisfying crunch.

Jack watched as Ianto swung the hammer, bringing it down again and again in a frenzy of blows. As he did Ianto sobbed out cries as the force of each blow shook his hands.

After several minutes half the shed was in pieces when Ianto cried out, “Why?” He swung the hammer again.

“What?” He screamed at the fallen timbers then fell back on to his knees.

“Tell me,” Jack encouraged kneeling next to him.

“I loved him,” Ianto sobbed inconsolably. “I loved him and he ran away, why did he run away?”

After several moments passed Ianto looked at him stricken as he pulled a drawing out his pocket, and Jack saw it was the most complete one yet.

“He ran away from Ianto to magic blue box,” he tried to explain. “Ianto was so sad,” he sniffed as he now tried to stand and Jack pulled him up then held him in his arms.

“Oh Ianto I am so sorry,” he said as tears ran down his face.

“I’ve tried so hard to find him, but he’s lost,” he sobbed.

“I know you have,” Jack reflected, “you’ve been looking for the man in grey.”

“Maybe he is looking for me but he can’t find me, and I can’t find him,” Ianto tried explain as he took a breath. “He didn’t like Christmas, so if we have Christmas and he is looking for me he will miss me and I will miss him.”

“So if we put up Christmas decorations or celebrate Christmas then he might think you’re not there because of that,” Jack said finally understanding as Ianto nodded.

“Well okay we won’t put a wreath on the front door,” Jack said. He felt Ianto almost sink with relief.
“May be we could put it somewhere else then?” Jack added after a few more moments had passed.

“I don’t know,” Ianto said as Jack now pulled back and took the hammer

Jack stood beside the shed his heart aching. Somehow in Ianto’s mind Christmas and the man in grey were linked. Which was not surprising as Jack was the man in grey. He had never celebrated Christmas; it was just not something he had done in all his time here on Earth. He let out a sigh. Well now he understood part of it. Ianto thought that if they celebrated Christmas and the man in grey was looking for him he would be looking for a place that didn’t celebrate Christmas. If they did he would pass on by and not find Ianto. He let out a breath as he took the hammer. Ianto headed back to car and, after viewing the remains of the shed, Jack went to join him.
If Jack was hoping things would improve for Ianto he was mistaken. He watched as over the following days all of Ianto’s progress seemed to slip away.

Ianto was distraught, and distant; the tiniest change in their routine caused monumental difficulties. He spent a lot of time just staring out of the window completely unresponsive. Jack tried everything but nothing seemed to lift his spirits and for days his only comfort was Myfanwy. Jack was despairing of what to do because as of that morning Ianto had even put her aside. For some reason he could not explain this saddened him more than anything else, because it was concrete evidence that Ianto was withdrawing more and more back into himself.

He was torn. Should he tell Ianto who he was? Would that help or would it make things worse? Deep in thought he entered the lounge to find Ianto curled up crying silent tears which flowed down his face dripping onto the carpet.

He put down Ianto’s afternoon snack and lay down next to him.

“Please tell me what’s wrong?” Jack risked a question as he tried to wipe away the tears that were rolling down Ianto’s face.

“Ianto –must- be- bad,” he sobbed in short breaths.

“How can Ianto be bad?” Jack asked as he reflected on Ianto’s behaviour, which was nothing he hadn’t seen before.

“Must be bad, very bad, bad.”

“Ianto, I can’t think of anything you have done that is bad,” Jack told him honestly.

“I can’t remember,” Ianto said so quietly Jack almost most missed it.

“You can’t remember if you were bad?”

“I must have done something, but I can’t remember.”

“I’ve been trying to think what I did, but I can’t,” he added after a few more moments had passed.

“Well I can’t think of anything you have done that is bad,” Jack reiterated.

“But Ianto must have been bad for the man to run away, but I can’t remember what I did.”

“So you’ve been trying to work out what you did to make the man run away?” Jack closed his eyes as he felt a shiver run down his back.

“Yes,” Ianto replied with a sniff.

“Ianto you are a good man, nothing you did made him run away,” Jack tried to explain as it suddenly dawned on him why Ianto was denying himself any comfort. It was in an effort to punish himself for causing the man in grey to run away.

“I know I was bad because I cried for him to come and take me away from the bad place, but he never came.”
“Oh Ianto,” Jack said in short breaths as he struggled to stop himself breaking down.

“I was hurting inside,” Ianto stabbed a finger to his chest. “I cried out in the dark for him to take me away in the blue box, but he never came…so Ianto must have been bad…I’ve been trying to think really hard,” Ianto struggled on as Jack felt another piece of his heart break as Ianto continued, “to think what it was I done for him to run away and not come.”

Jack pulled Ianto to a sitting position and placing his hands one on each shoulder he looked into his face. “Ianto, nothing you did made him run away. Maybe this was the worst mistake he ever made, maybe this was his biggest regret. Maybe he was so desperate for answers he didn’t think. Maybe he should have told you why he was leaving. But I promise you nothing you did caused him to run away from you and he knew you were hurting in the dark he would have moved heaven and earth to rescue you.”

Ianto saw Jack was now crying with him. “Why can’t you be the man in grey? Ianto loves you and you love Ianto.”

“Yes I love you with all my heart; you are the most important person in my life.”

“I am so scared,” Ianto said now as he started to tremble, “that Ianto loves you like he did the man in grey, that maybe I will do the bad thing again and you will run away.” He broke down into deep sobs as Jack held him. “But I can’t remember what the bad thing was so I might do it and not know and you will run away because I did the bad thing and Ianto will be left all alone and bad things will happen again.”

After a while Jack pulled back and took Ianto’s hands and looked into his eyes. Ianto turned away but he pulled his chin up so he was looking directly at him.

“Ianto there is no badness in you, there is no bad thing that you could do to make me leave. I promise you that I will never leave you as long as you need me. I will never ever disappear like the man in grey.” He watched as his words took effect. “And I promise I will do everything in my power to make sure no one ever hurts you like that again,” he burst out vehemently.

“But I might do the bad thing,” Ianto entreated.

“I promise, I rescued you, we came here so you could have a life, I did this all because I love you,” he said passionately.

Ianto quieted then looked at Jack. “I love you too,” Ianto said throwing his arms around him. “Sorry,” he added quietly after a few moments had passed.

“You have nothing to be sorry for,” Jack him told honestly as he pulled back to look into his eyes.

“I got angry at you,” he said and looked like he was going to break down again.

“You have every reason to be angry. The person you loved ran out on you, people did horrible spiteful, nasty, hurtful, things to you and it’s okay to be angry.” He took a deep breath. “Angry is good, and so is sad because what happened to you was horrible. I’m angry and sad about it, but every day we’re here working to make things better.” He wiped away the tears on Ianto’s cheek. “Just remember tomorrow is a new day.” He kissed him gently on the lips.

“New day,” Ianto repeated as Jack now helped him sit up and he gave him his afternoon tea. While he was sitting eating Jack raced upstairs to fetch Myfanwy, handing her over to Ianto who gave her a huge hug.
Later on the sofa Ianto lay stretched out, his head on Jack’s lap as Jack stroked the top of his head. Ianto had fallen asleep as they had watched one of his discs. He made no attempted to wipe away the tears that fell down his face as the image came to him of Ianto tortured, raped and bleeding, calling out for him pleading, begging to be rescued. It tore him up thinking of him there wishing for Jack to appear in the TARDIS but never coming. How must he have felt knowing Jack was somewhere in the Universe and believing he had left him to his fate?

His failure was complete. He had run away, been the instigator of a terrible chain of events. As he went over his ruinous decisions he felt a darkness settle on his soul. He had no idea how he was going to make up for this. He was so torn on what to do. Should tell him the truth of who he was? Would it destroy the progress Ianto was making? If Ianto knew the truth would he then hate him for being the cause of all this?

Right now Ianto loved and needed him. He prayed that one day Ianto wouldn’t need him so much, but losing Ianto’s love was something he knew would leave him beyond repair. He had suffered so much himself during that year the one thought that had kept him going and made it possible to endure was him.

To return and find him gone was a blow that had left him staggered emotionally and he knew his battered soul couldn’t bear losing Ianto again. He took a shuddered breath as he made his decision. He would not survive if Ianto rejected him. His love and acceptance of Jack was what kept him going all these months and kept him sane. A single smile or small step forward was a reward beyond measure. So Jack swallowed his own pain as he stroked Ianto’s face and pushed his own suffering once more to the back of his mind.
Watching from the kitchen, Jack busied himself making himself a cup of coffee and a snack. Much to his relief Ianto had come back a little into himself over the past few days. He was now talking to Myfanwy and some of the emotions on the board were a little less bleak, there was even a happy face this morning.

Snow had fallen overnight; in fact was still falling and Ianto was sitting holding her showing her the garden. Ianto was fascinated. Big fat snowflakes were drifting down and appeared to be floating. Ianto had sat unmoving as Jack, a plate in his hand, went and joined him. They sat for several moments when a sparrow hopped up to the window.

“Where do birds live in the winter?” Ianto asked him, taking a biscuit and noting the bird flew away startled by the sudden movement.

Jack looked thoughtful. “Some birds fly to a warm place and others stay.”

“But they must be cold and hungry,” Ianto said as he now took half of a biscuit crumpled it up and threw it out the door. His action was rewarded as several other birds now hopped down to eat the scattered crumbs. “Well what do they eat?” he asked when the crumbs were all gone.

“They go to people’s gardens and find seeds and fallen fruits from autumn, basically whatever they can find,” Jack explained.

“They liked my biscuit. But they’re not all fat like Marigold,” Ianto stated, “so maybe they are more hungry.”

He took several more biscuits and crushing them to crumbs threw them out the door. Several birds flew down, joined a few moments later by even more. “They really liked my biscuit because they were very hungry.” Jack raised an eyebrow as Ianto worked through his thoughts out loud.

“Maybe we could help them,” Jack suggested as Ianto turned his head towards him sharply. “We could go onto the internet and find out what they might like.” He saw Ianto nod, looking excited.

“Yes,” he said looking happy for the first time in days as he grabbed Myfanwy and headed to the computer.

“We could find what kind of birds stay over in winter and put out food just for them,” he said to Ianto’s back as he held Myfanwy on his lap and concentrated.

Reading down the printed list Jack let out a deep breath. Ianto was nothing if not thorough because he was looking at a list of every bird that over wintered on the Island and their preferred diet.

“Do you think this will be enough?” Ianto checked out.

“I think this will make them very happy,” Jack assured him.

“Good, you can use your magic card,” Ianto told him. Jack creased his brow as Ianto put his hand in Jack’s pocket, pulled out his wallet and opening it handed him his credit card.

“Oh,” he said in understanding.
“And I need to make a bird table,” Ianto pointed to bottom of the list. “I can dig the hole,” he said proudly.

“I know you love digging,” Jack agreed.

“I do,” Ianto said as Jack picked up the phone to call Morag.

‘God know what the locals would think, there was enough food on the list to feed every bird on the island for months,’ Jack thought.

“Morag,” Jack said, “When Ben goes out tomorrow could he make a delivery? I have some things we need.” He waited while she got something to write with.

“Not quite last minute Christmas supplies,” he listened again and looked at Ianto who was not interested in chit chat and wanted Jack to start the order so he tapped the paper with his finger...“That’s very kind of you but I’m working on that... thank you for the invitation, maybe next year. Now I need the following...” Ianto now standing as close as he could pointed to each item on the list as Jack read them out. “Three kilos of plain peanuts; four kilos of basic but good quality bird mix; 20 seed bell; two kilos each of sultanas, raisins and currents; six kilos of lard; one kilo of black sunflower seeds; one kilo of niger (what is this supposed to be?) seeds and two kilos of oatmeal.” He took a breath as Ianto tapped the paper. Jack now read out the list of his requirements of the bird table Ianto had designed.

Holding the wood steady Jack braced himself. Ianto aimed the hammer at the head of the nail. He was trying to get this right, but nails were difficult at the best of times. So far Ianto had yet to hit one that went in all the way. Jack could tell by the determined set of Ianto’s jaw he was far from defeated.

“Do you think it needs a large nail right in the middle of the centre post?” Jack asked as Ianto hammered away.

“That’s a surprise,” Ianto said as Jack raised his eyebrows.

“I like Christmas for birds,” Ianto declared. He now stood the pole upright and seated into the hole he had dug. Jack never ceased to be amazed at how much enjoyment Ianto got out of physical labour. Ianto had spent hours working out exactly where this should go. He had explained to Myfanwy that part of the fun was being able to see, but had to be in a place the birds felt safe. Filling in the hole he stamped in the dirt around the pole. Taking the top he had prepared earlier he now hammered it into place. Then he stood back to admire his work. It was simply a pole in the ground with a flat top. Several nails went around the outside to hang things from. Ianto explained that there was no roof because that put off the smallest birds. Having a roof meant the bigger birds couldn’t bully the little ones. It was important that all the birds got a fair share. He explained he had put Myfanwy on the case to keep an eye out for any birds that frightened the little ones and sort them out. Jack looked back towards the house and could see Ianto had positioned her so she had a good view.

“It’s wonderful,” Jack gave him a hug. Several moments passed as the both admired their new addition to the garden, when Ianto pulled away from him went back into the house. Several moments later he came out with the wreath and hung it on the nail he had placed earlier.

Jack broke into a grin as he felt his heart swell. Despite Ianto’s seemingly crippling issues he had found a way to compromise and to celebrate Christmas, even if it was Christmas for the birds.

Putting his arm around Ianto he took his hand and kissed it.
“Have I ever told you what an amazing human being you are?” he said to Ianto.

“Silly,” Ianto replied then looked at Jack. “It’s good all the birds will have full tummies and eat yummy things.”

“Now we need to make some bird Christmas puddings,” Jack said as Ianto’s eyes widened with excitement and he started to clap and jump up and down.

“Yes and I have the perfect rec, reci, recipe” he struggled to say. “It’s lard, currents, oats, seeds with peanuts all mixed together, called a fat ball.”

“I think that will be a big hit,” He agreed as Ianto now bounced back towards the house, pulled back the door, picked up Myfanwy and headed to the kitchen.
Nasty and Nice

Ianto was happy as he checked himself over. He stood and waited for Jack by the was wearing his light coat because he had checked the weather. It looked like it was going to be nice but he wore his coat anyway because one moment it could be all sunny next it was raining. Once it had been sunny, rained then snowed all in one day.

Patting his pocket to check he felt the plastic bag filled with several slices of bread he was going to give to Marigold. He liked Marigold she was all pink and huge and she liked him, especially when he bought bread. 'She was so greedy'. Today as always they would walk down the lane one behind the other, feed Marigold who would be waiting for them. Next they would look at the sheep with the lambs and see how much they had grown. On reaching the village they visit Mac and say hello. He stopped himself not today; Mac had told him he was going to fix a tractor.

He liked Mac he was all old and grumpy but he fixed motorbikes, cars, and tractors. Mac talked to him telling him exactly what he was doing. He also told him loads of stories about the Island and all the different types of motors he fixed. When he was visiting Mac Jack would go and have a coffee at Maureen's café. Not today he reminded himself, not today Mac was not going to be there. Today they were going to, Morag's shop. Jack had ordered another catalogue and it might have come. If it had come he was going to spend his book time circling the best things with his special red felt tip pen. It was special because it could make a big wide line and he circled all the best things with it.

"All set? " Jack asked.

"Yes. All ready," Ianto replied nodding his head.


"Watch out for cars on the road."

"Good man," Jack replied.

"Kiss?" Ianto asked as Jack leaned in and kissed him on the lips. He wished they could do more kissing he wanted to practice because kissing Jack made him feel really good. Luckily lots of things needed kissing better. He smiled to himself sometimes he made things up that needed kissing better so Jack would kiss him. Kissing Jack made him feel all warm…Jack interrupted his thoughts closing the door and locking it.

"Greedy," Ianto said as Marigold scoffed down the bits of bread he emptied onto the ground before her.

"You're so greedy," he repeated as Jack smiled at him. He felt a glow he loved it when Jack smiled at him it made him all happy inside like kissing …Marigold looked up at him chomping.
"All gone," he showed Marigold his hands and the empty bag. "Bye bye see you next time," Ianto called out as Marigold moved away and they walked further down the lane. He saw with disappointment that the puddles were dried out which meant he couldn't jump in them and make a big splash.

A bird song caught his attention and he pointed it out to Jack as a big car raced by and he had to jump back.

"Bad driver!" he shouted as Jack laughed at his reaction and marvelled at how far Ianto had come over the winter.

Jack was grateful winter was over. For him it had been the hardest time since he found Ianto in the institute. They had survived in part to the discovery of birds. This had diverted Ianto's attention and he now kept a log of every bird who had visited the bird table. Jack still hadn't figured how Ianto recognised some of them individually because each blackbird looked same to him. The notice board was filled with drawings of all of Ianto's particular favourites.

Spring had meant more time outdoors and together they were in the process of creating what he hoped would be a magnificent garden filled with flowers, colours and scent. They had recently installed a greenhouse currently growing tomatoes. Jack to his own amazement was revelling in every aspect from laying it out to ensuring it was practical as well as beautiful. For some reason he could not fully explain, this filled him with a great deal of peace. If the truth be told he hadn't taken much interest in gardening; now it was difficult to keep him out. He had never known such satisfaction as each plant took hold and grew.

They both saw the farmer who owned the farm adjacent to them in the distance and Ianto waved vigorously and was rewarded with a wave back.

Jack smiled at the returned wave it was just one example of how the locals had taken Ianto under their wings. It seemed everyone they encountered was careful to not to ask him questions, put him on the spot or offer him in a choice. As they walked he recalled the last conversation he had had with Maureen the owner of the small café as he enjoyed her excellent coffee. Like all the locals she was upfront in her opinions. He wasn't sure how they had gotten to this point in the conversation when she reflected on their arrival.

"Let me tell you was there a bit of talk about you and Ianto before you came here. Up in arms we all were. Bloody outsiders coming here buying up land destroying our heritage,"

"And now?" Jack has asked curiously.

"Well we met you, and Ianto is such a sweet heart," Maureen told him warmly. "If there is anything any of us can do you just let us know Jack," he looked bemused as she became more soft spoken.

"We all see how much work he is and how wonderful you are with him. Once we saw and understood us locals didn't want to make your life any more difficult than it already was. And Ianto what he must has suffered." He looked at her surprised but touched at her declaration. "What would people think of us if they knew someone was brought here to be healed and then we treated them badly…"she took his cup. "Let me re-fill that for you."

"Thank you" he said kindly as she refilled his cup form the coffee flask she was holding.

And then there was Mac; Jack was still trying to figure out Mac out. Mac was another local who had taken Ianto under his wing both benefiting from the relationship. Ianto was always in awe of anything mechanical especially motorbikes and the fact that Mac fixed them meant it was a match
made in heaven. He could watch Mac for hour's content with handing him tools as he worked but he remained as gruff as ever.

Another good friend was Morag who owned the local shop and he grimaced at how many times had Ianto had told him how many animals and people shared names that began with the letter 'M'. Ianto loved Morag's shop they would pick up the mail and Jack would catch up on the local gossip while Ianto would spend his time hungrily looking at the sweets.

It was clear he wanted to try them but he still refused to choose and they tried to pick out what they thought he wanted which he accepted without comment. His food choices remained as rigid as ever and Jack wished he could crack this because Ianto's ongoing health depended on it. Not only that it was bland, it was boring, sometimes Jack just craved the opportunity of cooking up a storm full of flavour and texture for him.

However with the arrival of spring there had been two breakthroughs. As Jack has thought about it both changes had been happening over a long period. Ianto was now able to handle some questions. As long as it was not a string of questions that led to a choice he was able to cope. Secondly he had begun to acknowledge those around him he knew with a hand wave and even a hello.

Ianto stated to pull on Jack's hand in an effort to get him to move faster as they entered the main street eager to get to Morag's shop. It was a sort of post office, corner shop, news agents, come mini super market where you could buy all manner of foods complete with ice cream cabinets, glass fronted fridges and even had a hard ware section. Ianto entered wide-eyed waved to everyone and placed himself firmly in front of the sweet section running his eyes over the packets and large jars filled with loose sweets.

"Morning Jack. And how is young Ianto today?" Morag asked.

"We're wonderful," he replied as she pulled out his mail. "Another catalogue," winking as she pulled out the new one Jack had ordered.

Looking at the sweets, Ianto feasted his eyes. He looked at each packet and jar in turn. He felt his fingers twitch, he wished, he wished he could lift his hand and point to what he wanted. He felt brave for a moment and felt his hand lift. As he did a shiver fear ran though him as it did every time he stood there and he let it drop. They all looked so wonderfully delicious, there were black ones, and orange ones, purple ones, green ones, yellow ones, red ones and chocolate. He wanted to try each and every one of the them and find the best ones.

A discordant noise interrupted his thoughts. A large brassy looking woman entered with two boys who looked to be about ten. They pushed past her and started running around. The woman huffed her way around the shop with an air of importance that appeared to go with the expensive nature of her clothes. He could see Jack still talking to Morag so he went back to sweetie gazing.

"Hurry up Daniel we haven't got all day," the woman called out as she pulled some biscuit packets from a shelf.

"Mum, the stupid man is blocking me and I can't see," the boy hollered out from behind Ianto as his mother stomped her way down to where he was standing.

"Are you going to stand there all day?" she demanded as Ianto turned not sure how to react to her angry tone. "For god's sake choose something so we can have a look," she took a deep breath "Choose!" she pointed her finger at the Jars. "Choose you stupid Oaf."

Ianto looked into her face found his eyes focused on her lips as she continued to shout at him. He
couldn't understand why she was so angry as he backed up and began to shake his head in distress.

"Choose," she ordered as she tried to push him out the way "Choose, choose!"

"I can't," he heard himself say as the room swirled dissolved and he found himself on his knees with the Master standing over him.

Ianto was so weak he couldn't walk so he had been manhandled here then forced on his knees. It was only the guard holding him up that kept him upright. He was in so much pain each individual agony had melded until it had taken over his entire body. He felt his stomach twist in fear as the Master looked at him his face filled with glee.

He fought to concentrate but his head was swimming, from the effects of the drugs that they had use on him to force him to speak. It took a moment to figure out where he was. He battled to remain present when he felt his head jerk up as the guard behind him pulled his head up by the hair.

"So glad you could come. As you recall yesterday I promised I would explain our little game. It's about time you understood the rules," The Master mocked rubbing his hands together.

Ianto felt a surge of dread. He hated these games because no matter what he chose it always ended badly for him. Every time he was given the same two choices black or white. The choice was always more pain for him or less pain for him. He had tried to work out the logic, but how did you work out the logic of a madman? The reality was there was no right answer and all this was just a stupid game to get him to choose which torture they were going to inflict on him today.

A door opened and two small children around the age of eleven were dragged in clutching each other.

"Meet black and white or white and black, I forget," the Master said as the children were pulled apart becoming hysterical as they tried to reach each. Raising his hand the guards let them go and the children now released held each other tightly.

"Now ask me what me what are you choosing," the Master said quietly.

"What am I choosing?" Ianto asked with a growing sense of horror as he looked from the children to the Master.

"Well today black as always if chosen gets thrown off the top deck, while white gets to live." He looked at Ianto. "Well until the next round of the game."

"You can't! You can't ask me to choose which one dies," Ianto called out, distraught.

"Oh but I am, and you have every day for weeks now: black or white. One gets to live, one gets to die," the Master taunted as Ianto came to terms with the consequences of his actions. Grinning the Master took enjoyment from Ianto's discomfiture. There really was nothing like watching a good man drawn into the dark nature of his own soul. As much fun as it had been to rape Ianto Jones, the rape of his mind was proving to be much more satisfying.

"I see you are reluctant, how about another choice then." He waved a hand and to his horror he saw Tosh and Owen dragged was in along with Rhys and Gwen.

Walking up and down the Master rubbed his hands together with glee. "Big choice today Ianto. You can choose two. Choose the children and two of your friends die, or choose two of your friends and the children die, choose none of them, they all die. So Ianto choose, it's not difficult I mean how many times have we played this game?"
"Choose?" the voice said echoing through his mind.

"I can't, I can't," Ianto begged as he backed up into the jars. Disorientated he blinked as the woman's face seemed to merge and he saw the bad man again.

"Choose!"

"I can't, I can't," Ianto stuttered.

"Mummy, the man's having fit," the boy pointed and laughed as Ianto backed up in the shelves knocking several packets onto the floor.

"Get out of the way! Cant' you see..." she tried to say more when Jack pushed her forcibly aside and in what seemed like a single move took Ianto into his arms who burst into tears sobbing. As he held him he could feel he was trembling like a leaf.

"You stupid woman," Morag shouted at the woman angrily as she watched Jack trying to calm Ianto down. She was mortified. Everyone who came into contact was so careful of him, trying to make sure he was not upset in an effort to help in his recovery.

"Mummy, the two men are hugging," the boy said pointing and laughing as he was joined by his brother.

"They're homos," the second older boy said.

"Don't be so disgusting," the woman snorted.

Morag stormed towards her, "Out!" she demanded pointing to the door.

"What!" The woman replied stunned she was being thrown out.

"Out of my shop," Morag ordered.

"You can't refuse me service!" the woman burst out.

"I can and I will,"

"How dare you, do you know who I am?"

"You're not one of us; that's all we need to know," Morag added her face flared with anger as the woman drew herself up.

"What kind of community do you have round here that would tolerate such a wanton display in front of small children. I shall make a complaint," the woman said imperiously.

"You know nothing about us," another local spoke up who had watched the interaction unfold outraged at the woman's behaviour.

"You know nothing about us," another local spoke up who had watched the interaction unfold outraged at the woman's behaviour.

"How dare you come in here and upset our Ianto," a woman's voice who Jack recognised as the head of the local W.I chapter now also spoke out.

Morag pointed towards the door, "out or I will call the police," the woman backed away as she saw she was outnumbered. Taking her boys hand she stormed out. Morag marched her to the door and slammed it shut.

Turning she returned to the back of the shop where Ianto was still being held by Jack to see if she
could offer any support.

A few moments passed and much to their respective reliefs Ianto sob's slowed. After a while Ianto whispered something and Jack kissed him several times on the lips. No one commented because they had seen Jack kiss Ianto better many times, a kiss and a cuddle better worked every time. Ianto turned around his face tear streaked as Jack took out a handkerchief and handed it over. Ianto wiped his face, blew his nose loudly and handed it back to Jack.

"He tried to make me choose and I couldn't, I couldn't speak, I couldn't," Ianto tried to say in way of explanation.

Morag observed him carefully as she made a connection. Just as he calmed down she reached out and took one of the jars of loose sweets behind him. "Ianto, thank god you're here. I need your help," Morag said earnestly. "We've had a load of sweets come in. There was a terrible accident and now they are all mixed up together into nasty and nice. Right mess, and I need your help to tell which is which."

He looked at her confused blinking still looking lost.

"I badly need your help because I am never going to sort things out in time." Ianto looked up with tear filled eyes his lips slightly open, before he could comment she popped one in his mouth." Start with this one," she said.

"Nasty," he said screwing up his face and spitting it out. Jack's hand caught it before it hit the floor. He raised an eyebrow wondering what the hell she was doing.

"Thank you, I am so glad you are here to help me. I've got more," she declared as she popped a different one into his mouth.

"Nice," he said too surprised to react.

"Wonderful," she said taking jars off the shelf and taking them to the front counter.

"This is choosing, I can't," he told her shaking his head, distressed.

"This is not choosing Ianto. Schools out in a few hours and children are going to come screaming in here in exactly two hours and if we can't figure out what to give them, they are going to be very unhappy," she told him.

He still looked uncertain "And I bet all the nasty ones are exactly the ones Marigold would love because for her nasty is nice," Jack told him thinking fast on his feet as he saw something in Ianto change.

"I bet if we gathered the all of the nasty ones up she would snuffle them all down in one go," Morag told him winking at Jack who raised his eyebrows.

"Okay if Marigold likes he nasty ones," Ianto agreed hesitantly, "I'll help," he sniffed.

"Come with me," she took his hand and she led him to the counter.

An hour half later the counter was strewn with opened packets and jars. In a small bin on the floor were all the ones Ianto had rejected which was mostly anything with aniseed which were was met with a terrible grimace as he spat out the offending sweetie. The other was any fake banana, pineapple or bland flavour, all ready to go to Marigold.
A far bigger pile were all the ones he had identified as nice. Jack offered to pay but she shushed him up.

"Now I only need one more thing. I need you to tell me the special nice ones, because the children will want to know the extra good ones," she told him.

"Okay," Ianto told her. He pointed out the ones he really liked.

"Excellent," she said biting her tongue not to use the word choice as she took a small white bag and filled it with all the ones he had chosen as his favourites and handed it to him. He looked at her in complete astonishment.

"For all your help today Ianto I couldn't have done it without you" she said. He took the bag.

"Morag I don't know how to thank you," Jack said as Ianto pulled out the first sweetie sniffed it then took a bite.

"The pleasure was all mine and throw these at Marigold as you go past on your way home," she told him as she handed him the bin filled with the nasties.

As they hit the beginning of the lane back to their cottage Ianto ate one more sweet then placed the bag in his pocket.

"For later because their special," he told Jack who took his hand.

Reaching Marigold they watched as with her pig like appetite she snorted down the nasties. Ianto watched deep in thought. Jack turned to say something when he noted Ianto had tears flowing down his face.

"I'm so happy to help the children today because I didn't want them to get hurt anymore," he told Jack.

"I'm sure you never hurt any children," Jack assured him taking out the handkerchief he had used earlier and Ianto wiped his face dry.

"I did. I chose; they died," Ianto said matter -of -factly as Jack put his arm around him. "I didn't know what the choosing was. I thought it was some stupid game but then the bad man came and he told me what the real choosing was and I couldn't choose," he sobbed out the words, "and the children died, everyone died," Ianto told him. "They all died because I couldn't choose." A few moments passed as they watched Marigold. "I couldn't speak a single word." He looked into the distance. " And now the children will get nice things and special favourite things and they won't be sad anymore." He looked to Jack for reassurance as he worked through his thoughts.

"That's right Ianto; all the children will be very happy because you helped them," Jack said shaken by his revelation as he realised the significance of his admittance. Whatever the Master had done had meant he had forced Ianto to choose as part of some sick game. He knew because the Master had tried to play a similar game with him. Jack had refused to play telling the Master that regardless of any seeming choice he made the hand on the switch or trigger of the gun was always the Master. The Master had been furious and beaten Jack to death. By the sound of it when Ianto had found out the true nature of the game and Ianto had has chosen not to choose, and it had destroyed him. It explained that for him it was never a simple matter of choice, it was life and death. If he chose someone died, if he didn't choose someone died. The shock of not being able to choose meant he had lost the ability to speak.

In the immediate days that followed Ianto was less exuberant spending time drawing or studying his
books. The schedule became all important again, and Ianto regressed slightly spending time looking out towards the sea.

"Lunch is ready," Jack said. He placed two white bread tuna sandwiches on a red plate in front of him.

Ianto crossed his arms and Jack looked then at the plate trying to figure what was wrong and bracing himself for a strop.

"Nasty," Ianto suddenly declared as Jack eye's widened.

"Marigold would like this it's nasty," he told Jack who blinked and straightened as he realised the implications of Ianto's statement.

"Anything else Marigold might find nice?" Jack asked cautiously.

"Load of things," Ianto told him as Jack started opening cupboards.

Jack, with a great deal of glee emptied the vast majority of foodstuffs from their kitchen cupboards from the back of his car to the delight of Marigold who had been brought up especially for the event. Ianto clapped as she scoffed her way greedily through the contents of their cupboards

"Marigold's really happy, she loves the nasties," Ianto told him excitedly as Jack snapped his mobile shut.

"Morag just called me and she had just had a whole shipment of food that's just been dropped off and she called to ask if you're available. She's desperate wants to know if we can come down right now," he said as put the car in gear

Ianto tuned and looked at him wide eyed and clapped his hands. "I'm really hungry," Ianto told him

"Good because this is a really big task," Jack told him as they got back into the car.
Standing back Ianto made sure he was well out of the way as Jack backed the car out the garage. It was not often Jack got out the car. Last time was when he had had his cough. First he had got hot then cold then achy. He had to lay in bed lots, sniffling. Myfanwy was not too good either so didn’t mind keeping him company. Jack found him loads of things to watch with animals and read to him. But his cough got worse and throat hurt and he had a headache.

Jack said he had to go and see the Doctor. They took the car because he was too poorly to walk. It was the only time he had ever taken Myfanwy out of the house but she was sick too and he made sure she was all wrapped up warmly. Doctor Singh was really nice; she had listened to his chest asking him to breathe in and out. Then looked in his ears and he had to open his mouth because his throat was sore and he could hardly speak. She told him he had bronky something. She said stay in bed, get lots of rest and drink loads of juice. He had to take loads of different medicines as well along with a strange puffy thing. You put it in your mouth, there was a whoosh and he had to take a quick sharp, long breath, and he had started feeling much better.

Then the cough jumped into Jack so out came the car again. This time it was his turn to look after Jack. Jack got extra tired and slept lots. Jack was so tired he slept a whole day and night in one go. It was a good sleep with no dreams. The best thing about Jack being sick was he got to help. He was so proud he had made Jack a cup of tea. It took him ages to get the mug up the stairs because he didn’t want to spill anything. Jack said it was the best cup tea ever. He was so happy Jack liked his tea.

Fortunately he did have help too much because Mary Morgan came. She was Mr Morgan’s daughter. Morag came to check that they were all right because they hadn’t come to the shop and Doctor Singh had told her they both had the bronky cough. Mary helped clean up the kitchen. She had said it was hard to believe from the mess he had only made one cup of tea. Ianto had explained that the sugar kept jumping off the spoon onto the bench and the milk wouldn’t come out the carton proper. After that she came every day Jack was sick to help out. She tidied up and things and heated up food. He liked Mary; she was nice and she was all fat because she was going to have a baby.

Apart from Mary the best thing about being sick was all the different things people kept bringing them to eat. Chicken noodle soup that was the best nicest thing. There was so much food Jack didn’t need to cook for two weeks and there were still some cakes in the freezer.

The car was fully out so he shut the garage door and got in. Putting on his seat belt they drove off. Today they were going across to the other side of the Island for a big day out and was too far to walk today so Jack was going to drive. Driving was special because he got to help change the gears. He put his hand on the gear stick and Jack put his hand on his and changed gear as they drove off.

As they passed through the village Ianto put on his music and saw Jack roll his eyes.

“Do we have to listen to that song?”

“But we are really moving, and it’s a moving song,” Ianto replied.

“Alright but only two repeats,” Jack told him as Ianto smiled and put the song on and sat back singing along. “I like to move it, move it…”
Watching the crowds Constable Dana stood her arms crossed. Of all the places she could have been sent this summer she had to be sent here. She couldn’t understand some of her older colleagues’ envy when she had found she had been posted to the big Island. She was a city girl not a country bumpkin. She had never heard of the place until she had been posted here. She had had to look through the records in preparation and found it had the lowest crime statistics in the United Kingdom. Now she understood why. There was no point in stealing anything. Even if the perpetrators did managed to take something without being seen by the keen eyed locals they could never get it off the island. Car theft was almost unheard of. The last serious attempt was a few weeks ago. It has was thwarted when the ferry operator has noted Mrs Grieves appeared to have been transformed into a sullen youth and called the police.

The only crime was all petty, caused by summer visitors and that was mostly drunk and disorderly. This was caused by the visitors underestimating the power of the local bootleg whiskey. It had a legal counterpart which was for sale legally. However the bootleg was the worst kept secret and readily available if you knew who to ask.

All attempts to stamp out its manufacture had failed. Except for overeager and enthusiastic Customs and Excise officers who came over every few years to try and find the stills no one bothered. Little good it did them. She got the feeling that the locals enjoyed the challenge. They geared themselves up like it was an entertainment. In all the years there had only been one successful raid and that had only recovered of three full pint bottles and some piping.

She let out a sigh; if only one was planned she could help she would have enjoyed the exhilaration. ‘Oh god,’ she was so bored she had come to this, dreaming of being part of the customs boys tracking people for tax evasion. She smiled as several locals passed, using the finger to the forehead greeting she had come to know so well. It was idyllic but only if you enjoyed fishing, farming and sheep. There was nothing to do for the police except make their presence known like today. Show your face, smile and wave and pretend she wasn’t bored out of her brain.

Looking wildly about Ianto scanned every face. He was not sure what to do. Jack had been talking just here. But there were so many people he only let go of his hand for a few moments. He had seen the police car all white and red with yellow stripes; it had big flashing light on the top. He was sure he had only looked for a few moments, he had turned to speak to Jack but he was gone. He tried to calm himself down. He wished Mac was here he would know what to do. He looked around but there were just too many people.

He swallowed. Maybe he should go and find the car but there were a lot of people in the way and he wasn’t sure he could push his way through on his own. He might bump into them. It was okay when he was with Jack; he just held onto his arm. How was he going to get home if he was lost? He bit his bottom lip as he thought.

He looked towards the police car. Maybe the nice policeman he had met at Morag’s was there. Maybe he could help. He quickly scanned around with his eyes. He felt his stomach drop when he saw it was a lady. She was wearing police clothes so he edged forward.

“How old is he and where did you last see him?” Dana asked a causally dress man approaching her, looking like he was about to burst into tears.

“I’ve lost Jack,” Ianto told as he saw the young’s woman’s face become more animated as she immediately became alert.

“How old is he and where did you last see him?”

“I don’t know,” Ianto replied shaking his head.
“Well is he a baby or toddler?”

Ianto heard the question but not sure he understood. Jack was a grown up. How was he to reply? Everyone he knew, knew Jack.

“What’s your name?” Dana saw the man take a step back and she couldn’t understand why he was so jittery.

“Ianto.”

“Surname?”

Ianto looked confused. “I don’t know that word,” he replied.

“Last name; what is your last name?”

“Jones.”

“So we’re looking for Jack Jones.” Ianto became even more distressed as he shook his head.

“Jack’s lost, I’ve lost him.” Ianto started looking around. She was about to continue when she was interrupted.

“It’s okay Ianto.” Ianto turned to the voice. Dana looked and saw it was Sergeant McCredie who put his hand on Ianto’s shoulder.

“You sound like you’ve lost Jack,” he said cautiously.

“Yes,” Ianto burst out. “He was talking. I turned around and he was gone,” he explained relieved to see someone he knew.

“Point to where you were,” he said. Ianto pointed to the marquee about seventy-five feet away and saw it was the tea and cake tent.

“Tell you what Ianto, you stay here with Constable Dana in case he’s come looking for you and I’ll go find him.”

“I need Jack, I need him.” Ianto said. Sergeant McCredie rubbed his arm.

“We’ll find him. You stay here with Constable Dana and she will look after you,” he reiterated.

“Okay,” Ianto said, uncertain.

Sergeant McCredie turned to Dana. “This is Ianto Jones. He lives with Jack Harkness at Rose Cottage. Jack looks after Ianto,” he said as introduction. She nodded her understanding. “He loves mechanical things. See if you could distract him with the police car while I go and find Jack for him,” he added.

“What if Jack is lost and you can’t find him?” he said his faced creased with worry.

“Yes we will. I bet he’s looking for you right now. And Dana don’t ask him anymore questions,” he said. As he turned away he saw Jack looking wildly about.

At the same time Ianto saw him. “Jack!” Ianto took off towards him and threw his arms around him.

“Knew he couldn’t have gone far,” Sergeant McCredie noted as they watched Jack embrace Ianto in
a huge hug. After several moments he handed him a handkerchief and gave him a quick kiss on the lips.

Dana watched the exchange, glanced about and saw no-one even turned a hair. She took a moment to observe what on the mainland would be an uncommon sight of two men openly showing affection in an inmate embrace followed by a kiss.

“Hug and a kiss works every time,” he said with a small smile. Dana looked at him.

“What’s with the questions?” Dana asked trying to work through what she had observed.

“Ianto has issues with questions. It's related to what happened to him before he got here and we all take great care not to ask him any if we can avoid it.”

“We?” she asked as several questions formed in her mind.

“Everyone hereabouts knows about Ianto, we take great care to ensure he doesn’t get upset.”

She was about to ask another question when they saw the pair both head towards them, Ianto firmly holding Jack’s hand.

“I’ve found him,” Ianto declared with a huge smile

“Thank you,” Jack said. Sergeant McCredie took Jack’s hand and gave it a shake. “I just turned around and he was gone.”

“You did the right thing Ianto, looking for one of us,” Sergeant McCredie commented as he acknowledged Jack’s thanks with a nod of his head.

“Yes I am very proud of you, you didn’t panic and you found help, good man,” Jack said as Ianto’s smiled grew.

“Have you been enjoying the day?” Sergeant McCredie asked him.

“I am, it's my first big day out. We came in the car. We parked over with loads of other cars. Then we walked around and saw all the animals. I said hello to Marigold, she was looking all clean. She had won a big red rosy thing which had 3rd on it.”

“Rosette,” Dana suggested. Ianto nodded.

“Marigold’s a pig,” Jack explained.

“She’s my friend. She all big and huge and greedy. I’ve never won a third of anything so that’s cool she got a rosy. Then we watched the black and white dogs chase the sheep into pens. They were so clever they seemed to know exactly what to do and made the sheep go the right way. We looked at all the things for sale. Jack bought some books which he put in the car. Then Jack got me lunch, it was a hot dog. I wasn’t too sure what that was. I didn’t want to eat a dog, hot or not, but then I found it was red sausage in a bun with tomato sauce. It was de-delicious. While we were eating there was a band marching up and down and playing music. It was a bit loud. After that there was people throwing huge poles and hammers and stones. Jack went to get a cup of tea and I got lost, then I found him now, we are here,” Ianto rattled out in what seemed like one breath.

“Wow, that is a lot of information,” Dana said blinking.

“I like talking Jack says it was hard work to get me to say a word now I’m started I can’t stop.” Jack
smiled at him proudly.

“Now I’ve heard a rumour there’s a certain young man who likes to know how things work,” Sergeant McCredie told him. Ianto now nodded. “Now I wonder who it could be?” he asked generally as he saw Ianto take a deep breath and his eyes widen.

“It's me, I help Mac fix things.”

“Well would you like a ride? I’m sure Constable Dana would love to give you a spin around the field and I am sure if you ask nicely she can be persuaded to turn on the lights and sirens.”

Ianto looked at Jack then to the car and then Dana. Jack nodded and he got in.

“You will wait for me right here?” Ianto said little unsure.

“Right here,” Jack told him as he pointed to the ground.

“He’s come a long way Jack. Can’t tell you what a pleasure it was to see him here today,” Sergeant McCredie told him as the car moved forward the lights flashing.

“It's his first big day out,” Jack added smiling.

“Aye and Marigold got a third. David Morgan will be pleased,” he said as they watched the police car on its way back.

“You look like you’ve run a marathon Jack is Ianto wearing you out?” he looked at Jack who was looking pale and exhausted.

“No just a summer cold, having a hard time throwing it off.” The car drew up and Ianto had his finger in his ears as he got out, a huge grin on his face.

“That was so much fun,” he added. “I put my fingers in my ears because it was too loud.”

“Well I don’t get to use the sirens much on the Island,” Dana told him. “So they needed a bit of workout.”

“Do you get to use them loads on the mainland?” he asked.

“We use them to get people out of the way.”

“I would jump out the way if I heard them,” he replied.

“Good man,” Sergeant McCredie told him. “Jack, always a pleasure,” he took his hand and shook it.

“Thank you for looking out for him,” Jack added.

“Yes, thank you for helping me find Jack,” Ianto added. Turning they now headed back towards the tea and cake marquee.

“Wow I didn’t think anyone could get out so much information in one breath,” Dana commented as they walked away holding hands.

“Oh aye when he arrived on the Island the poor man could hardly say a word let alone handle any interaction with anyone other than Jack, so it's a huge step to hear him say anything let along cope with a big event like today.”
“What happened to him?” she asked.

“No one actually knows but from what Jack has said Ianto was taken hostage and treated very badly. Torture from the scars on his back; whatever happened was profound, poor man. Jack brought him here so he could recover and it's been hard work. But he is making real progress if he can handle a day out like this.”

“And Jack looks after him,” she said looking across the field.

“Aye Ianto’s his partner, he spends every waking moment devoting his time to ensure Ianto is cared for on every level.”

“And this doesn’t bother you? I don’t mean the caring part, I mean that it's two guys,” she asked thinking this was not something she expected here of all places.

“Nope don’t care; none of us do. Well there was a bit of a fuss over the renovations to the house to say the least; meetings in the village hall, people vowing they would run them out but then we met Ianto and saw how Jack was with him. Never saw a man so in need of life. It didn’t hurt he ran around naked in the local church yard much to the enjoyment of the ladies,” he added with a chuckle.

“He what!” she burst out.

“Ianto not Jack,” he corrected. “Stripped off buck naked, chasing butterflies.”

“And no one made a complaint?” she asked astounded.

“Only complaint I heard there was no repeat.” He raised his eyebrows.

“This Island is renowned for well…its deeply conservative ways,” she found herself commenting.

“Well maybe we’re not as conservative as people imagine or as closed minded. We are hard but fair people and Jack has earned our respect. And once you become an Islander you are an Islander for life. We look out for each other. Oh, some people will call it being nosey but no one here will lay dead unnoticed for a year, or find themselves without help when they need it most. And any way since young Malcolm, Morag’s youngest, came out and started living with Mark over the way we got used to the idea before Jack and Ianto came to live here.”

She was about to say more when another local passed putting their finger to their forehead as they passed in greeting and she found herself replying in the same way, thinking about what else she had misread about this amazing place.
Celebrations

Sitting on the sofa and taking a long sip of coffee, Jack watched as Ianto was lying on his stomach, a catalogue in front of him, pen in hand as he studied each page of interest in a particular section.

Ianto ignored the vast majority of the catalogue and was studying the toy section. Not just the toy section, the Lego section. He had a big red felt-tip pen with which he would ring the ones that really took his fancy. Myfanwy was helping and Ianto started to wiggle his whole body, humming to himself as he did when he was particularly happy. As far as Ianto was concerned this activity was just something he did when a new catalogue came in but Jack knew it was presents by stealth.

Ianto had a birthday coming up and Jack was going to shower him with Lego. He was going to start with some basic kits and work up from there. He was sure Ianto would also love Meccano, but for now it was Lego he most wanted because along with the catalogue he talked about it endlessly and spent hours on the Lego website. He watched as Ianto leant forward and took a suck from a straw, drinking down some soda.

This was his treat for today. The nice and nasty test for food earlier in the year had some interesting side effects. Ianto had identified a whole plethora of foods; some very healthy, others complete junk: potato crisps, fizzy drinks and so on. Those he had identified as the best nicest ones and were now treats only. Ianto had eaten enough crap food over the past months and Jack was not about to replace one awful diet with another.

He was allowed one treat a day, soda and a snack packet of crisps or something else which were in the cupboard and included chocolate; except the maple syrup, which was hidden. It depended, like earlier with his discs, his being rewarded for behaving.

The schedule still remained but there were signs it was crumbling. Any change to the schedule or any change generally had to be prepared for and carefully laid out. He could handle big events like the mid-summer ‘Solstice’ festival with that preparation. As long as he was prepared he sailed through it. It was anything unprepared for that set him off.

A case in point was the arrival of what appeared to be fighter jets coming to practice some kind of aerial feat. They screamed across the countryside choosing particular cottages and houses and looked like they were preparing for bomb runs. One had made an extremely low flyover and to his dismay he had found Ianto curled up in the garden triggered into an episode. He was screaming incoherently and had wet himself, something that had not happened since he had left the institute. It took hours to calm him down. Ianto was horribly embarrassed by his loss of self-control and subsequently was extremely clingy for the next week.

Once he had finally got him cleaned up and settled in bed watching ‘Nemo’, Jack - apoplectic with rage - had made some phone calls to RAF base. He had threatened to come over to the base and personally rip the commander’s head off. At first the commander had laughed at him dealing with every complaint from locals with the same disdain as he always did. He told Jack that if he was a military man like his name suggested he should understand the necessity of preparedness. His flyers needed the practice and this Island was ideal. Jack had slammed the phone down and made some more calls.

The next day the commander’s attitude took a 180 degree turn when the Queen’s representative called. He was advised in no uncertain terms that as important as military preparedness might be, in this case Her Majesty respectfully requested he move his flyers to a new location. He had replaced the phone carefully and recalled the group and directed them towards the mainland. When another
call came the following day, this time from the Prime Minister’s Office, followed by a severe dressing down from the head of the RAF, he added the Captain’s name to his mental list of people never to piss off.

“It’s your birthday coming up, and we need to talk about your party,” Jack told him as he finished his coffee.

“Birthday party?” Ianto pulled himself up and sat cross legged as he picked up his crisp packet.

“19th August. Four weeks away, it’s your birthday. We didn’t get to celebrate last year because you were not quite ready, so this year it’s birthday time,” Jack told him as Ianto looked confused. “It’s a special day Ianto, we celebrate the day you were born.”

“Okay,” Ianto said a little unsure what that meant. He tried to think back to last year but it was all jumbled up in his mind.

“There will be a party, we can invite people, we will have all your special foods, all the really good stuff.” He saw Ianto open his eyes wide.

“Everything? Maple syrup, little sausages, sauce, crisps, sausage rolls, cakes, ice cream, chocolate sauce, mini pizzas, chocolate, pop, everything?” he said as if he didn’t quite believe what he was hearing.

“And presents,” Jack nodded, enjoying his reaction.

“What’s presents?” Ianto asked trying to recall where he had heard that word before.

“Like Myfanwy; she was a present. At every birthday party guests bring presents, gifts, special things,” Jack told him.

“That’s nice, everyone gets a present.”

“In this case all the presents would be for you,” Jack said. Ianto sat up straight and threw himself at Jack in a big hug.

“For me?” he asked his arms around Jack looking up at him.

“Yes all for you,” he said tweaking his nose. “All of them, every single one, ” Jack told him. He felt Ianto’s excitement hitch up a notch as he started to wiggle.

“So we have to think about what guests we are going to invite,” Jack told him.

“What’s a guest?” Ianto asked.

“Someone who is invited to the party,” Jack replied. He saw Ianto think about it.

“Myfanwy, Morag, Mac, and Marigold,” he stated. Jack laughed thinking David Morgan’s response to having his prize sow receive a birthday invitation.

“There’s some people who have said they would like to come, who helped up us move here and been supportive. There’s Owen and Tosh, they want to come and see our new place and you.”

“How do we invite them then?” Ianto asked as he tried to think.

“We send out invitations. I got these,” Jack said pulling out a packet which contained several envelopes and a pad of special printed letters with crocodiles around the edges.
“Crocodiles,” Ianto said as Jack opened the packet and saw the design. Currently Ianto was fascinated by crocodiles, the bigger the better. So it was Australian saltwater or African Nile crocodiles that were top that particular hit parade. The best one however was in ‘Peter Pan’ as he kept trying to eat Captain Hook. Ianto was now convinced the best crocodile protection in the world was a clock, not just any old clock a ticky-tock clock. He had told Jack getting the crocodile to swallow it would be the really difficult bit! Jack recalled with some amusement the hours Ianto had spent devising ways to do just that.

“It says ‘better make a snappy reply it’s a special birthday’,” Ianto said laughing as he read the invitation slowly with care.

“So what we do is write the name of the person we wish to invite in here,” Jack pointed to the space at the top of the sheet, “and then we put the date and time here,” Jack indicated to the spaces in the middle. “Then we send them in the mail.” As he finished his explanation Ianto stood up and picked up a pen and came and knelt between Jack’s legs.

“This one’s for you!” Ianto said taking the pad and writing out ‘Jack’ very carefully in his best handwriting, his tongue sticking out slightly in concentration. He then ripped off the top sheet and gave it to Jack.

“Thank you,” Jack said as Ianto gave him a hug.

“You’re welcome,” Ianto told him as Jack hugged him back.

Jumping with excitement and in his best clothes, Ianto watched as Marigold approached conveyed in her special vehicle called a horse box. He was trying to be careful and not get his clothes dirty. Jack had got him all new clothes just for today. He had a new deep red polo neck shirt, a jacket, trousers, belt, proper leather shoes and flat cap just like Mac’s.

So far today had been amazing. He had woken up to find a huge parcel on his bed. It was covered in special paper which had funny dancing crocodiles on it that made him laugh. He wasn’t sure what to do so Jack told him to just rip into it. He did and found it was Lego. He could hardly contain himself; he felt like running around the whole house, he was so happy. It was the biggest one from the catalogue which he had ringed several times; extra big with a red felt-tip pen. He had looked at Jack with awe, trying to figure out how Jack knew this was what he wanted more than anything else in the entire world. Jack had helped him open the box because he was shaking with excitement and his fingers had stopped working properly.

The day had gotten more brilliant from that point on. When he came down for breakfast he had found another huge parcel wrapped in brown paper with his name on it with big stamps in the corner. He had opened it and underneath there was more special paper with real crocodiles on it; this time he couldn’t think what it could be. It was even more Lego; the other set he had circled! He was stunned and burst into tears and Jack had given him a cuddle and asked why he was crying. He had told him it was because he was so happy. He had opened the card and it had a crocodile on the front. In it the message said ‘Have a happy snappy day. Happy Birthday, love from Gwen and Rhys’. He had no idea who they were but he was sure he would like them. So it had been a Legotastic day.

As he had been studying the special Lego booklet on how to make things Jack had called him into breakfast and found had made him his best breakfast, pancakes with maple syrup. He loved maple syrup. The bottle was now hidden away because he had drunk the last bottle when Jack wasn’t looking. He had been very careful making sure Jack had not noticed. He had only sipped a little bit every day putting the bottle back in exactly the same place. How Jack had figured he had drunk it he would never know.
All his most special foods were on a table in the lounge which was funny because the table was meant to be in the kitchen. Jack said it was okay for special occasions. There were several foods he had never heard of like trifle, and jelly. The jelly was so funny it was all wobbly and Jack had told him off for sticking his fingers in it and licking them. They both looked odd but were sure if they were nasty Marigold would love them. But he was sure the jelly was going to be nice because it was black currant flavour like Ribena. He wondered if the jelly wobbled on the way down, when you ate it. He couldn’t wait to find out.

There were three different cakes. Morag had brought one, and the one he had made for Marigold and Jack said he had a special one. Three different kinds of soda: orange, lemonade, and cola. There were mini pizzas, red sausages with tomato sauce, sausages rolls, sandwiches, fruit salad with cherries and crisps.

Another table was set up and this one had presents on it, all of them all for him. He couldn’t imagine what they were. There was a huge banner that said ‘Happy Birthday’ and balloons that hung on the ceiling. They had spent this afternoon blowing them up with a special gas that made your voice all funny. He had laughed till he almost wet himself at Jack’s squeaky voice.

There were some people that Jack had invited. There was Owen who kept telling him funny jokes. One was so funny. ‘What is a crocodile’s favourite game? Snap!’ It was really good and he told everyone he could.

Tosh was there, he liked her because she had been emailing him math puzzles; and Martha who was all brown. He had never met her before but Jack had shown him her photograph. Doctor Singh had come and she was talking in the garden with Martha. Mac was there; at first he hadn’t recognised him because he was not wearing his dungarees. He had given him a hug for coming and showed him how he now had a cap just like his and he was now talking to Morag.

“Hello Mr Morgan,” Ianto said as David got out of his land rover. “Did Marigold like her car ride?” Ianto asked helping him to take down the back and he saw she was lying down in a bed of straw.

“Thank you for coming, Marigold, I’ve make a cake special just for you,” Ianto said as he turned and raced back inside so he could show it to her. David smiled as he watched Ianto race inside. He had not been sure what to make of all this especially when he was received a birthday invitation for his prized pig. Jack had explained that because Ianto had no memories or they were jumbled in a way this was in every sense his first birthday and he wanted to make it as special as he could.

When he had heard about the pair coming to live here two and a half years ago and all the fuss over the house and arrangements he had been highly suspicious. He had no time for people from the mainland, buying up houses to make holiday cottages, crowding out the locals. These were no visitors; these were real people moving up here to build a life, taking part in such a way there were now part of the community.

Ianto was such a lovely man who was clearly making strides towards his recovery from whatever it was that had happened to him. Some said torture, terrible marks across his back the local gossip went. Jack was wonderful the way he looked after him and the pair of them were both well thought of; in fact he and he and all the locals were very protective on them both. So if bringing a pig to his birthday party would make Ianto’s day then who was he to argue?

“Ianto,” he heard Jack calling. “Don’t give her that cake until everyone has eaten.”

“I made it special for her and I want her to see so she doesn’t feel she’s missing out because she can’t come inside,” Ianto shouted back as he walked up the path holding the cake on the plate in a way to ensure it did not slip off.
“Don’t be too long,” Jack had warned him as Ianto concentrated. Reaching the horse box, Ianto now showed the cake to Marigold to the bemused look on David Morgan’s face.

“Jack says she should like it because it’s nasty and if there was ever a need for round bricks, I’m the man to see,” Ianto said proudly.

“That I can believe,” David said as he viewed the ruined flat round cake on the plate messily covered in some kind green icing. Jack beckoned them back inside from the front door.

“Jack says come in and have a coffee and cake,” Ianto told him. “See you later,” Ianto told Marigold as he and David walked in together.

“Here’s the birthday boy,” David declared as they entered the kitchen and made their way to the lounge where everyone was now paying attention to Ianto.

Wide eyed Ianto clapped as Jack brought in his special cake shaped like a motorbike covered in candles. It had ‘Happy Birthday Ianto’ on it and everyone started singing. It was a special song with his name in it.

“Now you need to blow out the candles,” Jack told him, “and make a birthday wish.”

“I got my wish, what do I wish for now?” Ianto asked him seriously.

“Well,” Jack said as the candles burnt down, “wish for more then,” he said. Ianto took a deep breath and blew all the candles out as everyone cheered.

“I did,” he said. He was handed a knife and Jack helped him cut out a piece.

“Chocolate,” Ianto said with a dreamy look as he took a bite.

“Well I think it’s time we opened your presents,” Jack said. Ianto went and stood by the table as everyone was enjoying the cake.

“This is from me,” Owen said as he handed him a small gift. Ianto looked at him. “I thought your joke was my gift,” he told him surprised because the joke was so good he was certain it was his present.

Ianto opened and it was a DVD. “‘Star Wars’,” he read out loud thinking the joke was much better.

“If you watch it will make the second present make more sense,” Owen told him as he handed him substantial box wrapped in yellow paper.

“Oh-ka-y,” Ianto said slightly confused. He opened the now much bigger parcel his mouth dropped open.

“How did you know what I wished for?” he asked as he stood back and saw it was ‘Star Wars’ Lego. Turning the box over in his hands he looked at Owen in awe then putting down the box gave him a hug.

“This is from me,” Martha said as she handed over her present. Opening it he saw it was a book.

“Ha-rr-y Po-tt-er and the Philo...Phil...” he struggled to say.

“Philosopher’s Stone,” she helped him. “Jack said he was reading you The Hobbit.”

“It’s very good. Bilbo lives in a lovely hole in the ground has a sword called Sting and it glows
blue,” Ianto told her in one breath.

“I think you will enjoy this one,” Martha told him as he gave her hug of thanks.

“Thank you,” he said. Tosh handed him her present.

“I know how you like to look for things so I thought you would like this,” she said as he pulled off the paper and found it was books inside a book. No... he looked again and it was lots of books.

He struggled to read the words. “Wh-ere’-s Wa-ll- y,” he said after a few moments. “I’m still learning,” he told everyone, who smiled.

“Now, Wally is very naughty; he is hiding in every scene.” She showed him the first book.

Opening to the middle Ianto started to really study the page and saw the huge amount of detail. “Oh yes I am going to enjoy finding Wally very much,” he said to her and gave a hug.

“There are five and a sticker book where you can make up a scene all of your own,” she added.

“Thank you very much,” he said.

David Morgan now pulled out an envelope. “Now a small wee birdie told me,“ he winked at Jack, “that a certain young man loves Lego, and you spend a lot of time on the internet on the Lego website. Well a few of us got together; me, Morag, Doctor Singh and few others and we got you this.” He handed it over.

Not sure what it was Ianto opened it to find it was a card. He was all excited because the card had Lego pieces on it and as he looked it had been signed by everyone he knew.

“Wow,” Jack said as he took out the voucher and showed it to Ianto.

“What this means is you can go to the website and design a set of your own up to the value hundred fifty pounds,” David explained.

Ianto’s mouth fell open. “Thank you Mr Morgan, thank you Morag, thank you Doctor Singh, thank you everyone,” he said.

“Aye there are a lot of us contributed, so when you made it, the local newspaper might like to have a photograph of what you decide,” Morag added.

“Oh I will! I love the newspaper,” Ianto added. “I would like to have my picture taken.” He looked at Jack who put his arm around him and took the voucher and carefully placed it on the table.

“I’ve been looking at the website and I have some ideas. I want to make a Lego Myfanwy. Thank you,” he said with a huge smile.

Mac moved forward handed him his gift. Ianto opened it to find it was a very old 1940’s manual for a motorbike and Mac read out the title, ‘Triumph. Twin speed 349cc 3T.”

“As you love motorbikes so much, I found an old wreck some years ago. I’ve been collecting parts over the years. I was thinking you and me could get it back working. You can come into town on Wednesday afternoons and give Jack here a real break. He is looking so tired lately I figure he could use a rest,” Mac said. Ianto looked at Jack for approval, a little unsure. He nodded in agreement and then broke into a huge smile.

Both Morag and David Morgan almost choked. Mac hadn’t given anyone any consideration within
living memory. They were still getting over the marvel of Ianto’s visits, let alone the shock of him turning up today, but his gift was unprecedented. Mac had not gone out of his way to show kindness to a soul in five decades.

“This is my best day ever!” Ianto declared as he threw his arms around Mac.

“You know your reputation as a nasty bastard is going to take a knock,” David Morgan said to Mac as he joined him and he added another sandwich to his plate from the food.

“I don’t know why I put up with him. He’s a bloody nuisance, the way he just comes in and hands me tools,” he replied, glancing fondly at Ianto who had a plate piled high with potato chips and was dipping them in pop before eating them.

“You can’t fool me. I always knew you had heart in there somewhere Jessie MacDonald,” Morag teased.

“This is the man who brought his prize pig to a birthday party and a woman who came up with the taste test,” he retorted.

“Once word gets round, god knows people will think you’ve gone soft. They’ll be inviting you to all sorts of events and you never know you, might actually enjoy yourself,” David ribbed.

“That’s Mac to you and don’t you forget it,” he said not very convincingly and stalked off, going to stand next to Ianto.
Grapping Martha by the arm Owen jerked her into the room where Ianto did his jigsaws. Closing the door he rounded on her.

“What in fuck’s name is a representative of UNIT doing here? Jack Harkness has retired. Ianto Jones has been medical invalided out,” he thundered.

“I’m…” she managed to say before Owen launched into her.

“There is nothing here that UNIT need to know about and if you are here sniffing around,” he took a breath as he stabbed his finger at her.

“My being here has nothing to do with UNIT.”

“Doctor Martha Jones, head of the Washington Project; stationed UNIT Headquarters, Washington,” he said in a manner that demanded she deny it. “If you cause them any…” this time it was Martha who interjected by taking hold of his finger.

“My being here today has nothing to do with UNIT,” she took a breath, and went on to explain. “We share a close personal mutual friend. We’ve travelled with him together.”

“You’re talking about the Doctor,” Owen said as he took in what she said.

“Jack and I met through our connection to the Doctor. I was a companion like Jack.” She took a breath as she saw he looked unconvinced.

“Jack and I shared something a while back. It was a very difficult time. I’ve been trying to deal with what happened. I asked to see Jack today because…” she suddenly looked angry.

Owen put out his hand instantly, realising he had completely misread her reason for being here.

“I think we should start again. Owen Harper.”

“Martha Jones.”

“You were saying…” he indicated with his hand.

“I’m not comfortable with sharing this. It was a hard time; a very hard time,” she added.

Owen looked embarrassed. “Martha, I am sorry. I saw you and jumped to every possible wrong conclusion there is. I think you’re trying to say that you and Jack are the members of a very exclusive survivors club.” He tried to repair the damage his assumptions had caused.

“The reason I am here is that I have something to share with Jack. But I have to confirm it first,” she added quickly.

“Go on,” Owen said.

“You were Ianto’s doctor,” she said, dipping her face as she saw him nod. “Does Ianto have a star-shaped scar on his upper right arm?” She put her hand on her own right upper arm to indicate where she meant. “From what I’ve been told it was like a tattoo that had been removed but performed very badly as if it was done in a hurry with whatever material was at hand. I heard it looked like it was burnt off leaving a raised brand,” she finished. She saw him now cross his arms in thought. “Can you
confirm it?” she asked him.

He shook his head. “He has so many marks the only person who would know for sure would be Jack,” he said. “Why is this so important?” he asked after several moments passed.

“One of the big questions we have is how and why Ianto was on the Valiant.”

“I always assumed it was because he was Torchwood. We would have tried to fight back,” Owen told her.

“Good assumption, but none of us really know the truth. As I said I’ve been having a hard time dealing with what happened. So someone said I should write down my story. It's been a journey that has led me to remembering a lot of what happened in more details; like slowing a film down to see an individual scene, and something came to me. As I worked through all threads and I realised I might know who Ianto was and why he was on board.”

“And?” Owen encouraged.

Martha moved to window and looked out to see Ianto chatting away to David Morgan. “Let me tell you about man who stood up and fought against the odds, with no hope of winning.”

As he listened they watched the party spill into the garden.

“And you are certain it's him?” Owen asked when she had finished speaking.

“If he has mark then it's him.”

“Bloody hell,” Owen said. He looked across as Ianto now chatted away to Mac as Jack moved into view.

“And while we’re talking I now need to ask you what the hell is going on with Jack?”

“You’ve noticed,” Owen pointed out.

“The man looks a wreck. He looks like he’s run down and exhausted. Last time he was like this was…” she paused.

“Was?” Owen queried.

“Just after we defeated the Master, he was thin and he had the same terrible haunted look in his eyes.” They watched as Jack appeared to brace himself. “He looks beyond exhausted. Oh, he’s putting on a good face, but he can’t fool me. Something is going on, I could swear it's an effort for him to smile,” she added.

“Yep, not fooling me neither. So let’s do a deal: you tell him about Ianto and I will get him front up about why he looks so bloody knackered.”

“Deal,” Martha said shaking his outstretched hand.

“You have done an amazing job,” Martha said. She joined Jack in the garden while he tucked into some of Ianto’s cake and they watched him enjoy eating jelly and cake as he chatted to Morag.

“He has worked incredibly hard,” Jack told her looking at him fondly.

“I will be honest with you, I never thought he would ever get to speak again let alone make such
progress,” Martha admitted. ‘Jack you must know this is all down to you. He’s verbal, reading, his
diet has changed out of all recognition, he’s gained so much, he’s confident, he’s made friends…”

“Keeping his clothes on,” Veronica Singh said as she came to join them, her plate piled with food.

“Don’t; that was not a good phase,” Jack told them. “I can laugh now but at the time…”

“I think the day he stripped off in the churchyard was probably his most notorious incident.” She
leaned towards Martha. ”You see...the local W.I., they were having their monthly meeting and they
were just about to serve lunch only to discover Ianto naked running though the churchyard, chasing
butterflies.”

Veronica winked as Martha choked. “It was the highlight of their year. I mean, it’s not often one gets
to see a lovely naked young man running around their backyard. Some of the old dears are still
talking about it,” she told her. “And Jack, you have done an amazing job. I can’t believe you have
been at it for just over two years,” she said.

Walking around the garden Owen took in a deep breath. The air was filled with the most delicate
blend of scents. Being late summer the garden was at its best. He was not much for gardens, but he
could admire a work of art when saw it. It had been laid out so that wherever your eye went it was
led to a particular feature. A rose bush, a small statute, or a water feature was just three of the many
hidden delights this garden had to offer. It was a work of love and dedication that bespoke hours
upon hours of hard work. As beautiful as it was he recognised it was still maturing; come back in
five or ten years and it would be mind blowing.

He followed the small path between the beds of flowers until he came to a nook complete with small
comfortable chair and arm rest to place a drink. Sitting down, he did just that. It was beautiful; simply
beautiful. Closing his eyes he allowed himself a moment of quiet to wash over him. Opening them
again he looked back towards the house as he contemplated what he had observed here today. Ianto
in two years had powered ahead. He was verbal, open, and had a wealth of friends; if the long list of
names on the card David Morgan had given him was any indication. He was coming back into
himself in all kinds of ways. He doubted the Ianto he knew would return but he had never expected
that. The best any of them had hoped for was to make him as happy and as secure as they could.
Give him opportunities to be away of the nightmare they had found him in. He was healthy, looked
incredibly fit, and was mentally active way beyond anything they had ever dreamed for him.

And then there was Jack…. standing he walked back to the lawn and re-joined the festivities.

“Gardening...Jack, I’ve been walking around, it's bloody amazing,” he said as he joined Martha,
Veronica and Jack.

“I have found I have hidden talents. I have no idea gardening was so much fun,” Jack told him.

“Well I not sure about the fun aspect of this; back-breaking more like. But this garden...it’s bloody
magnificent.” He waved an arm around.

“Have you seen his tomatoes?” Martha laughed.

“Tomatoes,” Owen looked directly at Jack thinking that master tomato grower was at odds with his
vision of Jack, the leader of Torchwood Three.

“You should see the size of them, they’re huge!” Martha joked as she used her hands to create a
circle.
“Did Jack tell you his tomato display got a third in the local vegetable competition at the village festival a week ago?” Veronica Singh pointed out.

“Third?” Owen stared at him.

“As I said...hidden talents.”

“Well I’m bloody amazed.”

“Would you like to see them?” Jack asked.

“As long as we are only talking tomatoes sure,” Owen replied warily. Both Martha and Veronica burst out laughing.

“Come with me,” Jack indicated towards the back of the garden.

“Are you coming ladies?” Owen indicated.

“Oh no we’ve seen them and they are monsters,” Martha told him seriously trying to keep straight face.

“Yes, how did you get them so big?” Veronica asked.

“Owen, before these lovely ladies wile my secrets away with their charms,” Jack pointed toward the green house as he gave Martha and Veronica a wink. “To the greenhouse.”

“We are just going to see tomatoes and nothing else,” Owen checked out as they reached their destination.

“Why, were you hoping to see something else?” Jack teased as he pulled open the door. “Here; try one,” he said as he reached over and picked off several cherry tomatoes which Owen popped into his mouth.

“Bloody nice,” he added as he chewed enjoying the sweet flavour. “Bloody hell, those tomatoes are whoppers. What is your secret?” Owen said as he pointed to one particular plant. “Are you sure you are not relying on some kind of alien tech?”

“No, that would be cheating and besides it's more fun doing this the old fashioned way. Lots of local competition in seeing who can grow the biggest pumpkin, the longest runner bean...” he paused as he saw Owen look serious.

“Right, I have led you down here under false pretences,” Owen declared.

Jack raised his eyebrows. “You know the trouble with greenhouses is they can be seen into but if your game...”

“Harkness you are a sick, sick man,” Owen said deadpan, shaking his head.

“Tease,” Jack retorted.

“Why are you looking so fucking knackered?” he stated outright.

“I’m fine,” Jack replied a little too quickly.

“Well you don’t look fine.”
“I’m fine really.” Owen looked unconvinced. “Really.” A few moments passed as Owen just looked at him. “Look, I had a summer cold from Ianto. And you know viruses are the only thing that can knock me for six. It’s just taken a while to get over it fully. With all the party preparation on top of looking after Ianto, gardening, running around…” he explained.

Owen pursed his lips. “Can I ask you a question?” he interjected as Jack took a breath. “Does it normally work?”

“What?”

“That excuse?”

Jack looked sheepish and pulled his lips in over his teeth. “Yeah,” he said quietly.

“Truth.”

“Truth, I am tired. Been a busy summer: gardening, looking after Ianto, this party...I promise once this is over I am going to take a break,” he told him.

“How tired is tired?” Owen queried refusing to be diverted.

“Tired enough I go to bed earlier. We’re both normally out for the count by ten, and some nights nine.”

“You sleeping okay?”

“Sure, a good night’s sleep and I’m raring to go,” he said.

Owen looked unconvinced. “How many hours?”

“Full night?”

“So you’ve gone from only needing a couple to what...eight, ten hours?”

“Something like that.”

“So what is it?”

“Well some nights it’s more than others. Ianto normally is in bed first, then I follow and I sleep until woken.”

“So you’re sleeping a lot more; going from only needed a couple to ten hours,” Owen reflected. “Have you spoken to Veronica about it?”

“Yes... no.” He looked at Owen. “We’ve talked about it a couple of times.”

“And?”

“I’m planning on taking a break…”

“And how are you going to take an actual break?” he asked outright, realising Jack was trying to divert the conversation.

“I’m still working on the details,” Jack hedged.

“Jack, I am going to honest with you: you look bloody awful. I can see you’ve lost weight. I mean
you’re looking thin, not that you had any love handles to begin with, but I swear to god you look gaunt. It's clear that you’re moving in a way to preserve yourself, taking little breaks. But I swear to god Jack, you look close to collapse. If you were back in Cardiff I would be doing a full workup while at the same time tell you to take time out. I’m worried about you and it's clear you need…” he was interrupted by a knock on the door and saw it was Ianto.

“Mr Morgan is leaving and he wants to say goodbye,” Ianto told him.

“Of course, and I’ll some of the leftovers for Marigold,” Jack told him as he continued to look at Owen.

“I’ll get a bucket,” Ianto suggested.

“Excellent, I’ll be right out,” Jack said. He went to leave.

“This is not over,” Owen told Jack lifting a warning finger.

“Look, I’ll make the same deal with you I did with Doctor Singh: if by the end of summer, and you both think I need it, I promise you can both give me a full work up and I will take that break,” he smiled.

Owen watched his retreating back. “The trouble is Jack I have this feeling you need more than a break, and whatever is going on is going to catch up with you; fast, hard, and soon, and no amount of trying to pretend everything is all right is going to help.” Owen said aloud, deep in thought and concern. He picked off another small tomato and popped it into his mouth. Jack was in trouble, deep trouble. With Jack dancing the light fantastic of lies, denying there was an issue, all he could do was to make plans and prepare for when whatever was going on reached its natural conclusion… First things first; talk to Tosh and find out just how long it would take for them to get here if they were needed in a blinding fucking hurry.
Handing over a mug of coffee to Martha Jack sank into the sofa ensuring he did not spill a drop. Using his toes he flicked off his shoes and placed both socked feet onto the coffee table and let out a deep sigh.

“Here’s to a wonderful party,” Martha said as they touched mugs and Jack took a deep sip.

Several moments passed as they enjoyed the peace and quiet. With Morag and Martha’s help the house had been restored. The only thing left was a pile of washing up which Jack had promised Ianto he would leave for him as he so enjoyed stacking the dishwasher. Ianto had gone up to bed worn out.

They enjoyed the long rays of the evening sun which filled the room with a warm orange glow. Taking one more sip Jack turned to Martha. “Alright, I’m ready but before you speak you should know Owen has already spoken to me along with Doctor Singh,” he said openly.

“I know; he told me. None of us are convinced Jack so you should drop the ‘I’ve just had a busy summer getting over a cold story’ because you’re not fooling any of us. I know Owen and Veronica are both worried about you. I am too. But that’s not why I stayed behind,” she saw Jack relax back into the sofa.

“You and me Jack; we saw the end of the world and survived.” She saw him nod. “It's been so hard. It's like it never happened except you and me know it did. My parents sort of understand but they have had to deal with their own difficulties, at least they have each other and they shared a common experience. But I am on my own.” She looked at Jack who took her hand.

“I know” he said quietly.

“While you were on the Valiant I walked the ends of the earth. Most of it I was on the run, living on the edge, not knowing if I could make it through another day. Each day waking up and forcing myself forward,” she tried to explain. “Then it all changed, everything returned to normal: supermarket shopping, driving a car, hot water, toast, traffic...Eastenders.” Jack stroked her hand as she swallowed. “As I said I’ve been having difficulty dealing with the stress of what happened. I was talking to someone about this. I couldn’t give them any details or they would think I was mad. To help they suggested I write it down. Everything I could remember as a way of getting it out of my brain and making it more real. It's in black and white on paper so it has substance.”

“So that’s what I started to do. Writing it down, and as I did I began to recall things; stories, rumours, things that were reported to me as I travelled. As chaotic as it was and as overwhelming as the Master’s control was there was a resistance. It had humble beginnings all over the world. It was part of the reason I was able to go from place to place.”

“The Master was ruthless; he would flatten whole towns to wipe out a cell. One by one they were all wiped out. I don’t think he ever truly wiped out everyone but he did break up the bigger, more organised groups into smaller cells, with no communication they became more and more isolated.”

“I think Torchwood was one of those groups in South Wales, centred on Cardiff. They ran a running battle with the Master for weeks. Their sheer audacity was their hallmark. You name it they did it; pitched battles, blowing up supply depots that the Master relied on. Smuggling individuals about, getting in medical help...you name it. Sabotage; internal, external, anything. Their leader said ‘every act of resistance meant they tied down the Toclafane’. If they were harassing them then the resistance
“They had a symbol: a V with a line through it like an upside down A. It began to appear all over the place but none more so than South West of England and Wales. It spread out, and no matter where it appeared a new cell would form in response. It drove the Master mad. He spent more resources hunting down the members of this one group than any other. Their leader was called Axel. He was a hands’ on leader who believed on leading by example. He was as reckless in his courage as he was brave. But he was loved for it; just his turning up was enough to give people the strength to continue fighting back. He was renowned; I heard about him all over the place, his message being passed on word of mouth.” She became sad.

“It was only a matter of time before he was going to be caught. It was during a raid on the depot for supplies to the Valiant that he was captured. He suffered for weeks; they filled him with drugs to make him speak along with torture. But he remained silent; he refused to give them a single name. Somehow his story was smuggled off the Valiant. He became a legend. Many people went into battle with ‘for Axel’ on their lips. He gave people something more precious than food or medicine: he gave them courage when there was no hope that anyone would survive. His endurance became a symbol to those still surviving that they could endure and win. That even waking up alive became an act of defiance. Being alive at the end of each day was a victory. I cannot tell you how much his suffering meant to all of us.”

“I can see he meant a great deal to you,” Jack as he saw how affected she was.

“Does Ianto have a star-shaped scar on his upper right arm?” She asked quietly after several moments had passed.

Jack’s eyes flew open at her question as the importance of her story began to become clear. “Yes, yes he does.”

“Jack I think Ianto is Axel.” She saw him become emotional; closing his eyes...

“Are you certain?”

“It fits Jack; the scar, he has no finger and palm prints. I know only the Axel’s group managed to do this because every group I encountered asked me if I knew how to achieve it.”

“The scar?”

“He got it during a raid. It’s a mark left by a particular energy weapon and...” she stuttered.

“And”

“The scars on his back; it was said that the Master used an ‘Amber Sonic’ whip as punishment. There were lash marks for every act he and his group did.”

Several moments passed as Jack struggled to compose himself. “There are so many,” he choked. “One for every...”

“I know Jack. There are marks upon marks, neck to ankle.” She tried to comfort him but he pulled away and stood up.

She watched as he walked to the window and looked out. She was not sure how much time passed when she heard a sob. Standing herself she went and stood beside him and placed her hand on his back.
“And what was the reward for all his suffering?” he struggled to say. “He should have been returned to life, living a life, one where he had some kind of real future, instead of this half-life.” He took in a shuddered breath. “If I had got him off that ship…” he left the rest unsaid.

“Jack, I was there,” Martha argued.

“My failure is complete” Jack said under his breath and took Martha by the shoulders. “His suffering was for nothing. All he is now is a derelict; a hollow shell. Martha, he can’t recall the simplest things; he has to be reminded over and over again. He’s a man trapped in a mind of a five year old. A brilliant five year old but one that will never grow up. His body has been destroyed; he’s lost all sexual function. You have no idea how he struggles with the simplest tasks we take for granted, like using the telephone. He loves motorbikes but will never be able to ride one or drive a car. He’s had everything stolen from him that was vital to him, that meant he could lead an independent life making his own decisions.”

“It wasn’t for nothing Jack! I pray whenever tyranny exists there will be some like Ianto. A soul who can show that it’s not possible to destroy the human spirit no matter the odds.” She stopped when she saw the look of despair on Jack’s face. “Ianto made his choices. He could have chosen to walk away, but he didn’t. He faced the worst the Master had to throw at him and survived.”

“He was left behind. That is something I have to live with every day.” He pointed towards the stairs. “He has to live with the consequences of my failure.”

“You are being incredibly unfair Jack, it was chaos.” She took a sharp breath. “I was there too Jack, I helped! I thought we had checked every room! We threw everyone off we could including all the dead bodies.” She saw the haunted look on his face. “You can’t blame yourself for this,” Martha told him, distressed, as she tried to make her point. “Time was re-winding it was worse than frantic. We did the best we could.”

Jack looked at her sharply. “Not good enough!”

“Tell me then what more could you I or anyone else have done!”

“I should have gotten him off,” he replied stubbornly.

“I think you are being very hard on yourself. If nothing else I should face some of the blame.”

He shook his head. “No Martha, this is my failure in more ways than you can imagine.”

“How Jack? Tell me how this is your fault.” She looked at him and felt a shudder pass through her and her face dropped. “No Jack. No. Tell me you…you don’t Jack…no, please… you can’t! That’s…”

“This is my burden. I failed Ianto in every possible way it is to fail someone and still be living. But I don’t have a choice and nor does he. Any choice Ianto had was taken from him the moment I ran towards the TARDIS,” he said quietly.

“I don’t believe that Jack; I won’t accept that what happened was your fault and yours alone.”

“I have chosen my penance: to stand by the man who loved me more than I ever deserved. As you have rightly pointed out Ianto has an incredible soul who continues to show the world that it is possible to overcome the worst monstrous acts.”

“But what about your suffering?”
“I see that now as just punishment.” She heard him say. She felt a tear roll down her face. “I don’t think there even a category for my crimes against humanity, but I’m guilty on every charge.”

“Not to me Jack, never to me!” she said as she tried to comfort him. “Never to me!”

“Ianto loves me, and I love him. He loves me. That is Ianto’s gift to me.”

“Listen to me you are not a monster.” she began to argue back but stopped in that instant because she knew Jack had locked himself into his own guilt. She knew no argument she could give would convince him otherwise so she just stood beside him as they watched the sun dip below the wall of the garden. She heard him let out a deep sigh as a deeper understanding grew of why Jack looked so terrible, and promised herself that when this all came crashing down she would be there for him.
Mighty Erections

Perched high on the back of his mighty dragon, she released her flame, scorching all before her, and he screamed out his battle cry. Holding his lightsaber aloft Luke Ianto set her up for the final charge. The Death Star and the bad man Darth Master would shiver at his feet in terror. He leapt off the dragon’s back as Myfanwy took off to fight the space fleet, keeping them busy while he rescued the fair Prince held captive in the cells.

Running through the corridors, he found Chewbacca at his side. “This way to the cells,” he called out seeing that now his lightsaber had been replaced with a blaster.

“Is this the right cell block?” Luke Ianto interpreted the growls of his companion.

“I know everything; just make sure the good coffee is on for when we get him back,” Luke Ianto told him

“Yes, the coffee is on; the special royalty blend,” Chewbacca growled.

“Perfect, if Prince Jack likes our coffee he will pay us in coffee beans,” Luke Ianto replied as he burst around the corner and started firing. The bad guys dropped to the floor in exaggerated movements clutching chests and crying, ‘Oh no, it’s the man on the dragon!’

Stepping down to the cells he found the right one. He pushed in the code ‘alohomora’ and the door opened. He saw the prince lying on a bench; he looked as handsome as he had on the hologram.

“Aren’t you a little short to be a stormtrooper?” the prince said, sitting up.

“I’m Luke Ianto; I am here to rescue you.”

“How do I know this is not a trick?” the prince said he stood up.

“I have your R2 unit and Gandalf the Wizard,” Luke Ianto told him.

“Excellent,” the prince said. “I will reward you in kisses,” he said, pulling him close and placing his hands on his arse so their bellies were touching, and gave him a massive snog.

“I like kissing loads, but right now, we need to get out of here. Let’s go I know the way out,” Luke Ianto said as they pulled back and grabbed the prince’s hand.


The room faded and he found himself in his secret underground lair, ‘the Hub’. He could hear Myfanwy his mighty dragon settling down after her fantastic effort, as she chewed on the carcass of Darth Master.

He turned and there was Prince Jack who drew him closer. At last his reward as Prince Jack pressed his lips against his and felt himself begin to tremble as they hungrily kissed each other. Now he felt both Prince Jack’s hands on his arse pulling him closer. Without warning they had no clothes on and the prince was chasing him laughing and catching up with him.

When Jack caught him he ran his hands over his body, It felt so good….. Now he was chasing Jack, when he reached him he pushed him up against the dark wall as they crashed their lips together. He
felt an incredible excitement building up as Jack ran his hand between his legs. He looked down and saw Jack had his hand around his penis, and he felt a giant sneeze build up……then everything seemed to explode in a white haze… Ianto woke with a jerk, hot and out of breath. He lay there for a moment as the sensations faded then he felt wetness in his pyjama bottoms.

Slipping out of bed as quietly as he could he felt under the bed and pulled out the spare pair of bottoms he kept there. He went to the bathroom and cleaned himself up with toilet paper. He felt so strange after dreams like this. They had started just after his birthday party. Not every night, but often enough for him to stash a pair of spare bottoms under the bed in case this was an accident. He was sure it wasn’t an accident, but he didn’t want Jack to know just in case. The dreams were so nice he was sure they were not a bad thing. He loved the dreams; he always felt so powerful and they always had him and Jack kissing, touching and ended with a giant happy sneeze. He yawned but the dreams always made him feel so sleepy. Putting the soiled bottoms in the washing basket he climbed back into bed.

Waking later Ianto felt something was different. A part of him felt all stiff, hot and achy. He reached down and felt with his hand and it felt like his penis was hard. He blinked as he looked down. He couldn’t see properly because the curtains were drawn and it looked early. He looked at the clock, 5.30 am.

Getting out of bed carefully so not to disturb Jack he went to the bathroom to have a look. Turning on the light he noticed something was sticking out so he pulled down his pyjama bottoms. It was his penis. He wrapped his hand around and it felt like it was pulsing. He moved his hand up and down. ‘Woh,’ he thought, ‘that felt good.’ He looked closer; as he pulled his hand down he noticed the top drew back to reveal a sizable round bit with a slit across the top. He was fascinated because this was not something he had never really noticed before. He moved his hand up and down and he felt his penis jerk in response. Not sure what this meant he let go. He now heard the birds start to sing and he noticed it was going down so he took a piss and washed his hands. It was early so he crept downstairs and started playing with his Lego.

“What is this?” Ianto demanded as he stood before Jack who was getting dressed. Turning Jack was faced with a fully erect Ianto.

“It started about a week ago, every morning I wake up, and my penis is big, hard and sticks out,” he explained as Jack looked down.

Jack had been expecting this; as much as Ianto had been trying to hide it he had been having a series of wet dreams. This in turn meant it was only a matter of time before he woke up with a full-on morning erection.

“You have an erection,” he explained as he tried not look at the magnificence of his lover.

“Erection,” Ianto repeated.

“Your penis has an erection. When you first wake up it gets hard, and at other times too,” Jack told him. “I get one too first thing when I wake up,” he told him thinking about the growing ache in his own groin at the sight.

“What’s it for?” Ianto asked, touching himself.

Jack turned away biting his lip and proceeded to pull out clothes. “Well, when you touch it right, you will have an orgasm.”
“What’s an orgasm?” Ianto asked his forehead creased in concentration as he moved his hand gently up and down his cock.

“Something exciting, amazing, and it makes you feel really good,” Jack tried to explain. He felt himself flush and sweat broke on his brow, and his breathing quickened.

“Maybe you could show me how you use yours?” Ianto looked at him as he stroked himself.

“I could but I’m sure you will figure it out,” Jack said slowly as he tried to tear his eyes away.

Around a week passed and Ianto’s growing curiosity over his sexual development came with a degree of frustration for him.

Ianto awakening sexuality filled Jack with a dilemma as Ianto kept asking him for help. He had shown him his erect penis several times because but hadn’t figured it out how to stroke himself with enough rhythm for anything to occur.

He wanted Ianto to re-discover that for himself because he didn’t want to take advantage of him. Sex had been the one thing up that until now had not been an issue. The damage to his brain had caused a form of sexual dysfunction Jack has been scared would never right itself, denying Ianto any sexual pleasure. Geoff had advised that this was not uncommon in torture victims and it was a wait-and-see situation.

He figured as most males managed to work out how to use their own equipment it was only a matter of time before that he figured out the right combination of stimulation to manage an ejaculation. It was a practice-makes-perfect situation, and Ianto was trying, fascinated with this new facet of his body.

Jack would love to re-introduce Ianto to the delights of sex. It had been almost three years for him but every waking moment had been filled with Ianto’s care and it had not crossed his mind. In truth he hadn’t had sex since his last time with Ianto, the day he went back to 1941. Now with Ianto wanting more he felt the need reawaken in himself, the hard-ons he had as Ianto touched himself were so painful he had difficulty walking.

He wanted Ianto, ached for him, but he didn’t want to put himself into any position where he was the initiator no matter how seemingly innocent. On the other hand maybe the fact that this part of Ianto’s body was working again meant he was ready. It was a dilemma that raced around his mind in an almost continual loop.

Sex was not just comfort; it was tied up with a whole raft of other emotions which Ianto may not be ready to deal with. Ianto was so developed in some ways but struggling in others. He was not innocent, but had innocence about him. On the other hand he was a fully developed adult not a child and Ianto had every right to reclaim the full functioning of his own body. Who was Jack to deny this to him? This thinking led to another dilemma. So what happened if they ended having sex? Did Ianto want to have sex with him? Maybe Ianto had a right to choose who he wanted. However he was unsure if Ianto fully understood the implications in a mature manner. He did not doubt Ianto loved him completely and utterly, but did that translate into a sexual relationship? It was no help that they had shared this in the past; in fact it muddied the waters. Or then again maybe sex was just an extension of the physical comfort they gave each other and he should stop overanalysing this.

Over the next few days Jack walked this tightrope. He answered questions as Ianto tried to figure out his body. It all came to a head late one evening. Ianto had just had a shower and in the process of
washing himself he had given himself an erection.

Lying on the bed on his back, his hand around his length, Ianto pumped himself slowly up and down. He had done this many times over the past days but he had never managed to get an orgasm, something Jack has said would be wonderful.

Picking up the towel Jack was confronted by Ianto lying on the bed on his back, naked, stroking himself. Within a heartbeat all the moisture left his mouth and he felt himself flush. Ianto was now in the best shape for years; he was stroking himself in long strokes, rubbing his thumb over his slit. Jack felt the power of speech leave him as his entire blood flow went straight to his groin. He felt his heart beat wildly when Ianto looked directly at him.

“Help me Jack, I can’t figure this out. What the hell do you with this thing to get it to orgasm?” Ianto growled looking up at Jack.

Throwing down the towel Jack slid next to him. Laying prone he kissed him deeply in a passionate snog. At the same time he took Ianto’s hand, linked their fingers then wrapped both hands around Ianto’s cock and stroked him, building up a rhythm. Ianto was now kissing him back as his hips began to move in time, thrusting faster and faster. Then he gasped and Jack felt come spurt over their fists.

Gasping Ianto lay with a glorious look on his face, panting as he looked up at his hand, all sticky and wet; then at Jack, his mouth open in wonderment. After a few moments he realised it was the same stuff from when he had his happy dreams.

“I -wasn’t- expecting- that!” he burst out in sharp pants. Jack, his head buried in Ianto’s shoulder, groaned.

Jack kissed him then he sat up. “Well now you know what it’s for, you can touch it as much as you like,” Jack told him. He got up and headed towards the bathroom and closed the door.

Ianto lay looking at the ceiling trying to catch his breath. He brought up his hand and looked at the pearl-like liquid again. He had no idea that any part of him could do that. Even his dreams, as nice they had been, were nothing like the reality. He touched his finger to his lips to take a taste; the liquid had sort of a strange bitter flavour.

He went over what had just happened in his mind. Jack had kissed him. Not a kiss better, but a better kiss. It was fantastic, the way their lips moved against each other. His whole body was tingling and flushed, and he was trembling with excitement and he laughed out loud, he felt so good. As he lay there another feeling began to take over; one of utter satisfaction. He felt so calm and at peace. Jack was right; orgasms were amazing exciting, and made you feel good.

Was this repeatable? He hoped so. He wanted to do this again and again, as many times as possible. He liked the way Jack touched him with his lips and hand and exploded with orgasms. He had always like kissing Jack but had no idea they could make him feel like he wanted to kiss him forever.

Closing the door, Jack put his head up against the wall, unzipped his trousers and he released his own cock. It was so hard it was painful and dripping. Using Ianto’s come as lubrication he stroked himself off. It had been so long; three strokes and come splashed onto back of the door. Trying to catch his breath, his heart pounded as he closed his eyes at the release. Several moments passed and he straightened up, cleaned himself, then washed his hands and dried them. Taking a washcloth he entered the bedroom.
Looking across the garden, Ianto sat deep in thought. It had been three days since the evening when he had had his first real orgasm. He had lots to think about. He felt deeply frustrated; this was not a new feeling, because he felt frustrated most of the time. He felt like this because he couldn’t express in words what he was thinking and feeling. Thoughts all got jumbled and he got more and agitated. But this was a different kind of frustration.

Jack had helped him out and it had been amazing. Now all he could think about was having Jack do that to him again. Kissing; he wanted to kiss Jack and hold him close them kiss him some more. He had ideas and he wanted to try them out…on Jack. He smiled as he went back to the sensation of being touched and he smiled at the idea of touching Jack just like that. Jack had answered all his questions and they continued on as they always had. Over the past days he had found lots that needed kissing better and had asked for extra cuddles, but Jack wasn’t getting the hint. Maybe he thought Ianto didn’t want him to do anymore. Maybe that’s why he just had answered his questions and helped him out but didn’t realise Ianto wanted to continue. He had a thought; maybe he should tell Jack about his dreams and then ask for more practice. That way Jack would know what he wanted. He nodded to himself; yes, that was what he would do.

Laying half-awake Ianto waited until he felt Jack get into bed. Jack always came to bed later, having a couple of hours to himself in the evening. Ianto wrapped himself around Jack as he held him close as he always did and listened to Jack’s heartbeat as Jack settled down to sleep.


“I like kissing you too.” Jack kissed him on the forehead.

“I don’t mean a kiss better, I mean a better kiss,” Ianto tried to explain. He felt Jack become really still. “I was thinking about my dreams.” Ianto struggled to find the words.

“What sort of dreams?” Jack asked sleepily and relaxed.

“Nice dreams, really nice dreams,” Ianto enthused.

“Dreams can be nice,” Jack told him, closing his eyes, relieved that the topic had changed.

“My dreams are nice, fun dreams and I wake up like I did the other night,” Ianto explained inadequately.

“I see,” said Jack, yawning, not understanding and holding Ianto closer to him.

“Yeah they are so funny, they have you and me in them.”

“Well, dreams are like that,” Jack told him, settling down.

“Kissing.”

“I know you like kissing,” Jack repeated.

“In my fun dreams you and I kiss lots, with chasing and holding and…”

“Kissing?” Jack looked at him. Ianto pulled away and pushed himself up on an elbow.

“Loads of kissing. We start all dressed, but we end always end up with no clothes on. I run my hands
all over you and you run your hands over me. We hold each other real close with our hands on each other’s arses, kissing like we did the other night.” Ianto stopped for a moment and bit his bottom lip at the thought and took a breath “ sometimes I chase you and sometimes you chase me, and we always end up kissing, better kissing not a kiss better and you reach down and touch me like you did after my shower. Except in my dreams I didn’t realise what was happening.”

“They sound like fun dreams,” Jack commented slowly not sure how to react.

“Best fun dreams ever! I wake up all excited and feel like I’ve had a huge happy sneeze,” Ianto told him wide-eyed.

“Does every fun dream have you and me kissing and touching?” Jack asked. He saw Ianto nod slowly smiling then looked more serious.

“Yes, but not as good as what we did the other night because it was nice to have the dream, awake, for real,” Ianto told him. “And I wanted to know if we could practice? I liked you showing me, but I want to practice because I want to try things too.” Jack listened, several emotions and thoughts running through him as Ianto continued. “I want the dreams to be awake and not in my dream. With you kissing me and me kissing you for real. I going to need a lot of practice because I don’t know things, but I want to try things, kissing and things, and touching. It was the best- thing ever – kissing awake for real and exploding with orgasms…” Jack stared at him as he was faced with his dilemma and realised there was only one answer he could give.

Jack moved away and sighed sadly. “Look Ianto, I would love nothing more than to kiss…” he got no further as Ianto launched himself at him and gave him a powerful, sloppy snog.

As Ianto kissed him he realised that Ianto had actually asked for something he wanted. He had tried to express it in his terms. Confused as it sounded it was really clear and his actions spoke volumes. So maybe he should stop agonising and give Ianto the first thing he had ever asked for outright.

Pulling Ianto close they lay prone to each other as Jack took control, and gave him a closed-mouth kiss. “Em,” Ianto mumbled as he sought out Jack’s lips and put his hands on Jack’s waist. Jack deepened the kiss, stroking the back of Ianto’s neck.

It was more heated this time and Ianto felt himself stiffening up so he got closer to Jack and kissed him again, and he felt his excitement build. Closing his eyes and concentrating he kissed him some more and felt the need to get even closer. He opened his eyes when he felt something of Jack pressing into him. “Does kissing make you hard as well?”

“Oh yeah, kissing is one; touching is another.” Jack gently ran his hand down Ianto’s side and stroked his arse then pulled him in closer.

“That’s nice like my dreams,” Ianto declared as Jack went their hands down each other.

“And different kinds of kisses,” Jack said, now kissing Ianto along the neck and under his chin. He took his earlobe and sucked it gently. Ianto chuckled.

“Tickles,” he told him. He now went back and gave Ianto deep kisses, sucking in his tongue gently as Ianto responded in kind.

“I really like that,” Ianto declared as they pulled back. “I am really hard so my body must really like this and you are too.” He touched Jack feeling his erection and bit his lip, yes this was what he wanted.
“Well, would you like another orgasm like the other night?” Jack asked. He saw Ianto nod slowly, smiling as Jack took off the boxers he slept in. Ianto took off his pyjama bottoms and threw them on the floor then moved in closer.

Taking Ianto’s hand he pulled it down so he could feel Jack’s erection as Ianto nodded. Getting as close they could Jack now kissed Ianto with even more passion. Ianto had his arm around Jack holding his arse and pulling him as close as possible. Now he felt their cocks touching and he began to tremble as he became lost in the sensation of his lips on Jack’s. Jack’s hands were on his arse pulling him closer as his cock slid against Jack’s. He felt his hips move of their own volition; it was becoming unbearably wonderful and he felt so hot and the sweat added lubrication as his whole focus centred on his cock. He felt a tingling in his spine and felt his balls twitch and the world exploded in a haze of sensation.

Grabbing some tissues from the night stand, Jack cleaned them both up as Ianto laughed softly. “We’re all sticky. Did you have an orgasm too?”

“Oh yeah,” Jack responded with a gentle kiss. “It was wonderful.”

“I’m glad because they feel so good.” He yawned as Jack now held him close. “I like my dreams being awake and I’m going to need loads of practice because there is lots I want to try especially kissing and touching. Can we do lots of practice? Because this is the best thing we have ever done,” Ianto said as he closed his eyes.

“Oh yes, as much practice as you like.” Jack kissed his forehead.

“Good, because I want to give you a lot of orgasms because they make me feel so good and you should feel good too,” Ianto told him snuggling closer as another thought came to him. “Other people...we should tell them, so they know about this so they can feel good,” Ianto expressed himself.

“What we do here is private. It’s a grown-up thing; grown-ups don’t talk about it,” Jack told him, almost groaning at the idea that Ianto might tell people. Not that he felt anything they were doing was wrong but it might be misunderstood and this was between him and Ianto.

“Like the naked thing, only in the garden,” Ianto yawned again as a wave of sleepiness overtook him.

“We can be as naked in bed as much as you want,” Jack told him feeling the irresistible pull of sleep.

“I like naked, naked Jack, naked Ianto in dreams and for real...” he yawned again, closed his eyes and gently began to snore.

Kissing his forehead Jack held Ianto safe in his arms. He felt a surge of relief. Ianto had done it again. He had come across a major hurdle and found a way through. It felt wonderful they had passed this hurdle. Ianto had experienced so much sexual abuse he wanted to counter that with as much loving and exciting, positive sex as he could. He held him close; it had felt so good, he had missed this so much and smiled as he knew Ianto was one step closer to being healed.
Lying on the floor, Ianto was stretched out on his front studying the book in front of him. He loved the books Tosh had given him. The first book had been no challenge, but the rest were much harder. Right now he was stuck on ‘The Land of Wallys’. All the characters looked just like Wally; he had found the wizard and the dog, but Wally was sneaky. He glanced up at Jack who was reading the newspaper. He kept telling Jack he could read the news online but no, he liked the newspaper. Jack also liked doing the crossword puzzle; the Sudoku he always gave to Ianto. It was easy; he could see the pattern immediately and could just fill in the numbers. The crossword however was different. It was words and words were what he struggled with the most. He always had to really think about the right word to use.

“Jaaaack?” Ianto said carefully.

“Yeeees?” Jack asked not looking up from his newspaper.

“We are going to practice kissing tonight, aren’t we?” Ianto asked. He didn’t look up from his book.

“We practice every night,” Jack reminded him.

He smiled. Good; they needed more practice. Practice now included mornings in bed or the shower and sometimes all day. He loved the game Jack had invented; it involved lots of fun kissing and touching each other, tickling and more kissing and orgasms.

“Jaaaaack?” he asked again.

“Yeeeeeess” Jack said still reading.


“Definitely, thinking can make you hard,” Jack replied.

“Cos I was thinking about kissing you and I got hard and sometimes when I just think about you and it happens,” he told him.

“That’s normal. Many things make you hard Ianto, thinking about sex is one of them,” Jack explained.

“I still can’t do that thing on my own, I never seem to get it going right,” Ianto said looking up now.

Jack looked around from his newspaper at Ianto who was looking at him with a cheeky grin.

“You know except for that first time, I think you only say that because you would rather I did it or we do it together,” Jack grinned. Ianto bit his lips then smiled like his secret had been discovered then returned to his book.

Jack went back to reading his paper. Ianto’s step into sexual maturity had had some unexpected side effects for both of them. It had meant a far higher degree of physical intimacy, something they both very much enjoyed. Jack had been carefully introducing little elements he knew Ianto had enjoyed in the past. Making love to Ianto was wonderful. His experiments on kissing had moved from lips to other things, and anything he found he enjoyed he wanted to check this had the same effect on Jack.
Often Ianto just wanted to lie next to him and just kiss. Ianto had always been a great kisser, moving towards completion via a mutual hand grasp. They did this because Ianto had a love of the familiar. Other times he wanted to explore. He found Jack’s and had his own penis fascinating and had found delight in playing with it, often doing direct comparisons. He had even measured them much to Jack’s amusement. Ianto had just discovered he loved watching Jack as he came and would delight in bringing him to orgasm just to observe.

On the other hand Jack wanted to give as much pleasure to Ianto as he could. To do this he had come up with a new game which Ianto adored. It was called ‘how many times can Ianto come in one day?’ Six was the record and every now and then he would challenge Ianto to see if he could beat it. He saved this game for when Ianto became unsettled in some way as a means of distracting him and it worked. They had spent many a cold and wet afternoon in bed, snuggling under the covers as Ianto attempted to beat his recovery time.

It was satisfying in a way he had not experienced for a long time. The only problem was he was beyond exhausted. It was growing, a bone-aching exhaustion he had been fighting for months, and the cold he had gotten earlier in the year had just made it that much worse. Every day it was like a little more energy was stolen away, leaving him a wreck.

To begin with he had tried to resolve it with more sleep and this had worked for a short period. However as time passed no matter how much he slept he had begun to wake up as exhausted as he did before he went to sleep. Every day he forced himself forward because the simplest of tasks were becoming increasingly difficult. Stairs were the worst. The walk into the village left him so tired he could barely stand. He was losing weight and since Veronica had raised the issue he had upped his calories but his weight still continued to fall. It was like he was burning energy somehow, but he was curious to why because his physical activity was no more or less since their arrival.

He went back over the conversations he had had with Owen and Veronica. He had told them the truth; he put this all down to nearly three years of hard work and no break. He had never been prone to illness; his 51st Century physiology protecting him from almost every bacteria and disease. Only viruses had the potential to knock him for six. That had to be the answer.

Well, with winter coming up and less work in the garden he did plan to take a break; not the one people imagined but taking it easier over the colder months. He was sure that would sort it out. He shook out the newspaper. His head pounded as he ordered his thoughts; this was a mind over matter issue. He was not going to give into this no matter what because if he did he had this horrible feeling he would sleep for months. No virus was going to the better of Captain Jack Harkness, he had faced worse much worse and survived.

What he couldn’t understand was why this was growing worse now just as Ianto had gained some independence? Ianto now spent every Wednesday afternoon with Mac, who shut up his workshop so they could work on his motorbike. Fridays he spent with David Morgan, doing odd jobs around the place, mostly looking after the animals. He had a huge range of interests, his art had come along in strides and he had even submitted a couple of drawings of butterflies and birds for a local art competition. Ianto hadn’t cared if he won; just having his work displayed was enough. Thanks to a suggestion from Tosh he had enrolled with ‘The Open University’ and was now studying Mathematic Tripos, starting with pure mathematics. Ianto was powering through with distinction and much enjoyment.

The local community had an extensive list of yearly events linked with the seasons; spring to winter festivals, with a few unique ones thrown in, like the mid-year Solstice and harvest festivals which had their antecedents in the pagan past. The fishing boat regatta was an eye opener to say the least and was reserved for locals only. Jack smiled at the honour of their invitation, and the wonderful day
out they had had. Life here was colourful, fun, and interesting, firmly grounded in the life of the Islanders and he and Ianto were now full participants whenever possible.

Ianto was more settled emotionally and the strops and his stubbornness had faded. He handled change well as long as he was prepared. In fact he could be reasoned with, which had made life a thousand times easier. They had a social life, and friends, so it was unfathomable to why now, just when things were getting better that he should be feeling like this. He folded his newspaper and looked out at the garden. Well, who knew? Tomorrow he could wake up feeling a right as rain...talking about rain, the garden needed a water. He folded the paper and placed it so the crossword was visible. He would complete that with some pleasure later but right now the garden called. Standing he felt the room swirl and he gritted his teeth. ‘Onward,’ he said to himself.

Two days later
Reaching over Jack pulled out the weed that had the audacity to seed itself in his flower bed. He muttered under his breath because he knew it was an indication that he had been neglecting this necessary task. He pulled back on his knees and threw the weed to join the others. He blinked as his head pounded and when he closed his eyes he could swear the pain in his head was beating in time with his heartbeat. The effort of leaning forward made him breathless and he took a moment to steady himself.

The dizziness faded, and he risked opening his eyes and then with a struggle he stood up. Leaning down he picked up the rake and used it to smooth over the earth. He knew he was pushing it; he had woken with a blinding headache and a tight band stretched across his chest but he needed to do this if he was going to leave the house. His breathing quickened and he broke out in a cold sweat at the thought. Stepping out of the kitchen door took every ounce of mental strength he had. And once he finally managed to get himself past the threshold all he could think about was getting back here into this sanctuary. He couldn’t describe the feelings of relief as he stepped onto the small lawn. All his fears and anxiety just fell away and he felt so at peace. There were no words to describe the feeling that encompassed him when he was out here; double if Ianto was pottering around with him.

He looked at his watch. Better start getting ready for their walk into the village, and he felt his heart race in his chest and he swallowed the rising feeling of nausea as he shivered involuntarily. He took a look around to calm himself. ‘He could handle this; walk Ianto into the village, drop him off at Mac’s, walk back and he didn’t have to go out again until Friday’. He took a breath to steady himself. ‘You can do this, you can handle this,’ became a mantra in his mind as he used the rake to hold himself up. Wiping his hand across his forehead he felt the garden swirl and he was momentarily disorientated as his vision blacked out. He staggered and using the rake as a walking stick he made it to the French windows. Looking across the room he could see Ianto was making lunch and he smiled. He was so proud of him. He went to call out his approval when he found all the breath had been stolen from his lungs. He leant into the door frame when a sharp spasm caught him and he was filled with agony. He attempted to lift his arm in response when he felt an excruciating twisted pain punch him in the chest. He tried to speak but found it was impossible to make his lips work. He felt his body become heavy and everything went black.
Paying the devil his due

With great care Ianto cut the sandwich in half. He lined up the corners with the sharp knife making sure his fingers were out the way and pushed down. He loved making lunch for him and Jack because he was helping. Looking at the clock, he saw the big hand was on the six and the little hand was on the twelve; that meant it was half past twelve. It was Wednesday and Mac would be waiting for him to continue their work on the bike. All the rust was gone from the frame, and today they were going to lay out all the parts they had and list what they needed to find.

He went to the fridge and got out the juice carton. Carefully he poured out a measure of juice. Tilting the carton he made sure the juice only came to two thirds’ up the glass. This way there would be no spills. Placing the plate along with the glass on the table he heard a thump. He glanced into the lounge and saw it was empty. That was strange because he was sure he had heard Jack come into the house. Maybe Jack had returned to the garden. Better go find him because lunch was ready, he hated being late so it was important they had lunch now so they could leave on time.

As soon as he entered the lounge fully he saw Jack was crumpled on the floor half in and out of the house.

He couldn’t imagine why Jack was on the floor.

“Jack, wake up. I’ve got lunch ready,” he told him but Jack didn’t move. He shook him again. He had never found Jack like this before so he sat back and thought. Maybe Jack was asleep? He was so tired lately, maybe he’d fallen asleep like he did when he was watching television or reading the newspaper. Maybe he had fallen asleep while he was walking.

He closed his eyes, thinking if Jack was so tired he had fallen asleep walking maybe he should get him to bed because the floor was no place to sleep. Turning Jack over, he placed his arms under his shoulders and pulled. He felt pain in his back, but ignoring it he struggled on. Using all his might he managed to get him into the kitchen. He felt another spasm and stopped as it reminded him of Jack’s words telling him he couldn’t do heaving lifting. He struggled to remember what Jack had told him, the bad man had hurt his back which meant he could do almost anything except lift heavy things. He had to be careful. He grimaced at the pain. Jack was right; it hurt and Jack was heavy. He looked at the stairs but he had to get Jack to bed. He must be really tired because even pulling him hadn’t woken him up. He needed to go to bed. Bed was where you slept, not on the floor he told himself.

He had a thought: if he couldn’t get Jack to bed maybe he could bring the bed to Jack. Racing upstairs he pulled the bed clothes off and took a pillow and raced back downstairs. Carefully he placed the pillow under Jack’s head then tucked the duvet around him.

Making sure Jack was tucked in he kissed his forehead and sat next to him. Some time passed as sat there and he watched the small hand of the clock wen past the one and the big hand arrived on the six which meant it was one thirty.

Jack had been here for over an hour he must be uncomfortable, the floor was all hard and cold because his own bum was all numb. Checking Jack he noticed he was right; Jack felt and looked cold, his lips were blue and his face was all grey.

He closed his eyes and tried to think. What Jack would do? Mac was expecting him and he felt a race of panic. He hated being late. He couldn’t leave on his own; he had never walked in by himself. Jack was all cold and grey and fast asleep. Jack always came with him. When he thought about it, it was strange that Jack just fell asleep while walking about, so maybe he wasn’t well like when they
both had the cough. If he wasn’t well the person to tell was Doctor Singh he reasoned. She would have the medicine to wake Jack up.

Standing he looked at the phone. He had only used it a couple of times and he kept getting all confused. Jack said he was going to get him a mobile so he could practice using one. He opened the door and walked down the path to see if David Morgan was in the field on his tractor. No, it the field was empty, so he would have to use the phone.

He picked up the hand piece and put it to his ear. It was making the right noise, now what? A number; he needed a number. You needed a number to connect the phone with the other phone the person you were calling had. He looked at the notice board and saw there was a list. Running his finger down the list he read it with great care until he found her number. He put the handset to his ear and found it was making a funny noise. Not sure what that meant he pushed in the numbers but nothing happened.

Something was wrong and he placed the handset back in the cradle, and then picked it up and listened again. He let out a breath of relief because it was making the sound Jack had told him meant he could call someone. Carefully he pushed each number and heard a new noise followed by a voice.

“Jack’s asleep in the kitchen,” he told the voice then stopped to listen. “I don’t know what an appointment is,” he explained. He wanted to say more but he felt so stupid. He was okay when it was just chatting. When it was important he found it so hard to find the right words.

“I don’t know what you mean,” he tried again.

“Jack Harkness,” he stuttered.

“Okay, no appointments until tomorrow,” he said, totally confused so he placed the hand piece back on the cradle.

He put his thumb into his mouth and bit his nail. What should he do? He had rung the doctor and a lady had said a whole pile of words he didn’t understand.

Maybe he could try someone else. He looked down the list to the next name. Taking a deep breath he picked up the phone and dialled. He listened and it made a noise like it was ringing but no one answered so he put the phone down.

He had another think. Jack hadn’t moved, not even to turn over. He was all grey and his lips were blue. He couldn’t get Jack into bed and his back hurt and he knew he had to get help.

He should ring Doctor Singh again. Swallowing he concentrated on what he was going to say. “Jack was in the kitchen, he was on the floor. He had fallen asleep when he was walking. I need to talk to Doctor Singh to tell me what to do because he might need medicine to wake him up then he could go to bed proper.”

Taking a deep breath he picked up the phone and dialled the doctor’s number.

“It’s me again” he said struggling with the words. “Jack is asleep in the kitchen,” he told the voice.

“I don’t know what an appointment is, I don’t know what that word means,” Ianto explained becoming distressed.

“Oh, it means he has to come there at a time tomorrow,” he told the voice and placed the receiver down cutting off the conversation.
He put his head against the wall to think and glanced down at Jack then back up at the clock when an idea came to him Mac would know what to do. Mac always knew what to do. If nothing else he could come and help Ianto get Jack into bed.

He read carefully down the list to see if the number was there. Finding it he picked up the phone and rang the number. He held it to his ear and he counted to twenty when he heard a familiar voice and he let out a huge breath.

“Mac, I am not sure what to do, Jack is asleep in the kitchen…” he said then stopped as Mac asked him a question.

“No I found him in the lounge. I tried to get him upstairs but he was too heavy and I remembered Jack telling me not to lift heavy things and he is very heavy, so I stopped when I got him to the kitchen. Then I got him a pillow and the duvet and put the pillow under his head and put the duvet over him, because he’s asleep and I didn’t want him getting all cold.” A question interrupted his explanation. “It was at half past twelve,” he answered as he stopped to listen again. “Hang on I need to put the telephone down.” He carefully placed the handset down and bent down to check if Jack was breathing, unsure of how to do this so he put his ear right up to his mouth but no matter how hard he tried he couldn’t hear anything.

He stood up. “I’m not sure, he’s cold and his lips are blue and his face is grey,” he replied then listened. “What should I do Mac? I rang the doctor but this lady said we had to make an appointment. I had no idea what that meant and she said we had to come there…” he stopped. “Okay I will wait here,” he said. He replaced the phone and went and opened the door as Mac said he would be there as soon as he could. He felt a sense of relief. Now they could finally get Jack into bed and he could sleep more comfortable instead of being all cold.

He lay next to Jack and put his arm around him. A few moments passed when he felt him shudder and take a huge gasp then still as if the effort had taken every ounce of strength he had.

________________________________________

Veronica Singh raced down the path leading to Rose Cottage. She had been with a patient when Mac had literally crashed into her office, telling her Ianto had called; she had apologised to her patient, grabbed her doctor’s bag and raced out. Mac had called the Island ambulance service but they were on the other side of the Island and would be at least another half an hour before they got there. She dreaded what she would find. From Mac’s description Jack had collapsed and was possibly dead.

“I didn’t know what to do,” Ianto told her as she entered the kitchen, followed by Mac.

“You did very well,” Mac assured him as Veronica began to pull off the covers and found he was alive much to her relief. She listened to his heartbeat with her stethoscope then she checked his blood pressure. He was cold and barely conscious and from what Mac had told her he had been so for nearly an hour.

“Tell me what happened?” she asked a very worried looking Ianto who was standing beside Mac, not taking his eyes off Jack.

“I was making lunch and I heard a thump. I went into the lounge and Jack was lying inside the big doors. I shook him but he did not wake up,” he explained.

“What happened next?” she asked.

“He had fallen asleep walking so I tried to take him upstairs but he was too heavy and we only made it into here, so I went and brought a duvet off the bed and a pillow so he would be more comfortable.
He was all grey and cold so I thought maybe he wasn’t well…” she put up her hand to stop him.

“Did you see anything else?”

“Just before you got here he took a deep breath like this,” he demonstrated the huge gasp Jack had taken, “then you came.”

“You said he had blue lips,” she queried. Ianto nodded. She looked and they were pink now when Jack suddenly grabbed her hand.

“Jack, it’s Veronica. You’ve collapsed. I’ve called an ambulance and you're going to be air-lifted across to the mainland.”

He shook his head. “No,” he struggled to say.

“Jack, you’ve collapsed. We need to get you to hospital,” she told him more strongly.

“Can’t,” he panted.

“There’s no ‘can’t’ about this Jack,” she told him firmly as he pleaded with his eyes.

“Not me, for Ianto,” he burst out and she looked at Ianto who was shaking with fear and she caught herself as she looked between them.

“You’ve collapsed you need help.”

“Call Owen Harper,” he struggled to say in a heavy whisper. “Just tired,” he croaked out a few seconds later.

“Exhausted to the point of collapse and as you know I’ve been advising you for months. There could well be an underlying cause. Only the full services offered by a hospital can do the investigation required.”

“Owen,” he repeated. She checked his vitals again and she sat back on her heels. He was stable and she could find nothing wrong, but he was so weak he was unable to move. She took a deep breath and looked at Ianto who was quiet but she knew from experience he was just holding it together.

“Very well. I will call and consult with Doctor Harper, but I will recommend you be taken directly the nearest emergency medical centre in the strongest medical terms I can,” she warned him.

Mac handed her Jack’s address book. Looking down the names she called the number on the house phone.

Jack listened and gritted his teeth. If he could stand he could demonstrate he was not as bad as the fuss being made. He willed his arms to move but they refused to obey him. A few moments later he realised his eyes were closed, and no matter how hard he tried his eyelids wouldn’t lift open. For a fraction of a second he feared he was paralysed but then the discomfort in his body was so great he knew he still had full feeling He had lifted his arm a short while ago; start there he thought. Several moments later willing his arm to move he made fingers twitch. He felt someone take his hand. With supreme effort he managed to force his eyes open a fraction to see Ianto kneeling beside him looking scared, and found it possible to squeeze his hand back

As all attempts to move were impossible he resigned himself to lying on the floor and listening to the heated discussion between Veronica and Owen. He had to agree that she was a force to be reckoned with but he knew Owen was the only person he trusted to deal with this. After an intense exchange
she stopped to listen. She agreed that Jack was out of any immediate danger, his vitals were good, and after a blistering discussion and with extreme reluctance she agreed he could remain but only if she was replaced with someone fully equipped to deal with the situation. She was interrupted by the arrival of the ambulance she had requested. After promising to call Owen right back she now gave Jack a more thorough examination using the equipment from the ambulance.

From what she could see he had no injuries. Both her and the paramedics confirmed everything about him was as normal including his heart rhythm and blood gases; the only issue appeared was he was so debilitated he couldn’t move despite his obvious attempts.

Using the expertise of the paramedics, Mac and herself, they managed to move Jack upstairs into bed. After checking he was still stable she noted Jack fell immediately into a deep sleep.

Closing the door she now turned to Ianto, who had been unable to help and tried to remain out of the way. He was standing clutching Myfanwy. Gently with Mac’s help they directed him back down to the kitchen.

“I’m scared,” he said as the paramedics began to pack their things.

“I see you’re scared Ianto, but right now Jack is in bed asleep.”

“Okay, so he did just fall asleep walking about, he has been very tired,” he added.

“Sort off,” she commented not sure what to tell him.

“So being in bed sleeping will help? What happens if Jack wakes up and he needs to move about? He’s too heavy; I can’t move him on my own.”

She put her hand on his arm. “I’ve spoken to Doctor Harper and he is on his way up here right now with another friend, Tosh,” she told him. Ianto nodded; he had met them at his party. Ianto remembered Owen was the one who told him the great crocodile joke and Tosh had given him the Wally books and helped him with his maths.

She looked at Mac. “Although they are leaving as we speak they will not be here for some time. Mac, I need to ask; if it’s okay with Ianto, can you stay with him until they arrive?” She saw him nod. “Is it okay if Mac stays here until Owen and Tosh arrive?” she asked.

Ianto’s lower lip wobbled. “I need to be with Jack. Can I go and be with him?” Veronica shook her head. “It’s that we never sleep apart. Jack will be all lonely on his own,” he added.

“He’s had a bit of a rough day so it might be nice if he just had a sleep on his own just for a short while,” she suggested touched at his concern and saw Ianto working this through.

“Okay, but later I need to check him and make sure he’s not lonely,” he said with a long face.

“I’ll come back in about an hour and we can check him together. Your friend Owen said best thing for Jack is to rest,” she confirmed.

Looking around the kitchen she gave strict instructions to Mac on how to check Jack every half an hour and any change in Jack’s condition and she was calling the inter-land ambulance service and Doctor Harper be damned. He nodded and gave her the thumbs’ up as she headed for her car.

Ianto watched her leave. He was not happy; Jack never slept on his own. How would he cope with the bad dreams if he didn’t kiss them better? Mac kept telling him they needed to stay downstairs but he was very scared. Something bad would happen to him if he was not there because Jack needed
him. He tried to explain as best he could and after further argument Mac agreed that he could take Myfanwy to him so she could watch over him. Bemused he watched him race back upstairs. Reaching the bedroom Ianto place the toy in bed with him, checked him as Doctor Singh had told Mac then left, leaving the door ajar so he could hear when Jack called out.

Mac pushed his cap off his head. Well here was a to do, Jack was ill and Ianto was just holding on and he felt real fear for him. What would happen to Ianto if Jack was incapacitated? Who would care for him? How would Ianto cope being removed from his life here? Well he would have something to say about it if it came to that. He would have words; it would be over his dead body that they removed Ianto from the Island. He wasn’t alone in that he was sure. Hopefully it wouldn’t come to that, but he geared himself up for a fight. Folks round here who said Jessie MacDonald didn’t care one jolt for folks were going to be in for a shock. Maybe he didn’t, but at the end of his life he had never expected to find such good company. Ianto mattered to him; he was a good friend. Not one to chatter on, his view on the world was refreshing, his opinions honest. For that he was very grateful. Jack was a friend too if had a mind to admit it.

“Ianto, you told me you had some great books on motorbikes. As I’m visiting could you show them to me?” he asked as Ianto stood at the bottom of the stairs not taking his eyes off the bedroom door, and wondered at the change in his life. He was in the house of two men who clearly loved each other and from what he had seen slept in the same bed and counted them both as friends.

He smiled as Ianto now indicated to the books he had found. Slipping out of his coveralls Mac sat down next to him on the sofa. As they looked through the first book Mac began to tell him the story of his very first motorbike while Ianto listened with rapt attention never taking his eyes off the stairs.
With supreme effort Jack forced opened his eyes and saw it was dark. He was not sure how long it had been since he had been put into bed but he reasoned it must have been some hours. He felt himself sinking back into sleep when he heard a knock on the door. It opened and he saw Owen standing there with a stethoscope around his neck and carrying a doctor's bag.

"You're awake," he said stating the obvious.

"When..?" Jack started to say.

"About two hours ago," Owen replied anticipating the question. "I gave you a once over and left you to sleep," he added moving over the bed to check Jack's vitals. Turning so he lay on his back Jack noted with some relief that despite the effort he now had some voluntary movement.

"Doctor Singh picked us up and filled me in. Us being me and Tosh," he added. Jack heard movement and turned his head to see Ianto hovering just inside the door looking extremely anxious, moving from one foot to the other.

"There's a young man who needs to see ya," Owen indicated. Jack nodded and Owen waved him forward.

Owen moved aside and Ianto threw himself on the bed, wrapping his arms around Jack and hugged him as hard as he could then burst into tears.

"It's okay, I'm okay," Jack soothed as he kissed the top of his head. Ianto lay next to Jack, his heard buried in Jack's armpit.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to give you a scare," Jack told him taking his hand and kissing it.

"I was very scared," Ianto told him after taking a deep breath. "I didn't know what to do…"

Owen interrupted, "Ianto you did brilliant. You managed to get Jack help. Doctor Singh and Mac, Tosh and me; we're all here because you called the right person."

"Yes I am very proud of you," Jack told him. Ianto brightened a little and his sobs eased.

"And they wouldn't let me come and see you and I kept telling them you would be lonely and I could kiss you better," Ianto said. "So I left Myfanwy to keep you company."

Jack now realised he knew what the lump next to him was. "She did a great job," Jack commented.

"Have you eaten?" he asked Ianto as he kissed his hand again.

"Yes; Moira brought a huge pizza. It was delicious," Ianto told him, brightening, "and Maureen from
the café brought a big chocolate cake that was yummy too."

"Do you need anything right now? Are you in any pain?" Owen asked.

"No pain but I need a pee," Jack said. Ianto took Myfanwy and placed her safely aside and then pulled back the covers.

"I'll do that," Owen offered. Ianto glanced at him as Owen moved forward.

"I help with hose control," Ianto stated clearly as he went across and opened their bathroom door. Owen stood back, amused at his statement. He returned and found Owen was helping Jack to sit up. Moving him aside Ianto lent forward. Jack hooked his arms around Ianto's neck and with Owen pushing from behind they got him to his feet. His knees buckled and he almost fell back onto the bed but Ianto put his arms around his chest, preventing his fall.

Standing, his arms around Owen and Ianto's shoulders, they made their way across the room. Reaching it Ianto made it very clear that Owen was to come no further. The door closed and Ianto proceeded to undress him enough so he could use the toilet. They both agreed it would be better if he didn't sit otherwise he might not make it up again.

Ianto held Jack from behind to steady him, and Jack took a much needed piss. Still very wobbly his knees gave out for a second time but found Ianto had a good hold on him and he remained standing.

Opening the door they found Owen waiting and he took his place by Jack's side. Reaching the edge of the bed Jack flopped down. Ianto picked up his legs and swung him around. Jack shuffled back down and let out a huge sigh of relief as he got comfortable. A few swift moves and Ianto had covered him up and straightened the pillow under his head. Taking a quick look around as if to check everything he took Myfanwy and tucked her into bed next to him.

"Do you need anything else?" Owen offered and Jack shook his head.

"Only Ianto," he added. He smiled and saw Ianto was standing looking anxious again and realised Ianto needed direction.

"Ianto you get ready for bed and we can go to sleep," Jack told him. Ianto now kissed Jack on his cheek, went over to the dresser, pulled out some pyjamas, and then headed for the shower.

"Any clues to what's wrong?" Jack asked as he heard the shower turn on.

"Tell me what happened?"

"Well I was in the garden. I felt dizzy, and then I went into this cold sweat, pain in left arm, then chest. After that I don't recall anything until I came around on the kitchen floor."

"How bad was the pain on a scale from one to ten?"

"The pain in my arm was not so bad; more achy than anything. But a few moments later I felt like I had been punched in the chest," he grimaced in recollection.

"Without being able to confirm it sounds like you had a heart attack, a massive one. It killed you," Owen said.


"You revived on the floor. Ianto can now do the most brilliant imitation of your back-to-life gasp."
"Oh god no," he struggled to say as he grappled with the implications.

"Ianto has no idea you actually died. He thinks you were so tired you fell asleep walking." He saw Jack go limp with relief.

"How long?" Jack croaked out.

"At least an hour. As you know the bigger the hit the longer it takes you to revive. So when I say massive I mean monumental."

They both heard the shower stop and looked in the direction of the bathroom door.

"Jack, right now I want you to rest. We can deal with anything more complicated tomorrow. Is there anything I should know?"

"I'm so goddam tired Owen, so I'm not going to argue about resting. As for Ianto, don't let him find the maple syrup, he has no self-control and if he finds it he will drink the lot. Other than that just allow him to do his routine," he said as Ianto now appeared wearing pyjamas and white tee shirt.

"We'll talk more tomorrow. I'm settling down on the sofa and Tosh is in the spare room," he told him.

"I helped Tosh make up the bed in the spare room and found a pillow and sleeping bag for Owen and we had loads of dinner and I locked up like you showed me. Tosh helped," Ianto told Jack.

"I'll talk to you tomorrow," Owen repeated as he now left.

Turning off the main light Ianto snuggled into bed, placed his arms around Jack, then burst into tears again. Several moments passed as the events of the day overwhelmed him. Jack just held him knowing he needed this release. He knew once he had calmed he would start to tell him what had happened so he prepared himself as best he could.

"I'm so scared. I didn't know what to do, you were all grey, I rang this lady and she kept saying words I didn't understand. The phone kept making funny noises. I couldn't wake you up. I tried get you into bed but you was so heavy," he took a breath. "When I was sitting on the floor my bum got all cold and you was so cold your lips were blue. I went to see if Mr Morgan was in the field on his tractor, and the nasty lady kept telling me I had to bring you tomorrow. I couldn't find the right words, you were so heavy I couldn't think about how I could bring you tomorrow, then I called Mac and he asked me all these question and he brought Doctor Singh."

"You did so well Ianto. Calling Mac was the right thing to do."

"He came running up the path. I have never seen him run. The ambulance came and its lights were all flashing. Then Doctor Singh had big words on the telephone. After she slammed the phone down and just glared out the door for a bit. Then the ambulance people and Mac got you into bed." He took a breath and continued.

"He wouldn't let me come up I told him we never sleep apart and I could kiss you all better. And if you was asleep you would really need me. So I brought up Myfanwy. I checked you over just like Doctor Singh told Mac. I checked you because she said if you got worse she was going to call the big helicopter and it would take you away and Doctor Harper be damned." He slowed as Jack pulled him closer. "I tried to be brave but I did get extra scared when I heard the helicopter and I thought it had come for you. Later Tosh told me it was her and Owen coming. So then I was happy when they came because you wouldn't be taken away."
"Ianto you were very brave. I think you handled this brilliantly." He felt Ianto go still.

"I was very scared you might leave like the man in grey in the magic blue box and I might lose you and if you got taken away in the big helicopter I might never find you," he whispered.

Jack lifted his chin. "Even if I had gone in the rescue helicopter, Mac, Doctor Singh, Morag, Mr Morgan, would all know where I was and they would have taken you and followed." Ianto looked unsure. "And I promise I will never disappear like the man in grey. I will be here as long as you need me," Jack said his heart aching as a wave of fatigue hit him.

"I will always need you," Ianto told him as Jack yawned. "You are very tired. You need lots and lots of rest. I think Ianto has talked too much and made you extra tired."

"Never," Jack added as he felt Ianto become more relaxed. "You talk all you need when you need to."

"I will, but I sometimes I worry I talk too much. Once I start I just can't seem to stop, it all comes tumbling out in one go," Ianto replied.

"Ianto, I never want you to be silent again, ever," Jack reiterated. "I love it when you talk. This is our home; you can talk as much as you like. I hope you never stop talking, you just had a lot to get out."

Jack held him closer.

"I did it was a very big scary day," Ianto responded quietly.

"I agree; a very long scary day and we both need a good sleep," Jack instructed as Ianto moved close.

"I am very tried," Ianto agreed, as he felt Jack begin to snore gently and he too closed his eyes.

Owen laid on the sofa, his hands behind his head as he went over the events of the day. By all accounts Jack had had a heart attack, one massive enough to kill him. He pondered the puzzle; from his examination any heart problem had resolved itself.

After picking them up Veronica had handed over Jack's medical files. He would have another look at them tomorrow but he was sure he would find nothing physical...or was there? In the past when Jack had been killed he revived and reset. Jack had told him it was like pressing the factory setting on an appliance, returning to its original configuration. He had seen it with his own eyes. Yet today Jack had revived so weak he could hardly move, which was an improvement from what Veronica had observed; she had found Jack so debilitated he couldn't lift a finger. Veronica had told him with some amusement how he had argued about all the fuss and there was nothing the matter and she had challenged him to get up and prove them all wrong.

After several moments of clear effort it was obvious Jack was not capable of lifting an arm let alone getting himself off the floor. And what gave a healthy man a heart attack in the first place? Jack had none of the typical antecedents: he was a non-smoker, not a heavy drinker, his diet was okay, plenty of exercise...or was there some alien pathogen raging though Jack's body? He felt chilled. What sort of germ could handle the kind of energy to survive one of Jack regenerations? It didn't bear thinking about.

He pulled the sleeping bag up around his chin, turned over and stretched out. This had been one long day. He had taken Veronica's call and Tosh had immediately thrown 'Operation Harkness' into high gear. Owen had handed over control to Gwen for the duration and then he and Tosh had made their way to the airport. They had completed several practice runs and they had arrived as expected in
under an hour considering the afternoon traffic. Waiting at Cardiff airport was a small commercial plane fired up and ready to go. Hired for just this eventuality it had been on standby for several weeks. It had cost a small fortune but Owen didn't care, he had fiddled the budget with Tosh’s help and no one would be the wiser.

After reaching Aberdeen they had re-fuelled then taken a short hop to the nearest air strip closest to the Island. They completed the final leg from the mainland to the Island by helicopter.

Veronica had picked them up, and had arrived here at 'Rose Cottage' along with two locals with dinner. Ianto was only just holding himself together and kept asking to see Jack. They had gone up together and found him deeply asleep. A noise caught his attention; a desperate cry but it was gone so quick he put it down to creaks in a strange house.

He went back to his thoughts. Jack had been sleeping so soundly in fact he only just stirred as Owen had examined him and checked his blood pressure. The only problem he had was not with Jack but with Ianto. When he tried to get him to leave he refused, saying Jack needed him and how important it was he stay. Jack would be lonely and that he had to stay and kiss him better. After a whispered argument Ianto had finally agreed to let Jack sleep a little longer on his own but was clearly unhappy at not being able to remain.

God knew what Ianto thought he could do. He did wish a kiss would make this better. A hug and a kiss would be bloody nice, if only it was that simple. Tomorrow he would set up some blood tests just to eliminate anything … he stopped as he heard another cry. He let out a deep breath; it was most likely a fox. Were there foxes here? Bloody hell; it sounded horrible. Must be some strange fox sounding like that. Did the Island have some kind of variation…he heard it again and he sat up; no, this was inside the house. It was a scream followed by a shout and it was coming from upstairs.

He stood up and stepped out of the sleeping bag, grabbed his doctor’s bag and raced up the stairs two at a time. At the top of the stairs he was joined by Tosh when another cry rang out and together they opened the door to Jack and Ianto’s room and turned on the light.

Jack was in the throes of a nightmare and screaming out a series of pleas as Ianto attempted to calm him down. He was waving his arms around as if he was fending off blows followed by what looked like a pleading motion.

"Master, not Ianto; take me." Ianto now managed to gain hold of his wrists, restraining him.

"I'm here I'm here I'm safe," Ianto told him. Jack threw his arms around Ianto, holding him close.

Owen, not sure if he should intervene, decided to observe as Ianto appeared to know what he was doing. He watched as Ianto put his arms around him in a protective embrace and began to speak to him gently; telling him he was safe from the bad man, that he was here and the bad man couldn't hurt him anymore and kissed his face. It was a mantra and after what seemed an age Jack's agitation faded and he held onto Ianto like he was never going to let him go.

"Ianto please forgive me, forgive me, please forgive me," Jack begged as Ianto kissed him and rocked him telling him he loved him and that he was forgiven.

Owen glanced over to Tosh who was wiping a tear from her face. Ianto looked up at them.

"Jack gets terrible bad dreams," he said holding Jack close, as his agitation faded.

"Does this happen every night?" Owen asked quietly.

Ianto nodded.
"Bloody hell," Owen said under his breath. Tosh looked at him her hand over her mouth.

"He gets bad dreams and I hold him and kiss him better," Ianto said as Owen now realised why Ianto was so insistent he be with Jack. Ianto had found a way to help Jack through the trauma of his nightmares. It worked as Jack now fell back into a deeper sleep.

Turning to leave he saw Ianto straighten out the bedding and settle back down as Jack held on to him in a way that was so familiar. Returning downstairs he got back into his sleeping bag going over what he had just observed. Just as he settled it came to him where he had seen the same embrace. It was the one Jack had comforted Ianto with at the institute three years before. Jack had told him the staff had termed it 'the position'. Now reversed it was Jack with his face buried in Ianto's shoulder their arms locked around each other. He took a breath. Well one thing for sure next time Ianto tried to tell him something important and that he could help Jack he was bloody well going to listen.
Ianto eat his breakfast with gusto. He loved cornflakes and with Jack still in bed he could add as much sugar as he liked. He was extra hungry today from helping Jack this morning. He was hoping he could persuade Tosh to make him pancakes with maple syrup but Tosh had told him this was for special occasions only. Owen was sitting opposite drinking coffee.

"Err, I think that's enough sugar," Owen said as he watched Ianto heap on another spoonful. Ianto pouted but moved the spoon away from the bowl. He saw him smile.

"That's what Jack says," he looked at Owen shyly. "I loved your joke, have you got any more?" Ianto asked outright.

"Oh the joke from the party," he said recalling he had told Ianto the most pathetic joke in history and it had been a huge hit. "Okay here's one: what's yellow and exceedingly dangerous?" He saw Ianto think, shake his head then look at him, excited to hear the punch line.

"Shark infested custard," he declared.

Ianto burst in to laughter. "Oh that is really good!" He turned to Tosh who was busy preparing her own breakfast. "What's yellow and exceedingly dangerous?" he saw her shake her head. "Shark infested custard," he declared as she laughed. "I like that, but how would you get the shark into the custard? It's like getting a clock into a crocodile...very hard, I'll ask Myfanwy later she might know," Ianto said, taking a drink of juice and picking up a slice of toast.

Owen and Tosh watched Ianto, as with extreme care he buttered his toast. They could see it was taking all his concentration. The effort was evidence that Ianto was still working on his physical recovery. He looked awkward as he took butter onto the knife and tried to spread it. Owen wanted to take the knife from him and do it for him but knew better. Jack had made it very clear this morning Ianto was to do as much as he could without intervention, and unless they saw him getting frustrated or he asked for help they were not to step in and assist. He was capable it just took him time, so be patient.

"Do sharks like custard? Or would they swim about and eat all the custard? Like swimming and eating all at the same time? Maybe they would swim with their mouths open? Marigold likes custard, because she ate all the leftover trifle from my party. That had custard, she likes everything, nasty and nice, she's so greedy. She likes me but she likes me more when I have loads of things for her to eat so I always make sure I have something," Ianto added as he now carefully measured out a teaspoon full of jam from the jar on the table. "Jack says this way it's not so messy." He spread the jam on the toast.

"Jam is my second favourite," he said taking a bite. "My best favourite is maple syrup; it's wonderful, all sticky and sweet. Sometimes if I'm extra good Jack makes me things with maple syrup."

"Ianto, tell me about Jack's dreams," Owen asked him.

Ianto licked his fingers. "He has terrible bad dreams."

"Are they all like the one last night?" Tosh queried, blowing on her tea to cool it down then taking a sip.

"Sometimes he calls out asking the bad man not to hurt me and asks me to forgive him. Those ones are easy, I just tell Jack I'm okay, kiss him and hold him close," Ianto said licking the spoon clean.
"To begin with those dreams were hard because I kept telling Jack I didn't know what 'forgive' meant. He got all upset when I kept asking him so I asked Myfanwy and she told me to say I forgave him. I did and that really worked. Do you know what that word means? I tried looking it up but I'm not sure if I spelled it right and I didn't want to ask Jack in case I upset him in the day time." He looked at Owen then at Tosh.

"It means when someone does something really bad and hurts someone else the person who did the bad thing might wish to ask for forgiveness from the person they hurt," Tosh replied and saw Ianto stop to think.

"But it was the bad man who did bad things to Jack? Why would Jack ask me? Jack's never done bad things to me!"

"It's a complicated concept," she said after several moments had passed.

Ianto looked at her, baffled. "I get confused over words," he added sadly and she immediately realised her mistake.

"Ianto have you ever done something that you felt really bad about and later on you felt like you needed to say you were sorry?" Owen asked him.

"Yes, last Christmas; I was really angry and mean to Jack," he replied after several moments.

"And I bet you said you were sorry?" Tosh added and saw Ianto nod.

"Well forgiveness is another way of saying sorry, only bigger," Owen explained. Ianto nodded his understanding.

"So when someone asks for forgiveness it's a big way of saying sorry," he reflected back. "Jack's has never done a big mean thing to me so I reckon it's something in his dreams because dreams are like that, things happen."

"You said sometimes Jack has other types of dreams," Owen nudged him verbally, getting the conversation back on track.

"He just screams and screams and screams. I get sad and worried because I can't get him to stop; he throws his arms about and then tries to curl up and keeps asking the bad man to stop. I tell him that he's with his Ianto and I love him, I asked Myfanwy on how to help but she had no idea so I just try to hold him and tell him he is not there anymore. I think sometimes he thinks he is back in the first bad place. That was where the bad man was really mean, but not for real just in his dreams so he thinks it's real but it's not." Tosh put her hand on Ianto's shoulder as Owen absorbed what Ianto was telling him.

"How often does he have these dreams?" Tosh asked gently.

"Sometimes every night, sometimes lots of times every night, sometimes not at all, other times he just talks a lot, like he's having a long talk with someone," he added as he stood and started to clean up. Owen sat back deep in thought.

"I like cleaning and washing up. It's fun," he said picking up the cereal packet and folding the top down.

"Has Jack always had bad dreams?" Owen queried.

Ianto stopped to think. "I can't remember. When I think back too hard things get all jumbled up. I
can't think of a time when he didn't have the bad dreams. They've got bigger," Ianto tried to explain.

"Do you mean they've got worse?" Tosh asked

"No, they've always been worse, but they're bigger now," he added as he continued to clear the table.

Owen creased his forehead and looked at Tosh trying to work out what Ianto was trying to tell them.

"Do you mean they go on for longer?" Owen asked after a few moments, uncertain he understood.

"Yes, no,' he looked at Owen in confusion, creasing his face and starting to get agitated.

"It's okay, you've been a great help," Tosh said quickly smiling at Ianto who looked uncertain.

"I have to really think about the right words and they get all mixed up in my head, words are very hard," he explained. "I draw things when I can't explain, I can draw it for you," Ianto offered and placed the dirty dishes in the sink.

"That will be brilliant mate, that would really help me understand so I can help Jack," Owen told him.

"Did Jack really fall asleep while he was walking?" Ianto asked after a few moments. Tosh and Owen shared glance.

"Jack is feeling very tired, so he's going to sleep lots," Owen told him.

"He is very tired, so he needs lots of sleep, but I need to go to him if he gets bad dreams because he needs me," Ianto told them.

"Ianto I'm glad you brought this up because I need to apologise...say I'm sorry," he added quickly. "I should have listened to you yesterday when you told me you needed to be with Jack. So is there anything else I need to know?" He saw Ianto brighten a bit as he thought.

"Jack likes being in the garden, it's very special." He stopped and thought some more. "And..." he hesitated.

"It's okay you can say," Tosh encouraged.

"I'm not sure but," he took a breath "Jack is very heavy. I'm worried he might fall down asleep again and I can't do things because of my back and…" Tosh interrupted as she realised Ianto was asking for help.

"Owen and I are here. We are here to help get Jack better," she said with a smile. "And I know Mac will help too if he can."

"That's good because I really need Jack to get better," he added.

Tosh put her arm around him. "So what's the plan today?" Tosh asked Ianto as they heard a knock on the door.

"Hello Mrs Fisher," Ianto said as he opened the door to an older lady holding out a tin.

"Hello Ianto, I came to drop this off. I heard Jack's not well, and he liked my banana cream pie so much at the art display supper I thought I would whip him one up."
"Thank you Mrs Fisher," Ianto said taking the tin and lifting the lid. "Oh yes, Jack will love this it's his favourite. This is Jack's friends Owen and Tosh," Ianto said introducing them as he placed the pie carefully on a plate and handed her back the tin.

"Owen told me a great joke." She smiled and he told the shark custard joke.

"That's a good one," she said winking at him. "You tell Jack to get better soon. You let him know to call if he needs anything."

"Thank you Mrs Fisher, I will and thanks for the pie," Ianto said waving her off and closing the door.

"So what's the plan for today?" Owen asked bringing the conversation back as Ianto put the pie in the fridge. Now he looked at the clock as he licked his fingers and moved to the large fabric calendar.

"Today is Thursday," he said looking out the window, "it's cloudy," he picked up a fabric cloud and I pred," he struggled with the word, 'predic, predict it's going to rain." He took down the white fabric cloud and replaced it with a black one and added one of rain drops. Carefully he placed it on the cloth under Thursday. He stood for a moment then stated, "I'm feeling sad, unhappy and worried," as he spoke he placed the emotions on the calendar.

Turning he faced Owen and Tosh. "First I need to give Jack his good morning kiss, because he hasn't had a good kiss yet, and we always give each other a morning kiss. Then I am going work on my maths and jigsaws. We have morning tea. I then do some reading and Jack helps me with the words. Ben will pass in his van and the newspaper will come. Jack will read the paper cover to cover. I will do the Sudoku and Jack does the crossword, then it's lunch time."

"Could you do the drawing for me first?" Owen asked. He saw Ianto hesitate and momentarily freeze.

"I do drawing in the afternoon," he said slowly as he picked up then gripped Myfanwy closely.

"Of course," Tosh interrupted recalling Jack's words this morning reminding them that Ianto found comfort in the routine he followed. As there had been an upset they were to allow him to follow it as closely as he needed.

"This afternoon will be fine," Owen agreed. Ianto relaxed.

"That's good because I, I, I need to do things in order," Ianto added with relief.

"I'll go and give Jack his kiss now because he will be lonely and we always give each other a good kiss in the mornings," he said as he turned and raced up the stairs.

Opening the door Ianto saw the breakfast tray he had brought up earlier was on the side of the bed. Jack had had some toast and coffee. Coffee was so strange; he loved the smell but he didn't like the taste. He picked it up carefully and placed it on top of the dresser. As he did Jack opened his eyes and he went and lay down next to him and Jack put his arm around him.

"Mrs Fisher brought you a banana cream pie and I came up to give you a morning kiss," Ianto told him as kissed him.

"Emm, banana cream pie, my favourite," Jack said after Ianto had pulled back. "Have you had breakfast?" Jack said in a huge yawn.
"Yes Owen told me good joke," he said repeating the joke. Jack laughed.

"Owen says you're going to stay in bed today," Ianto double-checked and Jack nodded.

"I'm sorry I can't stop sleeping," he yawned.

"Are you really okay?" Into asked hesitantly.

"I just need to sleep," he said as he gave Ianto a squeeze and Ianto lent down and kissed him deeply.

"Yes sleep," Owen agreed as entered the room and witnessed the snog and felt uncomfortable.

"If you're asleep who will help me with my reading?" Ianto asked

"Tosh can help she's a good reader," Owen told him.

"She's so good at maths so it will be good if she can help me with my reading. I love reading but words are very hard and after my reading I'll bring you lunch and the newspaper," Ianto told him. He pulled back and gave him a sweet kiss on the lips.

"It's time now for you to go start working on your maths," he told him gently. Ianto gave him another quick kiss on the lips then stood up, took the tray and left quietly.

Owen came and sat on the edge of the bed. "Now tell me about your dreams?" Owen asked.

"What dreams?" Jack forced his eyes open.
Owen watched as Ianto cleared part of the vegetable patch in the garden. Being autumn it was time to pull out the now spent plants. Owen noted Ianto was careful to leave any plants with seed heads for the birds that were attracted by this oasis. He could understand why, he had to admit as much as he hated the reason for his being here he spent every moment out here he could.

South facing with its high stone walls it was a haven protected from the almost constant wind creating a micro-climate. As well as making the space feel protected, the walls allowed for several fruit trees to be espaliered and the included a substantial vegetable patch. Berry fruits were in the greenhouse along with the tomatoes. The garden had been created to attract butterflies and birds as well as being visually stunning; the eye naturally followed the contour of the landscape down towards the sea, creating a contrast from the bare green fields to this sanctuary. Even though it was late in the year the garden was no less beautiful; it had just taken on a more mellow character in contrast to the exuberance of summer.

Ianto approached to show him a particularly fat caterpillar and began to tell him how every day he took them off the ones he and Jack were going to eat and placed them on the cabbages they had planted just for caterpillars. Ianto looked a little happier and he even saw the ghost of a smile. What was it with the pair of them and this garden?

He went over the mystery as it had unfolded before him. Firstly Jack had died of a massive heart attack, cause unknown. As envisaged every test he had done had eliminated any possible physical cause. To be doubly sure, he had sent a sample of Jack's blood to Torchwood to ensure he had not picked up some sort of alien pathogen. Jack's blood was normal along with all other physical indicators as he had predicted. And yet Jack was literally sleeping twenty-two hours a day.

When he was awake he was limited to getting up, taking a shower, changing his clothes, eating, and turning over in bed, getting down the stairs once a day and either laying asleep on the sofa or out here on the swing seat.

To begin with he had basically ordered Jack to complete bed rest, but it became very clear after three days that Jack needed to get into this garden; if not actually in the garden then as close as it was possible to be. As difficult as it was to get Jack down the stairs and back up again he now recognised that there was something significant about Jack's attachment to this space.

The journey to understanding had begun with Ianto's drawings. He had sat on the floor with him that first afternoon as Ianto produced a series of illustrations. Unlike his more formal work these were far cruder. It indicated, if Owen interpreted them correctly, that Jack's dreams had become more intense over a period of time, and more frequent. Ianto had then gone on to produce more of Jack in the garden awake and asleep. They were the complete contrast to the previous ones showing Jack as almost angelic surrounded with hearts, birds and butterflies. Ianto proceeded to fill in every part with ticks of every colour of the rainbow. When Owen asked him about it he declared that when Jack was in the garden he was extra good so he got a tick. A tick he explained was like a thumbs' up.

At the time Owen had drawn back as he could not see any understandable link. As hard as Ianto tried to explain he could not make himself understood. As they had stood together on the third night, trying to calm Jack during what appeared to be an ever increasing intensity of the most horrific series of night terrors, Ianto had handed him the drawing. The next day he insisted that Jack had to get into the garden. 'It was special,' he had declared, glaring at Owen. Even Jack was confused, but not wanting to upset Ianto had agreed. Recalling how he had discarded Ianto's knowledge that first day he went along, giving Ianto the benefit of the doubt. Ianto's certainty of actions meant he might be
trying to demonstrate something vital.

After some effort, and it was a bloody effort because Jack was heavy and had no strength, they finally reached the swing seat. Jack virtually collapsed onto it, pale and shaking. After being covered with a blanket and tucked in he was asleep in seconds. Ianto had given Owen a thumbs' up then dusted off his hands in satisfaction and began gardening.

Bemused, Owen had stood back wondering at the madness of it all because getting Jack back up the stairs had proven to be twice as difficult as the journey down. However, that night it became more than evident that Jack's nightmares were far less intense. Not only were they less animated Jack had a more peaceful sleep before and after one of them hit. That said being less severe did not make them any less traumatic for those trying to calm him down. So there was a direct correlation between how much time Jack spent in the garden to how severe his nightmares were. What Ianto's drawing had shown was Jack at peace, well more at peace but the why was a mystery still to be unravelled.

The other mystery was that Jack's night terrors only happened at night. He had requested Gwen send up the 'Bractavian scanner' one of a number of useful gadgets that had fallen into Torchwood hands. It measured brain activity on many levels. It might seem an odd request but he had his suspicions and he needed some confirmation he was on the right track.

He had monitored Jack over several days and nights. Right now Jack was on the swing seat stretched out. He looked deeply asleep but Owen knew now this was not correct. Well he was asleep, but only just. During the day and out here he was in a half-awake type of sleep. Jack had told him that he was aware but found himself in some different kind of consciousness, floating while everything just carried on around him. He admitted it was a very comfortable place to be in.

He turned as he heard a small soft cry. Ianto, on hearing the cry, went over and knelt down and just placed his hand on Jack's face. He said a few words and Jack settled back down. Turning Ianto now returned back to his task.

Was that the answer that during the day Ianto was able to respond in some way to Jack that prevented him from falling into a deeper sleep? He considered Tosh's words that there appeared to be a deeper connection between the two men than would appear.

On the outside Jack was Ianto's full time care giver. There were a lot of things Ianto could do but he was still required supervision, direction and constant reassurance that he was doing things correctly. He checked in a lot just to make sure in case he had forgotten how to do something. Jack had shown them the thumbs' up sign to enable Ianto to see he was doing something right. Both he and Tosh used this to good effect; Ianto would glance their way and they would return with the gesture. Ianto would smile then with more confidence continue on. It was the constancy of the reassurance that made Owen wonder where Jack got his patience from.

That said Ianto had taken over a lot of Jack's personal everyday care, like showering, taking up any food, making sure he was comfortable, and so on. He smiled as he recalled the way Ianto had made it very clear that it was his shoulder Jack leaned on. Jack cared for Ianto; now in turn Ianto cared for Jack.

Tosh had also noted and he agreed after watching them that it was hard at times to distinguish were one ended and the other began. She wondered if others had noted how they completed each other sentences and sometimes Ianto answered for Jack and vice versa. If she didn't know better she would call it telepathy but knew it came from the close way they interacted and lived together.

Owen agreed but...he let out a sigh. He wished he could work this out. There was something going on; garden, Ianto, nightmares... he went back to what he knew. Jack was exhausted and physically
weak. The man had virtually no strength or stamina. He recognised it as a form of fatigue syndrome without physical cause.

This left only one possibly reason as indicated by Jack's night terrors. Jack's dreams were horrific; his screams and cries were hard to listen to. It was clear he was reliving his worst times while he was a prisoner on board the Valiant.

As a victim of torture he would be unique; there were no marks on the outside. What had Jack told him? He struggled to recall and then nodded as the memory came to him. Jack had told him he had been the 'Master's personal stress release' but what did that actually mean? Jack had been on the Valiant with Ianto. What if his torture had been as extreme, worse even? His ordeal had never been acknowledged. On his return, Jack had tried to disguise his suffering but from the dead look in his eyes Owen recognised something horrible had happened to him. He recalled he had tried to get Jack to talk about it but Jack had always managed to avoid answering him directly. So Jack had been running on empty long before they had found Ianto. Finding Ianto he had then channelled every part of his being and pushed this aside to care for him.

Was the fatigue and exhaustion as witnessed and documented by Doctor Singh over the past 14 months evidence of Jack's mental struggle to cope? The mental energy required to suppress not just the memories but to deal with the ongoing plethora of issues PTSD threw up like flashbacks, depression, to a whole range of anxieties, panic attacks and physical effects would be phenomenal and that begged the question: how had Jack managed to do it?

If Jack was asserting some form of control then it was slipping because the trauma was seeping through in his nightmares. The stress had had become overwhelming, causing him to have a heart attack. But it was all theory. He had no proof, the only person who could give him any true understanding was Jack.

He had tried to approach the subject of his time on the Valiant with Jack hoping that someone connecting the dots would encourage him to would open up. However all he had had received was a sardonic look and a raised eyebrow. Owen didn't need to be a psychiatrist to realise it was possible the experience was so traumatic Jack couldn't speak about it.

Part of the problem was he had no idea just what Jack had gone through. Ianto was evidence that the Master was a sick sadistic fuck because it had left him shattered. Owen doubted if he would ever fully recover, but then he had doubted Ianto would ever speak again. What had happened to Jack? Jack had been held prisoner on the Valiant and a single throwaway comment was all he knew. There had to be more. He watched as Ianto bundled up the pulled-out plants and heaped them on the wheelbarrow. Could he risk asking Ianto? He shook his head. Ianto was only just holding on; he had a focus, looking after Jack and his routine. He knew from the posts on the board Ianto was unsettled in the extreme. He wondered how long it would be before this translated into a major upset of some kind.

He looked across at Jack. If his suspicions were correct this was way out of his league. There was only one way forward: he needed help. He needed someone to confer with and he knew there was only one person he could call. Opening his mobile he called and left Martha Jones a message.

"All I can tell you is it was bad," Martha added after she had listened to Owen's questions. "Trouble is Owen I wasn't there. Jack gave me his Vortex Manipulator and I escaped. I only returned at the very end as the Doctor worked his usual magic. As soon as the Doctor acted and the paradox machine was destroyed, our entire focus was getting everyone off while time rewound including all the dead bodies. It was pretty frantic. My parents were there so I was more concerned for them, they had it pretty rough. We stayed on the TARDIS for a few days. Jack acted like he was fine, but I
could tell something had happened to him. He was unsettled and kept himself constantly moving, I
don't think I saw him stop once. He had cleaned up but he looked terrible, pale and thin. I did try a
couple of times to talk about what had happened ,but he glossed it over saying he only needed one
thing and as soon as he saw Ianto, he would be okay," Martha told him.

"What about the Doctor?"

"The Doctor told me Jack kept the Master distracted but I don't think even he knows what actually
happened to Jack in any detail. How is Jack doing?" she asked and listened as he gave a full and
frank report of Jack's current situation, the results of the tests, what he had uncovered using the
scanner, the nightmares and his suspicions.

"I agree, there is nothing physically wrong that would have caused him to have a heart attack. All the
symptoms we observed are still present after he died and revived, any physically issue would be
gone. Therefore what's in his mind remained so all the issues plaguing him before are still present."Martha reflected back.

"Exactly, I would say he is suffering from PTSD. My best guess is he is suppressing what happened
to him."

"Owen, PTSD is overwhelming: nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, stress, the ability to live day to day
is almost impossible for some people. Look at Ianto, his PTSD is so severe it's taken hard work to get
him to be able eat normally, or speak. So the energy required to suppress all of that would be
unparalleled."

"The trouble is I am flying blind. Jack needs help but I am not in any position to offer any form of
psychiatric assessment. The biggest issue for me is I have no idea what actually happened to Jack. I
have tried to speak to him about it but he just remains silent, suggesting he can't speak about
it..."Martha interrupted.

"Or it's possible he can't share because we have no frame of reference. I mean, how can he share
with us something we can't possible even begin to comprehend? He might believe no matter how
irrationally that we couldn't possibly understand." She paused. "I think we can pretty much guess he
was tortured and killed," Mather offered after several moments.

"That's the problem, it's all guess work. We know what happened to Ianto; it was sickening, so I am
prepared for extremes but the truth is we don't know," Owen told her.

"There is one thing more you should know. Jack blames himself for what happened," she told him.

"Explain?"

"For the Master; he believes strongly had he not chased after the Doctor, he would not have gone so
far in the future. As a consequence the Master would have never been released. He also believes that
it is his fault Ianto was left behind. But I was there Owen; I swear we searched that vessel, every
room," she became upset. "So he feels personally responsible for what happened to Ianto. He has
been trying to atone for whatever sins he feels he's committed. I think that guilt lays very heavy on
his soul."

"Jesus Christ," Owen said under his breath as Jack's pleas for forgiveness were brought into sharp
relief.

"I do now this: it was Jack's actions that kept the Master pre-occupied. It diverted his attention and
allowed the Doctor the time and space to attune himself into the Archangel Network." She took a
breath. "The Doctor told me he owes a debt of gratitude to Jack he can never repay."

"Could you ask the Doctor for help?" Owen asked finally, not sure if asking someone as powerful as the Doctor was appropriate, after all he was a Time Lord.

"Absolutely," Martha replied. "I'll do that right now, be prepared he might want to visit."

"Bloody hell," Owen burst out. "Okay if he does I need to ask one thing, can you ask him not to just drop in? Ianto is only just holding it together. To say he is unhappy that the house is filled with people he hardly knows would be an understatement, and he is sick with worry about Jack. I know Jack is worried about him. Jack has explained that the house and garden are safe zones, where Ianto should feel completely protected. That safety has been invaded and explains some of his unhappiness. I think a blue box suddenly appearing out of thin air and having another visitor coming into the house is something we should avoid. Ianto goes out on Wednesday afternoons to work on his motorbike in the village and Fridays from ten to four to doing odd jobs at the farm next door."

"I'm on it," Martha said as she ended the call and punched in another number.
Following Tosh, the Doctor stood behind her as she knocked on the door and entered. He noted a lump in the bed which turned over as she placed the tray down she was carrying then opened the curtains.

"You have a visitor," she told him kindly as he struggled to open his eyes.

"Jack," he heard a voice say through a fog of drowsiness. He thought he recognised it as he moved his head in that direction.

"Doctor?" he said as he looked up.

"Heard you've been having a bit of a rough time..." the Doctor said as he sat on the edge of the bed.

"Where is Ianto?" he demanded, reaching out for the clock to see the time as he felt panic begin to rise.

"It's okay Jack, we made sure Ianto was out. He's with Mac working on his motorbike," Tosh explained frantically in an effort to calm him down.

"It's really important, under no circumstances is Ianto to see the TARDIS," he struggled to explain, his heart beating wildly and his eyes wide with fear.

"Owen and Martha have explained that Ianto's feeling invaded, and he might not deal too well with something just appearing out of thin air," the Doctor explained adding his own assurance.

"That's the understatement of the year. I can't emphasise how important it is that Ianto not see the TARDIS, under any circumstance," Jack panted out each word with effort.

"Jack, it's okay. We made sure Ianto was well away from the house before the TARDIS arrived. We waited until he was in the village before we called the Doctor and said he could materialise," she assured him and saw him sink back his head on his forehead as he tried to calm himself. Tosh helped him sit up and handed him a mug of coffee.

"I wonder if you could leave us for a while?" he asked Tosh.

He looked at Jack then waited until the door was closed. "Everyone is very worried about you," the Doctor said. "They tell me you've been here for two week now." He took a swallow of the coffee as he looked around the comfortable room.

"I hear you had a new companion...Donna?" Jack asked after a few moments.

"Yes, Donna."

"Keeping you on your toes?"

"More than that she's a great mate," the Doctor said smiling.

"I can't believe you're here. Am I that bad?" Jack told him honestly.

The Doctor looked mildly amused. "Owen tells me he has this theory that this has something to do with the Valiant," he said opening up the conversation.
Jack nodded. "Yeah, so I gather."

"It was a terrible year." He saw Jack take a sip of coffee.

"Yeah," Jack agreed.

"And at the end so much to do, you and I never caught up." Jack looked off into the distance as the Doctor spoke.

"We could talk," he offered.

Jack looked at him. "I don't think I can," he admitted quietly as he now looked into his mug.

"I think you need to, if we found someone…"

"Who would believe what happened?" Jack burst out. "I haven't got the energy to convince them that I'm telling the truth!"

"I just need to rest," he emphasized after several moments had passed.

"I think you need more than rest. I agree with Owen and Martha, you had to cope with this too long on your own. This is partly my fault. I dropped you off without a second thought, thinking 'Jack he's a survivor he can survive anything'...but to see you like this, all of us who care about you can see you need more than just rest." He saw Jack become still under his comments. "If we found someone would you be open to the idea…"

"I can't leave here," Jack told him bluntly, "I won't leave here" he corrected.

"No one is asking you too." He saw Jack sigh and close his eyes.

"I don't think I can," Jack said a few moments later.

"Can?"

"Talk about it," he added sounding scared and he felt a shudder pass through his body. The Doctor saw Jack's hands begin to shake uncontrollably and took the mug from his hand.

"If we found someone who would be willing to come here, who you didn't have to convince, would you talk to them?" he asked again.

Jack looked up at him. "I don't know. I just need to sleep. Ianto will be home later and we need some time, just him and me. It's so hard, we used to spend every moment of every day….and now…"

"For Ianto then? If not for yourself, for him?" The doctor tried another tack. Jack looked at him with haunted eyes then nodded and began to sink back under the covers.

Closing the curtains the Doctor quietly left the room, saddened to see the man he knew reduced to this remnant.

"Who do we ask?" Martha asked outright as she paced around the console room of the TARDIS,

"Geoff Green," Owen replied. "He is a world renowned specialist in helping the victims of torture; he has been overlooking Ianto's care. So he is already aware of some of the circumstances."

"Some of the circumstances? The issue here is we drop in ask him for help, and what are we going to say? He will think us certifiable." Martha pointed out. "Ianto has a history, he was found on the
Valiant, he has hospital records, his injuries, all of Ianto's mental and physical scaring. Jack has…"

"Nothing, there is no record is there? Putting aside believability for now, without some background Doctor Green will be flying blind and that brings us back full circle. I sense Jack is incredibly reluctant to share. I've been doing some research about PTSD. It can be caused by a single or series of traumatic events but its effects are accumulative, event upon event. Now Jack has lived through the entire Twentieth Century. I know he served in World Wars One and Two, along with all the skirmishes Torchwood-style and god knows what else. To get Jack help we can't afford to send in anyone blind. They need his full and complete history, and if not complete history then a least a summary of things we know happened. Jack is going to need ongoing long-term support. I've asked Tosh to pull out his service record. Once we've convinced him we are not barking mad, and to help Jack in the now, we have to show him some evidence so he understands the full nature of what occurred."

"The Valiant!" Martha burst out as Owen finished speaking, and Owen and the Doctor were startled at her vehement declaration. "The Valiant was in the centre of the paradox. It would have instruments that would have recorded what happened during that year. CCTV footage, if nothing else, and we could at least prove the year that never was, was real." She saw the Doctor shaking his head.

"Thought of that. While you were talking earlier I remembered that one of the last steps was to wipe the entire mainframe," the Doctor admitted his arms crossed.

"We could construct something...photo manipulation?" Martha suggested.

Owen shook his head. "He won't fall for that. We presented him with the best fake documents in history and within minutes he had dismissed them as fraudulent." He saw both the Doctor and Martha both raise their eyebrows.

"First visit, Jack sort of crashed in to see Ianto. We were in Geoff's office with him screaming at us both, vowing he was going to make it his life work that we would never step inside the building again, when Jack stated he was Ianto civil partner. Not surprisingly considering the circumstances Geoff demanded proof."

"Proof?" Martha checked.

"The next day we presented him with said proof. The documents were flawless; photographs, you name it."

"So if they were fake why didn't he kick you out?" Martha asked.

Owen smiled. "Because he's a bloody nice bloke who looks beyond the obvious; also Jack was mess. Truth be told I don't think he did it for us, he did it for Ianto. He had been there eight months and no one had turned up to claim him. They had no idea who he was. Then suddenly this man turns up in theatrical gear so desperate to see him he barges his way in. Truth though Jack was out of control from the moment we found out Ianto was alive," he paused as recalled that day. "Look, I'll be honest...when he found him then discovered Ianto had no recollection of him I swear Jack looked like his entire world had disintegrated. He wasn't much better the following day. I think it was clear even though the documents were faked; there was a connection that he couldn't ignore. Geoff gave Jack the benefit of the doubt."

"So Geoff Green is our man," the Doctor said as much to himself as Owen.

"Yeah, but without some evidence of what Jack went through, he is not going to believe us," Owen
pointed out now crossing his arms.

"I can't believe there is nothing that remains of that horrible year. It's like we suffered for nothing." Martha ground her teeth as she put both her hands on the console and looked down in frustration then pushed herself away and sat down heavily on the small sofa.

Tapping his fingers on the console the Doctor suddenly straightened up. "But not everything," he burst out as he began to work the console. A few moments passed as the Doctor stepped back. "I think this is what we are looking for," he said triumphantly as the screen began to fill with images from the Valiant control room just before the American president was assassinated.

"Is there more?" Owen said, suddenly moving to his side.

"So fast! Any way of slowing this down?" Martha as the images now split into a multitude of segments, all fast-forwarding at breakneck speed.

A few moments passed when the Doctor took a sharp intake of breath. "I think this is what we are looking for," he said as a sickening series of images played out all that made it clear the Master had tortured a whole series of individuals.

"How?" Owen said as he felt his stomach turn over.

"The TARDIS was at the centre of the paradox," the Doctor declared. "Well done old girl." He patted the console.

Several hours passed and it became evident that the TARDIS had acted as some form of recorder. Forced to be at the centre of the paradox the events had become part of her living matrix. She had become the receptacle of the echo of every second of time during the entire year.

Being a living matrix they found that each second could be organised into any category. Placing in Jack's name, the sheer volume of information meant it would take years to assess every detail.

Finally they decided to ask the matrix to provide a potential catalogue of events starting with something ordinary, 'Jack eating', for example. They all noted now little there was of that. They then added Jack and the Master and the list lengthened to a multitude to choose from.

"Let's start at the beginning," Owen suggested.

The screen came alive as Jack was beaten into a bloody pulp as several of the guards at the Master's instigation vented his displeasure at Martha's escape as he watched on in glee. There was a brief pause then the next sequence began…

"Oh god," Owen said as he swallowed bile. He saw the Doctor shake his head as another scene began to play out.

Martha had her hand over her mouth as she tried to watch. She had wanted to close her eyes, but forced herself to endure each scene.

"Jack always had an instinctive fear of fire, and the Master used it full effect," the Doctor said as he watched him writhe in agony until he became a charred ruin.

Owen shook himself. He had expected extremes but nothing to what Jack had endured. He couldn't die, and that was a challenge for the Master. On top of this he delighted in forcing Jack into submission no act was too degrading.
The Doctor shuddered as the lengths Jack had gone to. He knew every button to push to trigger the Master's more sadistic tenancies, his challenge of, 'Do your worst' had meant the Master had done just that.

"He suffered all this and he never said a word," she said wiping away a tear as another sequence of images began to play out, this time of Jack being raped by several of the guards.

"I can't take any more, please turn this off," Owen begged as Martha now took refuge in the Doctor's arms.

"And Jack suffered another eight months of this," the Doctor commented. He saw the date embedded in the recording.

Several moments passed as they tried to recover from the sequences they had witnessed. Owen was not sure what was worse: what they had watched or knowing they had only seen a fraction of what was there.

"I wonder if the price Jack is paying is partly physical. We all assume when Jack dies he can just jump back as if nothing happened. What if this was so extreme, his body needs time to recover, and he can heal a finger but the trauma of that finger being broken takes a lot longer as each death is reinforced one on top of the other," Owen said thinking out loud.

"Maybe all this has imprinted itself. Somehow being killed multiple times, one after another, months of it, had to have done some damage," Martha ran with the idea.

"Let's find out the number," The Doctor began to request information from the matrix. Several moments passed before the completed list began to scroll down.

As Owen moved to read the list of the types of death and the number of times tried to keep his mind in a clinical state but it was impossible. The sheer number of deaths and their cruel nature made it incomprehensible that one man could have endured.

"He went through all this then arrived back and tried to carry on as if nothing had happened. Poor bastard...I didn't see it," Owen punched a strut, distressed.

"When this is all over I'm going to find a way to make this up to Jack," the Doctor said, just holding on to his own emotions. Martha pulled back and he handed her a clean handkerchief. "I don't know how, but I'm going to make start," he said manipulating the controls of the TARDIS.
Absurdities

Geoff Green looked at his watch: 9.30pm. He cursed; time had gotten away on him again and he had promised Beth he would be home by eight. He flipped open his mobile to check for messages and saw there were several. He felt his stomach turn. He debated for a moment if he should send an apology; he hesitated as he looked at the screen. He could hear Beth’s retort, ‘So being late you decided you would waste time texting to say you were late. And don’t tell me it was a patient, I know full well where you were…’ He snapped his phone shut, grabbed his case, clicked off his desk lamp and raced out the door.

Closing his office door he began to walk with speed down the corridor that led to the side entrance where he parked his car. He heard an odd noise; a sort of grinding sound. Some of the staff were sure the place was haunted and he snorted at the absurdity of the idea. He had argued a place like this, an old institution with its long dark corridors and cream and green walls - ominous reminders of its history - all the abuses of old meant it was rife with stories of ghostly sightings. He had argued on many occasions after any particular event, and being a sceptic that it was all the product of late nights, along with the noises creaks and groans were the result caused by the fact the building was old and overactive imaginations. He opened the exit door and headed for his car. Pulling out his keys, his thoughts filled with what he was going to say to Beth, an internal debate raged about whether he should find a garage with flowers then dismissed the idea immediately. He needed to get home, now.

A shadow moved and a dark woman stepped out. He jumped back, startled. “Good god you gave me one hell of a fright.”

“Doctor Green, my name is Martha Jones.” She offered her hand then withdrew it as the man glared at her.

“What the hell do you think you are doing? You scared me half to death!”

“I need to speak to you.”

“And you thought you would get my attention by scaring the living daylights out of me?” he thundered.

“I'm sorry never meant…”

Ignoring her, he put his key in the lock and turned it then took hold of the door handle.

“My name is Jones, Doctor Martha Jones, and I really need to speak to you. I have a friend who really needs your expertise,” she said hurriedly.

Geoff looked her up and down with disgust. “Look young lady, I don’t have the time or patience to deal with you. If you are a doctor as you claim your behaviour is highly unprofessional. If you want to consult with me, go through the normal channels.”

“I can’t, this is urgent; vital. Coming here now will make what I have to say well, more real,” she fumbled her reply.

“What in god’s name are you talking about? I run a small unit dedicated to helping victims of torture. If it’s urgent you need to call 999.” He started to move into his car but Martha caught his arm.

“Get your hand off me or I will call security,” he told her bluntly.
She let go. "It's not an emergency, but it is urgent," she pleaded. "My friend really needs your help and I assure you there is a reason why I," she corrected herself, "we couldn't approach you during normal hours."

"This is outrageous. I have a life outside of here. My wife was expecting me an hour and half ago. So if you are a doctor which I very much doubt, you need to go through the proper channels," he told her as another figure stepped out of the shadows.

"Doctor Owen Harper...what the hell are you doing here? Is some kind of sick joke? I am not amused. Is this how you conduct yourself? I thought after the last time you had learnt your lesson, but clearly you have not. Now excuse me," he flared then attempted to get into his car.

"Jack Harkness has collapsed. We suspect..." Owen got no further.

"Well I told him it would be hard work; he most likely needs a rest. I suggest you speak to Veronica Singh and find some respite care for Ianto, and give him a break." He turned to Owen. "And you need to find a far better way to get my attention; this was uncalled for."

"We came to you because you are the best," Martha pointed out.

"I'm flattered, but his issues are carer fatigue and as such I cannot help."

"You don't understand," Martha interjected.

"I understand very well. I warned Jack that taking on Ianto's care burns people out. I know he has done an incredible job however..."

"Jack was on the Valiant," Owen tried to explain.

"And so what? Many people have been on the Valiant, she is a fleet vessel," Geoff retorted impatiently.

"Jack was on the Valiant. He was as prisoner along with Ianto," Martha added.

"I've had a long day, I am late. I have had enough of this absurd conversation..." he began to say as a tall thin man came out of the shadows.

"All we are asking is for you to listen, and I promise I will get you to wherever you need to go on time."

"Another one! Let me guess: you are part of this comedy act. Well, unless you can turn back time by one and a half hours, I have to go," he blurted out as he looked the tall thin man up and down.

"I'm the Doctor," he said holding out his hand.

Geoff stood his back against the drivers' side of his car, arms crossed and listened. He was not sure who had put this trio up to this. He had never heard such a preposterous tale of nonsense in his entire life and berated himself for allowing himself to be persuaded to listen.

"So let me get this straight: Jack Harkness is immortal, who can't die. Well he can die but doesn't stay dead. He was held prisoner on the Valiant and tortured by a mad Time Lord called the Master. A time machine called the TARDIS was caught in a time paradox which, when released, rewound time. The paradox created a year that never was, where humanity was forced into building a fleet of spacecraft by some future incarnation of the human race called the Toclafane. After three years he has collapsed and now is in need of help due to the nature of his torture. You have found a record of
said abuse which is prolonged and graphic; you want me to come and speak to him and see if he will talk to me," he pointed at the thin tall man in the bad suit. "You are another a Time Lord and you are a previous companion," he pointed at Martha, then at Owen. "I have no idea where you fit in," he took a deep breath. "I am not sure who put you up to this but when I find out who it was there is going to be hell to pay. Have you any idea how ridiculous this all sounds?"

"You need proof?" the Doctor lifted his hand to interrupt his tirade.

"Damn right I need proof," Geoff burst out. "Have you any idea how ludicrous this sounds? It's beyond bizarre."

"We have proof," Martha told him.

"I am not going to stand here and listen to another word of this nonsense. This farce is over," Geoff burst out.

The Doctor stared then pointed a finger at him. "Jack Harkness is responsible for helping save humanity from enslavement. Every man, woman, and child alive today owes their existence to his sacrifice. I can tell you that came at a huge personal cost. You have asked for proof, well we can give you that proof," the Doctor pointed into the night.

"Are you are expecting me to walk into the dark with three people I consider to be requiring they be committed?" he spat out.

"Wait here," he stated as he strode off. Not wanting to hang around any further, Geoff pulled on the handle of the car door. He was about to open the door fully, when he heard the strange grinding sound from earlier and what appeared to be an old police box materialised beside him. He had time to drop his jaw as the door opened.

Jack looked at the play of light filling the room; it was mesmerising. Tosh has hung a crystal prism down one of the picture windows. As the mid-morning sun reached a certain point it filled the room with dancing colours. 'They would be hanging wind chimes next,' he said to himself.

He watched the pattern of colours dance around him as he tried to contain the anxiety that had been gnawing away at his insides since Owen had told him they had found someone to see him and he was coming here this morning. He should be prepared; this could be a long session. In preparation Ianto had been taken out on an outing accompanied by Tosh and Mac and organised by Sergeant McCredie.

One of the local fishing boats had become the particular haunt for a family of otters. It was one boat only and they followed it in every time it arrived back into harbour. They would then beg the freshest titbits from the crew and after all the hustle and bustle of unloading would sleep curled up amongst the ropes or some other nook or granny. The otters only appeared out of season once the tourist season was over, being shy reclusive animals. It was one of best kept secrets of the island and they intended to keep it that way. Jack felt a warm glow that for a moment replaced his feeling of anxiety at their ongoing inclusion in Island life.

With Jack incapacitated, the locals had gathered together and thrown several outings like this for Ianto in an effort to distract him. Jack knew that Ianto really enjoyed these excursions because it forged connections to the world around him. Each one allowed him to re-fill in the gaps left by his stolen and damaged memory. They were thoughtful gestures and each one was designed with elements Ianto could get the maximum pleasure and enjoyment from. Jack thanked the powers-to-be daily that they had come here.
He turned over to face the door to prepare himself. He had no idea what to expect and he braced himself for what was to come; he felt cold and knew it had nothing to do with the temperature of the room. What the hell did Geoff think he could do? He had worked wonders with Ianto, no doubt, but what hell were they going to talk about? He had never needed to seek any kind of help of this form. The idea of someone probing his darkest thoughts, unpicking who he was, sent a shiver down his spine and he swallowed nervously. He closed his eyes momentarily and fought back the darkness hovering ever present in the back of his mind.

He knew what they suspected; he had done his own research. Part of the problem was he was terrified someone might discover the sort of control he was using and ask him to stop. He snorted to himself; as if it was that easy. He was sure the suppression was permanent, until he found his memories were seeping through via nightmares. He had been stunned to speechlessness at Owen's revelation. Ianto had been helping Jack for months, he had seen the drawings. It would appear that they had started just after around the time he had started to use the technique. They were bad, really bad, but why did he have no recollection until Owen had enquired? He shuddered; he knew the truth. It came back to control and there was no way he was going talk about or discuss that particular issue. All he needed was to catch up with his rest and he would be back being able to cope…he heard footsteps and the door opened.

"Hi Geoff," Jack said sleepily.
"Hi Geoff," Jack said sleepily.

Geoff entered the room and spent several minutes talking about the house and garden. Jack sat up and made himself comfortable. They exchanged pleasantries, mostly about the weather when Geoff put his hand in his pocket and pulled out three balls.

"You know, I've always wanted to juggle," he said throwing the balls around. He started with one, then added another trying to establish a rhythm then introduced the third.

"Years I've tried; even my ten-year-old had tried to teach me." His words were punctuated by his efforts as he either dropped one of the balls or all three flew off in different directions. Jack smiled at his efforts as Geoff swore aloud as he struggled to get his co-ordination. Then he threw one at Jack followed by the other. "Okay then, you have a go."

"Smart bastard," Geoff said as Jack showed his prowess then threw each ball back at Geoff, who caught each one and placed two back in his pocket but retained one. "When was the last time you had some fun?" He threw the ball at Jack, who caught it instinctively surprised.

He thought for a moment, then threw it back. "Define fun." Jack hefted the ball. Geoff caught it then threw the ball back to Jack who caught it with both hands then threw it back without thinking.

"Play, letting everything go, type of fun?" Jack caught the ball and held it.

"Not for a while," he said quietly then lugged the ball back.

"Define awhile? Geoff threw it back. Jack looked at him as he now held the ball.

"You know this wasn't what I was expecting." He tossed the ball using an overhand throw which caused Geoff to almost fumble the catch.

"What where you expecting?"

"I'm not sure but this wasn't it."

"You mean two grown men playing catch..." He saw Jack smile.

"Oh were you expecting me to ask you to lay on a sofa, or bed in this case, and you would open up and start bearing all your deepest darkest secrets, while I sit here and look pensive and say things like 'sometimes a cigar is just a cigar,' or ask you questions like, 'tell me about your mother,' that sort of thing?" He saw Jack nod then took a breath.

"So fun" he added after several moments.

"You know what Geoff? I can't think it's been that long, but I guess I'm having fun right now," Jack said he saw Geoff smile and threw the ball back.

"Only guess?" Geoff teased as Jack smiled as Geoff tossed the ball his way.

"I am having fun," Jack admitted.

"That's good because I figured things are serious enough. Firstly I've been summoned by the mighty Time Lord, the Doctor, in his TARDIS," he put his hand over his mouth as an aside, "And a mighty
fine nifty manner of conveyance she is too." He straightened up and deepened his voice. "Summoned along with his oh so serious sidekick the brave and fearless Martha Jones, the long faced Doctor Harper, with the delightful Miss Sato, to rescue Captain Jack from the terrible circumstances he finds himself in. But that is not why I am here."

"Oh," was all Jack could say perplexed.

"You don't need rescuing Jack. From what I can see you've done a mighty fine job of that yourself. . . Your friends, colleagues, and associates told me all about you. Jack the hero of the Valiant, Leader of Torchwood. You are Captain Jack Harkness, a dashing hero, who will face down any enemy, regardless of the odds race in to save the day. He makes the tough decisions no one else can stomach and then carries them through." He watched the effect of his words on Jack. "I tell you Jack, I've met him; he came crashing into my life, wearing a grey coat, sidearm on his hip. Refusing to take no for an answer, faced with the unthinkable he found a way to overcome all obstacles. He fought a multitude of battles and overcame distrust, to rescue the man he loved more than his own life and I suspect his own soul. He faced down professional scepticism - mainly me - and with great fortitude and purpose as Captain Harkness always does and won."

"No, I'm here for a much different reason." He paused then hefted the ball. "I'm here for Jack the man, and as much as I think Captain Harkness won the odd battle, there is a war which is I believe is ongoing which Jack the man has had to face on a daily if nor hourly basis." His voice became softer as he saw Jack sink back a little and he allowed a few moments to pass before he spoke again.

"Before we go any further we need to set some ground rules. Firstly, anything you say here stays here. However I do ask permission to ask for insights from your friends. I should also tell you I consulted with them as part of my homework for seeing you today. However those insights would be general only and would contain no specifics. If I do need to share anything in any detail I will always ask your permission first. Is there anything you would like to add or change?" He saw Jack look at his hands shaking his head.

"Great, if you think of something we can always change this but my rules are absolute in terms of confidentiality; nothing you tell me in here will be shared. I have spoken to Tosh and she has given me a special programme, an encryption matrix that will make it impossible for anyone to gain access other than myself to any notes I commit electronically. Secondly, I think we need to clear up a misconception. I'm not here to give you the answers, or tell you what to do because you already have those answers yourself, it's my bet you've known the answers for some time." He saw Jack become still. "My role here is to help you conceptualise those answers into ways in which you can apply them. One final thing: I know you only agreed to see me because you thought it would help Ianto, which is a very noble offer, and fits in with the heroic mantle you wear but..."

"There is always a but," Jack interrupted warily under his breath.

"I'm here for you. Not for Ianto, not for Owen, Tosh, Martha, or the Doctor," he said bluntly. He now threw a second ball at Jack who, off guard, only just managed to catch it.

"I want this to be a time for you, without their expectations, or any notions of you doing your duty by them, or your love of Ianto." He saw his words' effects as he saw Jack become still.

"This is hard," he let out a breath and then threw the ball at Geoff a little harder than he realised.

"There is no easy way out of this," Geoff admitted to him.

"I just need to rest?"
"I agree," Geoff said as Jack looked at him blinking.

"One of the hypotheses that make a great deal of sense suggests some of your current predicament is physical. I suspect the longer you go without being killed or dying will over time increase your stamina. I am sure that the time it takes for you to revive after any given death will shorten considerably," he said straight-faced as he saw Jack's jaw lock.

"In what way do you think you current lifestyle will benefit from being able to revive more quickly?" Geoff asked after several moments passed.

"There is none, because I don't plan to die or be killed," he replied sheepishly.

"So what do you want?"

"I want my life back, not the Torchwood hero, life." He looked at Geoff. "I want a life with Ianto, here and now."

"How is rest helping?"

"I thought it would. I've been telling myself for months all I need is rest. I guess part of me knows rest is only going to solve part of this."

"That's reasonable; Ianto is hard work; even now he needs direction, supervision and reassurance. Part of being a carer of someone in Ianto's circumstance is fatiguing. It comes from the constancy of care. So what's the other part?" Geoff asked as he threw a ball at Jack who picked it up and heaved it back, missing Geoff and striking the window with a thud. Several moments passed as they threw the ball; at each throw it was clear Jack was putting more and more energy into each throw.

"Can you put a sound to this?" Geoff encouraged.

"No."

"How about a volcanic explosion?" Geoff offered after several more throws.

"Only if the explosion is me screaming at myself," Jack retorted back then stopped as he realised what he had said.

"What is about yourself you feel you need to be angry about?"

Jack caught the ball one-handed. "I'm stronger than this. Captain Jack is stronger than this." he threw back with force.

"Captain Jack is strong enough to survive torture, pain, deprivation and evil? What happened, and make no doubt about it Jack, was evil and you were strong," he reflected.

"Yeah he is strong enough," Jack replied, raising his voice.

"So why are so angry?"

Jack stopped his arm raised in mid throw.

"You said you were angry at yourself for not being stronger." He saw Jack staring at him, blinking as he put his arm down.

"I did," Jack bit his lip. Several long moments passed before Jack replied. "Strong enough to hold back... to ..." he looked at Geoff then threw the ball his way. "Hold onto, deal with..." He looked
exasperated.

"Where is Jack in all this?"

"Jack?"

"You said Captain Jack, not Jack?" Geoff reminded him.

Staring at Geoff Jack made a connection. "I'm angry at myself for being human?"

"You tell me. Captain Jack's a hero; a persona. Jack's a humans being. A person, like the rest of us, who forgets things, and makes mistakes." He saw Jack blanch and put what he had observed away for future reference. "Has bad hair days, makes impulse purchases, forgets to put petrol in the car, locks themselves out of the house, goes grocery shopping and puts forty things in their trolley but forgets to buy the one thing they went in for. Gets speeding tickets…"

"I should have been able to cope," Jack interjected.

"Well when you say cope what do you mean?"

"Cope as in handle," Jack replied almost as a sneer as if the answer should be obvious.

'Is that what you do? Handle things by coping, and that means you should be okay?" Geoff raised an eyebrow.

"I've coped in the past."

"And what exactly have you had to cope with?"

"This was not the first time I've been tortured. I've coped," he corrected himself. "I managed to deal with it each and every time."

"How?" Geoff asked him directly and Jack closed his eyes and swallowed.

"I just did."

"Would it be fair so say in the past you used avoidance?"

"Well, maybe avoidance is a way of coping. I cope by putting aside the events as a way of allowing myself to continue on, therefore I cope," Jack declared.

"You are quite right. Many survivors of torture use avoidance to cope with the aftermath." Jack blinked then looked thoughtful then nodded to himself. "So how does this work? How have you applied this strategy to your own ordeal?" He saw Jack fold in on himself a little. "Tell me about an average week at Torchwood Cardiff before all this happened. Start at the beginning of the week, say a Sunday night, and take me through." Geoff sat
back and listened as Jack reeled off his list of activities, which were a whirlwind of seemingly never-ending events. He began to wonder how Jack had managed to forge such a strong relationship with Ianto; from what he gathered Ianto had stayed over a lot.

"So anything else?" Geoff checked.

"No, come Sunday then we start all over again," Jack admitted.

"And you live in the Hub as the person on call 24 hours a day and sometimes Ianto joined you?" Jack nodded in agreement. "Would it be fair assessment to say you were a workaholic, someone who found it difficult to just sit still?" Geoff asked,

"So how did you recharge?" he asked as Jack pulled his lower lip deep thought had not replied.

"I like tall buildings. I would often go and take some time out enjoy a dawn, or sunset, or the stars."

"How often?"

"Occasionally."

"How occasionally?"

Jack pouted at the question. "Once or twice?" he admitted.

"A week, month, day..." Geoff raised an eyebrow.


"So once or twice a month you would take a few hours and go sit on a tall building taking some time out," Geoff reflected back and saw Jack looking at him. "Would it be fair to say you loved the frantic nature of how you go from one activity to the other...?"

"Yeah, being busy, it's great." He looked at Geoff as he realised where this was going.

"Continually working is one way of using avoidance as a coping strategy, you fill your life with endless activity because if you stop even for a moment..." he left the remainder of the sentence unsaid.

"That was before you went, what about when you returned?" he saw all the blood leave Jack's face and bite his bottom lip so he got up and sat next to the bed to find Jack was shivering.

"So this time was different?" He nudged gently and saw Jack nod.

"Ianto was gone. Everyone was angry at me for disappearing; all of them made it clear how displeased they were. I found it difficult to keep my focus," he said mildly. "I threw myself back into work, to just keep moving... there was a lot to catch up on, and I needed to re-establish myself not just with my team but outside agencies."

"Ianto being gone; how was that?" Jack looked at him with haunted eyes as the question caught him by surprise and his mouth opened but found it impossible to speak.

Geoff watched as he saw him shrink in on himself and realised he has strayed into an area that Jack was not ready to deal with so he changed tactics. "So you used avoidance; you threw yourself back into the role but you said you had difficulty coping."

"Could anyone?" Jack snapped. "Okay, I had nightmares, I was jumpy, loud noises, crowds, I had
difficulty concentrating. I would be fine and then without warning I would be filled with this overwhelming panic, break out in cold sweat. I started trying to avoid places, people, and things that would set me off but nothing helped. I spent a lot of time trying to fill every moment of every day…I hated being left on my own. If I was left on my own I was in the shower, mainly because it made the blood and brains easier to clean up. I can’t tell you how many times over the next few months I killed myself. Only because it was the only time I could find any moment of blessed oblivion. I needed it, anything to give myself some relief. Especially after… I had to clean up his flat, go through his stuff. Found he loved me as much as I loved him. His diary, his words, knowing he was lost, what I had lost. I could find no peace, I laid in his bed, wrapped up, surrounded by memories. It was like I had this hole in side of me filled with nothing but agony… and all I needed, all I wanted was him.” He broke down.

"And then you found him." Geoff stood and handed Jack some tissues.

"Yeah." Jack wiped his hand over his face to clear his tears.

"I want to keep our focus on you Jack. How bad was this by the time you turned up that day at the institute?"

"Bad."

"Can you give me an example?" He saw Jack let out a slow breath.

"Constant; Ianto's night room, the bars on the windows, the worst was the day of Ianto's meltdown, as we walked to the room where he was. I had to fight every step of the way, not to lose it. At one point I swear the walls were moving in" He shuddered. "That night with Ianto, I think I blacked out for a while. It continued on and on." Geoff kept his expression neutral as Jack spoke

"So the whole time before you left with Ianto, what about after?"

"Here too, but it eased a bit being away from the institute. The garden certainly helped. Ianto started to make improvements, but it returned full force. I remember coming to lying on the floor screaming."

"And then?" He noted Jack looked away.

"I made a decision. I couldn't take it anymore. Ianto needed me, I couldn't fail him. I was on my own here. I had to do something."

"So what you're telling me is you found a way to block the PTSD?"

Jack shook his head and let out a huge breath and knew he had no choice but to explain. "When I was a Time Agent we had this technique to suppress memories. It's a form of mental discipline. Over the following days after I broke down, I used this to suspend them in a place where they could not cause me to break down. The PTSD is still there it's just more manageable; more of a distraction rather than overwhelming."

'Until you dropped dead of a heart attack caused by stress,' Geoff thought as he raised an eyebrow. "Can you access them?"

Jack shook his head. "No and I don't want to. This is my greatest fear Geoff, that you will persuade me to release my control. I can't anyway. So don't ask," he burst out.

"Why would I ask you to stop using something that has kept you sane?" he pointed out bluntly and saw Jack almost sink with relief and look at him wide eyed.
"I swore I was not going to tell you this. I laid here and vowed the last thing I would tell you was this."

"As I said you rescued yourself, that journey to this point is one you have made on your own. I'm not going to fault or begrudge you the choices you made to helped you get here."

"Thank you."

"I think we've done enough today. I think we both need time to think over what was said here, but before I go, I want to share something with you. No victim of torture comes out unscathed and every single one of them finds a way to deal with the trauma. Yours is unusual but not as surprising as you might think." He paused. "You look exhausted. I'll send up Tosh with some lunch. Get a good rest and I will see you in two days. While I'm gone I want you to do some homework. You said what you wanted was a life with Ianto. Over the next couple of days I want you to list down in detail what you mean, be specific."

Geoff stood and picked up the balls. "I'd leave them Jack but it's not like you need the practice." With this final comment he left.

Jack lay back and listened through the open door as Tosh tried to persuade him to take a couple of cakes delivered by an ongoing stream of well-wishers and closing his eyes felt hope rise in his chest for the first time in a long time.
"You're looking happy," Owen said as Ianto placed Jack's lunch tray on the kitchen counter.

"We've been practising," Ianto told him as Owen ate his lunch at the kitchen table.

"And what have you been practising?" Tosh asked; she was curious as Ianto looked coy.

"Kissing," he told her as he started to clear away the tray.

"Jack's too tired to really practice so I sort of helped practice for him," he added a few moments later. "I do miss our game and mornings and night times, but Jack says too many visitors. We used to do loads more practice, and I like practicing and I need a lot of practice, but Jack's too tired, so we only practice sometimes," he said as he washed up Jack's plate and mug.

"So kissing," Owen nudged, curious and not sure what Ianto was referring to.

"Yes and other things."

"Like?" Tosh nudged as Owen looked at her.

"We give each other orgasms. We get all sticky. It's the best thing we have ever done, and I need loads and loads of practice," Ianto emphasized as Owen looked disapprovingly. Tosh placed a hand over her mouth to stifle the laugh that erupted over his declaration.

"How long?" Owen asked trying to keep the disapproval out of his voice.

"Since I started having the nice dreams."

"And when did they start?" Owen said his tone causing Tosh to stare at him, shaking her head.

"After my party. Jack said I'm not supposed to talk about because it's private."

"Emm," Owen stifled his next question and bristled at Jack's insistence Ianto not tell anyone.

"So you're going to Mac's this afternoon," Tosh said changing the subject.

Ianto looked at the clock to check the time. "Yes, I'm making a list of all the parts we need, and then I am going to see if I can find any on the internet or e-bay," he told them.

"Okay you go and get ready and I'll walk you in. I've got some bread and some leftover cake we can give Marigold," Tosh told him as she now finished drying the dishes.

"Oh yes bread and the cakes are yummy so I am sure she will love bread and cakes, she is so greedy she once ate all the nasty foods from our cupboards," Ianto said. Turning he headed to where they kept their coats and outdoor shoes.

"Never saw you as a prude?" Tosh said as soon as Ianto left the room.

"I'm not, but this is not right...Ianto has a mental age of around nine, and as far as I am aware sex with nine year olds…" He left his statement unfinished.

"It doesn't sound like that to me," Tosh pointed out.
"You heard; Jack told Ianto not to say anything about it so what does that suggest?" he said raising his eyebrows.

Ianto now joined them wearing his coat and flat cap.

"I always wear this to cap to Mac's because it's just like his," he announced. "I always wear my cap outside; it keeps my head warm," he added and handed her, her coat.

"And very handsome you look too," Tosh told him.

"I don't know that word," Ianto told her.

"It means you are very good looking." She saw the look of confusion on his face. "Have you looked at someone and thought, 'wow they are good looking'?" Tosh asked him.

He shook his head. "Does the flat cap make you look handsome? Because Mac wears one and he's all old and wrinkly," he said trying to figure out the meaning.

"Oh god," Owen groaned under his breath as he realised they had stepped into a mine field.

"It's more to do with how the person looks like rather than what they are wearing. For women there's beautiful, like Tosh," he tried to explain.

"So handsome is like beautiful, only for a man," Ianto reasoned and saw both Tosh and Owen nod.

"I might think corrrrr, she's beautiful and I might like to get to know her better and ask her out on a date."

"What happens on a date?" Ianto asked.

"It's where you go and meet or take someone you really like and think is beautiful or handsome and get to know them better."

"Where would you take someone on a date?"

"Depends, sometimes you might go out for a meal or a nice walk somewhere, meet in a pub for a drink."

"Like the café you can have meal there. We've had meals there. Last time I had sausage eggs and chips, Jack had fish and chips, and the fish is really fresh because it comes from the boats in the harbour. I've seen the boats; they work really hard catching fish." Ianto then laughed out loud in recollection. "I stole some of Jack's fish and he stole some of my sausage and dipped it in my egg. I had a chocolate milkshake and Jack had coffee. Then we both had ice cream and it was yum. Maureen didn't have maple syrup so I had chocolate sauce with nuts and cream. Jack said it was a called a chocolate Sunday but I don't know why it's named after a day in the week but it was delicious. Maureen said she would get some maple syrup in just for me. So what happens on a date?" he finished with a question.

"You talk and hold hands and hopefully end up kissing," Tosh replied quickly.

"So you're saying I'm good looking and someone might ask me out on a date like to the café or the pub or a nice walk. We will talk, hold hands and there might be kissing," he said.

Tosh nodded. Owen groaned, not sure how they had walked into this one as they saw a look of understanding grow on Ianto's face and his eyes lit up.
"Jack is very handsome. We kiss. So I need to ask him out on a date. I could take him to the cafe. If I'm handsome then he will come, and we will hold hands and kiss." He thought deeply for a moment. "Tosh, what happens if someone asks me out on a date and I don't think they're handsome? How do I say no because I wouldn't want to hurt their feelings?" he said as he worked through the concept in his mind.

"But you might like to go on a date with them," she pointed out.

He shook his head. "No, I have Jack and he has me, he is handsome and we kiss and practice and I've never seen anyone more handsome so I don't want to go on a date with anyone else," he told her bluntly.

"It's okay to say no, that's what I do," she told him as they now headed out the door.

"So people have asked you out on a date then, so you must be beautiful…" Owen heard Ianto say as they headed down the lane.

Owen waited until Ianto was out of sight before he pulled out the mobile to tell the Doctor Ianto had left. He snapped his mobile shut, and he heard the TARDIS land in the garden. He went over and over Ianto's revelation. What the hell was Jack thinking? Greeting Geoff he pulled him aside.

"Before you go up can I have a word?" Owen asked as Geoff turned face him. "It's about Ianto."

Geoff looked concerned.

"Look I'm not sure how to say this so I am going to come right out and say it. I think Jack is having a sexual relationship with Ianto."

"How did you know?"

"Ianto told us outright. He calls it practicing."

"So what's the problem?" Geoff asked.

Owen showed surprise at his reaction. "Ianto has a mental age of what nine. Jack is taking advantage of him."

"I think you are confusing Ianto's age. Ianto is not a child. This is not paedophilia," Geoff stated.

"But does Ianto understand the implications? Sex is an act between adults. He does have diminished responsibility. I'm pretty sure Ianto will not be able to fully understand. What I am saying is it's not consensual," he argued.

Geoff looked at Owen and took a breath and crossed his arms. "Let me make one thing clear: Ianto is an adult. He has a right to have any sexual relationship he wants. Just because he comes across as naïve I assure you he is not. I would say Ianto knows exactly what he is doing and is willing and able. So to be blunt I don't see the problem."

"But is encouraging this in his best interest? I mean Jack knows it's wrong. He even told Ianto to keep quiet and that implies guilt," Owen pointed out.

"Firstly, I don't agree. As you've discovered Ianto doesn't always sense why people are asking him questions so he tells you the answer without considering... what I trying to say is he doesn't have the same internal sensors we do. In light of this it's more likely Jack told him that sex is a subject grown-ups don't talk about. I mean do you discuss your sex life openly with other people?" Owen shook his
head.

"Secondly everything that Jack has done, has been in Ianto's best interests. They are at the forefront of his mind at all times. I can't think of any instance where Jack has placed his needs before Ianto's."

"I'm going to be blunt. I think it's inappropriate for Jack to encourage Ianto in this," Owen told him point-blank.

"Why is it inappropriate?"

"Because Ianto doesn't understand the concept of sex between adults. How can he deal with all the emotions and issues that are inherent in any sexual relationship?" Owen argued.

"That's one tall order Doctor Harper. I don't think many adults do either. But I think you're mistaking naivety for innocence. Ianto is not innocent. If you hadn't noticed he's a very strong-willed individual with a mind of his own. I'm betting it was Ianto leading and Jack following protesting all the way with a smile on his face," he said laughing out loud.

He saw Owen raise an eyebrow.

"So what I'm saying is, this is none your business or mine for that matter. This is between them and them alone. And to be honest I am relieved considering the fears both Jack and I held that Ianto might never be able to reclaim full sexual function. It is wonderful that this has been resolved."

"You have given me a lot to think about."

"Good because you need to get with the programme, Owen. Their private lives are just that: private. I don't want you expressing anything to Ianto that would suggest that what they are doing is in any way wrong. As a survivor of sexual abuse, we have to tread very carefully that he does not associate the enjoyment and discovery he is possibly experiencing with that past. Have I made myself clear?" he said as he saw Owen nod. "Excellent," he said turning on his heel and heading upstairs.

Owen checked Jack's vitals as he sat up in bed enjoying the view from the bedroom window.

"You should know Ianto told us about your practice session today," Owen told him as he heard Jack groan.

"I tried to tell him grownups don't talk about sex, but he's so open," Jack admitted. "Sorry if he embarrassed you."

"Sort of took me by surprise," Owen said.

Jack interpreted the look on his face. "You should know I was not the instigator. Ianto put up a damn good argument that was hard to refuse." He saw Owen raise an eyebrow as he checked Jack's pulse.

"What is so strange was, it was a repeat of what happened at the Hub," Jack confessed as Owen looked confused. "Ianto seduced me," he added quickly.

"Never," Owen burst out.

"Yeah well he's a man who once he knows what he wants goes for it," he added as he remembered how Ianto had astounded him with his passion and vigour.

"I have to tell you Jack when I found out I was uncomfortable but Geoff put me straight and told me to mind my own business. So while minding my own business, don't let Ianto talk you into too much
"He's so hard to refuse," Jack admitted.

"Well I was thinking last night you told me you had this tipping point and I got to thinking…"

"Yes," Jack admitted. "Ianto is very enthusiastic."

Owen laughed. "You know the Ianto we knew would never have blurted out something as personal as this," Owen added after several moments.

"He would have blushed," Jack became sad.

"Penny for your thoughts," Owen offered.

"I wish I could turn back to the clock and go back to prevent all his suffering..."

"Press the re-set button," Owen completed his thought. "You have got a mate with a time machine," Owen pointed out

"Don't you think I haven't considered it? Why do you think it took me so long to get back? The time distortion was so bad the first clear time was months later."

There was a knock on the door and they saw it was Ianto.

"Myfanwy's getting lonely, she hasn't had a cuddle for a while," he said.

Jack held out his arms. "And I bet you could do with one as well," Jack said as Ianto came and laid down next to him and Jack folded his arms around him.

"Tosh tells me I have to take you on a date because I think you're handsome," he said.


"Tosh said I was handsome, which means I'm good looking and people might ask me out on a date."

"Well you are very handsome," Jack said.

Ianto hugged him. "Because I think you are most handsome so I have to take you out on a date and we can hold hands and I can kiss you," he said.

Jack leaned down and gave him a kiss. "What else did Tosh say?" Jack asked.

"That Owen is an idiot and won't take her out on a date," he said. Owen choked out a cough.

"I told her maybe Owen doesn't realise she wants more. If she thinks he is handsome she should just ask him on a date and give him a really a big kiss just like I did when I asked you for more practice and don't take no for an answer. Give him a real big kiss and say she wants to practice kissing."

"On that note," Owen interrupted "I think I'll leave you to it and remember what I said," Owen reminded him as he closed the door and headed downstairs. Ianto had seduced Jack and he had been sure it was the other way around. Now he understood all those times at the Hub when Ianto had thrown lustful looks at Jack and why Jack had looked so knackered. Thinking about it, it was after the second Suzie incident. He couldn't wait to share this with Tosh. Maybe Ianto was right; maybe he should just give her a big kiss.
Up and about

Opening the TARDIS door Geoff was surprised to be greeted by Jack.

"It's good to see you up and about," he said slapping Jack on the shoulder as he stepped out.

"You've come such a long way, the least I could do was get out of bed and walk twenty five feet. And as today is one of my rare good days, I thought I would make an effort," Jack told him and stumbled. Geoff caught his arm.

"Might need some help getting back though," he joked.

"I get the impression that sometimes the Doctor doesn't always have complete control where the TARDIS lands? I'm never quite sure where we will end up. We land in the garden and other times here in the lane."

Jack laughed as they walked slowly back to the house. "I have often had this feeling that the TARDIS has her own ideas and as such operates from a different set of priorities, so he often ends up in some surprising places," Jack added.

"She?"

"All ships are women, and she does require very delicate handling." He saw a look of comprehension grow on Geoff's face.

"Ahhh that explains why he caresses the console and appears to treat her like she is a treasured individual rather than a vehicle. I would say the touching, is almost sexual."

"Are you suggesting that the Doctor and the TARDIS are in a relationship?" Jack stopped to look at Geoff.

"You know Jack sometimes a cigar is just and cigar and sometimes it is not," Geoff joked.

"As I think about it he does argue with her in a way that suggest she's more than just a conveyance and I can confirm she purrs if stroked just right," Jack admitted.

"Are you telling me you seduced the TARDIS?"

Jack stopped and put his hand over his heart. "I just noticed that she tended to operate better under certain circumstances if stroked... she's very tactile. I could swear at one point she hummed with delight."

"Jack, you are incorrigible."

Geoff smiled as they walked down the lane enjoying how relaxed they were now in each other's company. His meeting the TARDIS meant Jack was finally showing evidence that he was moving forward and he had regained a modicum of energy. So far they had talked a lot about Jack's past but were yet to touch on the year that never was. Jack was a great story teller and Geoff had found himself many times drawn into these tales. On guard he was well aware of Jack's ability to detract from core issues and used them to allow Jack to examine those events on a deeper level. They had led to Jack gaining some insight into his life and allowed both of them to build a foundation of trust that would be needed for Jack to open up.
Now they had built a foundation, his purpose today was to steer Jack back to his admittance he was suppressing his memories.

He was sure this suppression was a major factor contributing to Jack's fatigue and the lessening of the effects of the PTSD he was suffering. He didn't for one moment believe that this had become a mere distraction as Jack had claimed. Jack had died of a heart attack caused by the stress of dealing with the overwhelming physical effects of PTSD. Jack was a master at playing down the severe nature of what he was experiencing and today it was his plan they start to tackle this very delicate topic.

"I will never get used the weather here. One moment it's beautiful but getting ready to blow up a gale, and yet within an half an hour it will be raining, followed by hail." He took a view down the lane as they neared the cottage.

"You should ask Ianto to tell you about the day it went through every possible variation including snow."

"Where is he today?" Geoff asked.

"With David Morgan. He spends his time examining all the farm machinery; they have a tractor, you know. He helps with any maintenance, and feeds the animals. It also gives Marian Morgan a chance to feed him up with her maple syrup and walnut loaf." He smiled.

"He doesn't need feeding up. If any more cakes come through that door you'll be able to open your own bakery," Geoff commented. "By the way my wife thanks you, for both the carrot and chocolate cakes; they were divine." Geoff said as they heard the TARDIS de-materialised behind them.

Reaching the door to the cottage, Jack took a moment to recover then busied himself making them both a hot drink.

"Tea or coffee?" Jack called out.

"Tea," Geoff replied as he took the opportunity to look around the lounge. In the past four weeks, he had only walked through on his way upstairs. He marvelled at what a perfect environment this was for Ianto. It was one thing to read Jack's monthly reports; another to actually visit.

He picked up the stuffed dragon that was sitting on one of the armchairs. So this was the famous Myfanwy; she was in almost perfect condition, evidence of Ianto's care for those things he valued. He placed her back in the same position and moved to the desk.

He went through the items ensuring he kept them in order. He came across his Open University assignment, just returned with a mark of 'A+', and the word 'outstanding' written across the front. This was a perfect example of the dichotomy that made up Ianto. His intellectual ability when it came to maths was impressive and yet in terms of the issues that plagued him he still has a long way to go.

His biggest difficulty was he could not express in words what he wanted to say; it was like that part of his mind had been disconnected. His emotional development was on the same par. He could feel something intensely but not express how he felt in any vocabulary. Jack had done well to divert this expression into drawing, and Myfanwy had certainly helped. Both outlets had been very beneficial along with the fabric emotions. Jack had learnt early on that how Myfanwy was feeling was often in direct correlation to what was going on for Ianto. Another curious aspect was that Ianto often had insights from the toy. There had been many instances where he had found clarity and attributed them to her. He had concluded that Ianto had projected a part of his mind into her, and the conversations he had with her (which were in effect conversations with himself) allowed him to work things
through.

He moved now to admire Ianto's art work and started to remove the layers of drawings from the board to admire them. There were butterflies, birds, and flowers from the garden. He reached the final layer and his attention was immediately drawn to one picture. He took out the pins to examine it more closely.

If he was reading this correctly the blue box was the TARDIS. The grey blob was now a man in blue grey coat, wearing a backpack and running towards it. He tried to think if Jack had mentioned this in any of his reports. He would need to check but he was sure there had been no update on this. As part of Ianto's obsession, the sheer volume of work and its clear importance had been obvious when he was at the institute. It was more surprising considering the details that went into Jack's reports that it had not been included. He started to put the drawings back as Jack appeared and held out a mug.

"Jack, over the past two weeks we've touched on many areas of your life today I would like us to return us to a topic we touched on during my first visit. You told me that you've been using a form of mind suppression technique which you were taught as Time Agent." He took the drink and they both sat at opposite end of the sofa. "I have a theory about your fatigue but before I share this with you I need to gain an understanding about how this works," he stated cautiously.

Jack sat back and closed his eyes. He knew they would come back to this and felt a tremor of fear as an internal debate raged. He could not stop, did not want to stop, and worst still didn't know how to stop. He opened his eyes and glanced at Geoff. He had to tell him something, and felt himself calm as he made a decision. There was only one way to proceed; he would give a reply to the question as it had been asked, it was close to the truth anyway.

"It's a mind control discipline, which began in our first year of training. As we advanced each level of training we would get to strengthen and practice the skills needed."

"How does the technique work?" He noted Jack looked uncertain, and Geoff figured there was more to this than Jack wanted to admit but right now he needed to understand the basics as he was sure this suppression at the core of Jack's fatigue.

"Jack, I'm not asking you to stop using the technique. All I am asking is for is some understanding how this works," he reassured him.

Jack took a sip of his drink then let out a slow breath and braced himself. He began to speak with deliberate slowness, "First you to create a sort of safe place in your mind. It's an image of somewhere."

"Can you be more specific?"

"A place, a safe place," Jack stuttered.

"Can you give me an example...?" Geoff stopped mid-sentence at the look on Jack's face, which was one he had not seen before. He sat back deep in thought as he observed Jack's struggle. Jack was trying to reply but something within him was preventing this.

"Apologies," he realised what the issue was. "Part of the process was that the details of your own special place were protected within yourself, for your and its protection?" he reflected and saw Jack sit back in relief and nod. "Okay so let me paraphrase for you: you create a space or place that is unique to you, somewhere you consider completely protected and safe." Jack nodded. "Can you tell me a little about some of the ideas that were expressed to help you create this?" He saw Jack shake
his head so decided another tack.

"I use a visualization technique, which sounds similar; it's a form of relaxation and I talk about
making the ultimate safe place, cave, beach, forest; is what you did similar?" Jack nodded and he
placed his hand on Jack's knee to reassure him. "How does that work?"

"It is the ultimate safe place. It is vital it be as detailed as possible. No-one can get in or out except
yourself. You surround it with as much protection you can, layer upon layer. As Time Agents once
it's fully realised with all the protection it becomes embedded in your mind," Jack replied as if each
word was being wrestled from him.

"As a permanent feature?" Jack nodded. "I'm curious; how long did it take to perfect this?"

"Four years, you couldn't fully qualify as a time agent without achieving this. It was vital considering
our work. You are hoping in and out of different eras, the potential for capture is always there."

"How does that work with memories?"

"The memory part is different. This means putting memories in that safe place, where they can be
locked away; like a safe and you have the key."

"Tell me a time when you used both?" Geoff asked.

"It was my second year as a Time Agent, my partner John and I were on assignment. Things went
wrong and I was abducted."

"Can you be more specific?" Geoff watched as Jack took a gulp from his mug.

"It wasn't pleasant, there was no physical beating but they injected me with this compound that gave
me an enhanced pain response. They started by attaching my…" he took a sharp intake of breath,
"and applied energy. It was extremely unpleasant." Jack grimaced.

"How long was it before you were rescued?" Geoff balked at Jack's mild description of what
sounded like some form of electro-shock torture, possibly to the genitals.

"I think it was eight days. Afterwards I was a wreck; I found it hard to concentrate and I kept getting
flashbacks. I used the first technique during, then the second directly after, so we could complete the
mission."

"What happened afterwards, once the mission was over?"

"In what way?"

"What happened to the memories, the suppressed ones?"

"Once the mission was complete and we were back on our ship, my partner John released the
memories," Jack told him not sure of what he was being asked.

"Then what happened?"

"We went on to our next assignment," Jack replied as he furrowed his brow.

"Sorry I'm not being clearer Jack. What help were you given to deal with the memories that were
suppressed."

"I, I just dealt with it," Jack replied. He saw Geoff's face crease.
"What about when you got back to the Time Agency? Was there a debrief or some form of support?" He saw Jack shrug.

"Not that I recall, we got back and…” Jack paused. "And we were reassigned a new mission and off we went." Geoff took a deep breath in disgust at the negligence and wondered how many Time Agents suffered mentally and had breakdowns due to their failure to offer any support.

"How many more times did you use this technique?"

"To be honest I can't recall… a lot… I utilised it many times, including, including …" Jack left the sentence incomplete as he swallowed heavily.

"So both are short term measures, which you could use in an emergency when required," Geoff reflected as he saw Jack nod.

He took a sip of his tea before he continued." Was it ever intended to be used to suppress the level of abuse you experience on the Valiant?" he asked.

Jack sat deep in thought. "To be completely honest I have no idea. In the past, I've used it one technique more than the other. The first is difficult to use because it removes part of your mind to another space. In combat or in any situation you need to keep fully aware so it's usefulness is limited. However, I've used the suppression many times to deal with situations then later released the memories at another time."

"If I can just clarify," Geoff looked at Jack. "You have used this technique to suppress your memories?"

"Yes."

"However this time you used it to suppress your memories permanently?" Jack nodded.

"I think I might have an answer to why your fatigue is so extreme," Geoff saw Jack raise an eyebrow at his pronouncement. "From what you've told me the memory suppression was only ever intended to be a short term fix, something that would help you in, for example, the situation you described. The first enabled you to block the immediacy of the torture; the second to concentrate on the task at hand until it was over. Once the mission was complete you unsuppressed the memories and dealt with the consequences at a more convenient time." Geoff took a breath. "This time, faced with the overwhelming nature of the ordeal, you used the second technique in an attempt to suppress your memories permanently. The experience was so extreme HH the effort of suppressing them is using every ounce of energy you have." He watched the effect of his explanation on Jack's face, it became darker as he realised the implications. "It is clear to me, unless I have misunderstood; it was never designed to be used for more than a few days, weeks at most. As a consequence the memories are breaking through in your dreams."

Jack looked curious. "But why don't I recall them?"

"The subconscious is very complex. I suspect that as deep as the blocks you put in place are, they are not subject to the deepest part of your subconsciousness. This is because that part of the mind is something you or I have no control over. You have blocked the memories but they are all still there. If I may make an analogy: your memories are like high-grade radioactive waste. You can seal that waste in concrete several feet thick and then dump it in the deepest part of the ocean. It is out of sight but it's still just as deadly. Eventually the concrete will degrade and the waste will surface."

"Not just dreams; I've had bleed throughs," Jack said softly. " We were playing a game. Ianto was
chasing me through the house with Myfanwy trying to flame me; next I was on my knees, the Master standing over me with a flame thrower. The other time..." he visibly swallowed. "It can be the smallest things, flash of light on a kitchen knife..." he petered out.

"So your control is not absolute?" He saw a momentary flash of terror cross Jack's face then shake his head. "I think that's reasonable considering the stress caused you to have a heart attack." Geoff watched and Jack looked into the now empty mug in hands.

"How do you assert this control" Geoff blinked as he saw Jack pale, his hands trembling as he fumbled the mug he was holding. Leaning over Geoff took the mug and placed it on the floor. "Is it like you said earlier? An image, like a safe with a key?" Geoff asked cautiously

"Yes...no... It's hard to explain, I can't open... Geoff, please don't ask me to," Jack burst out, a waver in his voice.

"I'm not going to. Why would I ask you to stop using something that has kept and is keeping you sane?" he reminded him of the statement made during their first discussion. "But I do want you to consider something. On my first visit, you told me what you wanted was a life with Ianto. I asked you to be more specific and you told me you wanted to spend every moment of Ianto's life with him, making him as happy as possible for him, as his lover, partner and best friend. From your list I can infer that due to your long life, you guard your heart and it is a rare event when you fall in love. It is a rare gift; something to be treasured."

"Our love for each other was surprising in ways I cannot begin to describe. I had been so long on my own." Jack looked into the distance. "After nearly forty years of one-night stands this man came crashing into my life." He paused. "I never expected to fall in love..." he drifted off. "I had put myself on hold for so long, waiting. I had made this inner pledge not to fall. I've made and used every excuse in the book to keep people at a distance, making sure I never got in too deep..."

"What was different this time?" Geoff nudged.

Jack let out a huge breath, "Ianto."

"Well Jack, to achieve the life you want and to fulfil the love you feel you need to give yourself the same gift you gave him." He sat back.

Jack looked at him, unsure about where this was going.

"Let me remind you of a conversation we had at the institute. Ianto was damaged by the same individual who did this to you. He was trapped in a nightmare, seemingly unreachable. I have no doubt over a long period of time he would have made some small improvements. I doubt he would ever have achieved the level of breakthrough he has. The chances are he would never have left. You argued with me that he was only twenty-five years old and he deserved a chance at having a life. You then created an environment that allowed him to grow into that new life. He still has to deal with the consequences of his torture now and will do for the rest of his life. What you have done is make it possible for him to live. Not just live, but heal and thrive. What I am saying is you need to give yourself that as well."

He allowed Jack come to terms with his statement. "So, have you any idea how extraordinary your mental survival is?"

"I am not so sure about that," Jack admitted.

"Once the crisis was over, you walked away and returned to your life. Have you any idea how
astonishing that it is? You came out intact, intact enough to carry on…” he paused.

"I didn't, Geoff. Once I got back…I had this one thought, it had kept me going for so long... I remember thinking once I saw him, held him in my arms, I would be okay," Jack said softly.

"I think coming back and finding Ianto gone was a blow," He said softly as Jack looked a spot behind Geoff's shoulder.

"I remember standing in the Hub calling out his name… he wasn't there. I decided to wait, thinking he must be out on a mission, then I found the …" he stopped.

"Found what, Jack?"

"My note. I left a note, for him, I had been waiting so long for the Doctor, I ran out of time to tell Ianto that I might be leaving. It never seemed to be the right time; it had been so long I never expected… I saw the TARDIS, but I didn't want Ianto to think I had run out on him so I wrote a note and put it somewhere he would find it telling him I would be back."

"What happened?"

"He never found it," he said a whisper. "As far as he was concerned I left without a word, abandoning him."

"How can you know what was in Ianto's mind?"

"The others told me he spent hours analysing the CCTV footage," Jack told him. "He became withdrawn and as much as he tried to hide it they knew it had affected him."

"I think you're right. I think it was profound." Geoff handed him the drawing.

"Ever since you've been here, you've never mentioned his drawing; it's complete. It's you running towards the TARDIS." A multitude of questions flooded into Geoff’s mind as Jack held the picture. If Jack was the man Ianto was looking for, had Ianto realised this? If not, had Jack told him? What had been Ianto's response? Seeing the haunted look on Jack's face he realised he needed time to think this through. He waited for Jack to regain some composure.

"He calls me the 'Man in Grey'," he said slowly, his heart pounding.

"So he has no idea you are the man in the picture?"

Jack shook his head.

"No?"

"I haven't told him."

"And he's never figured it out?" Geoff checked.

Jack shook his head and then took a deep breath. "Gift? You said I gave a gift to Ianto?" Jack asked as he went over the implications of this revelation in his mind and he tried to find a way to lead Geoff away from the black hole this represented.

"Hero Jack; racing in and saving the day. But who rescues the rescuer?" He saw Jack's lip curl into a soft smile.

"You said I didn't need rescuing."
"I did; I think Captain Jack the hero rescued himself. He got back, found the one person he needed was gone. But he dealt with it like a hero; he took a deep breath, threw on his cape, placed a sidearm on his hip and Captain Jack got on with what needed to be done. That's what heroes do. But the coat and sidearm come off and Jack the man has to deal with day to day realities, of coping. It's Jack who needs help."

"I think I know where this is going," Jack interrupted pointing a finger at him.

"And where would that be?" Geoff encouraged.

"I'm not going to do it," he stated.

"Do what?"

"You said that the reason why I have no energy is because the technique I'm using…” he closed his eyes.

"It is a way forward," Geoff pointed out.

"It's permanent, Geoff."

"We are talking about the mind here. Your power of suggestion is outstanding, but it's flawed. It's taking every ounce of energy you possess. It's causing bleed throughs and nightmares. You had a heart attack and it's robbing you of the life you have said you so desperately want."

"No!"

"Just like that."

"That's right, Geoff. The answer is no."

"So you are not open to even the idea that we could work together to slowly release some memories and deal with them, thereby restoring some of your energy?"

"You don't understand," Jack told him.

"Help me understand." He took a moment and an idea came to him. "Is this an issue of won't, or can't?"

"Both," Jack stated.

"So what you're saying is that even if you could choose to slowly release memories a fragment at a time you can’t."

Jack nodded. "Geoff, to open the safe you need a key. I'm telling you I can't open the door because I don't have the key."

"Okay; lost or deliberate?"

"Both," Jack declared triumphantly.

"Okay, then I say we don't use the key. We find some other way.” He saw the same look of terror he had seen earlier flood Jack's face.

"I don't know how I can express this in words…but I...I..."
Geoff heard a noise; cursing the interruption he turned to see Tosh, wide eyed with worry, holding out a mobile in her hand.

"David Morgan's on the phone. He can't find Ianto,"
Snatching the phone from Tosh, Jack listened. "I'm on my way," Jack said as he snapped the phone shut and found Tosh waiting with his shoes. Forcing them on, he explained, "Ianto was sent up to the top field about an hour and half ago to feed the sheep. He hasn't been seen since." Standing with some effort he looked at Tosh. "Did anyone try calling his mobile?" Jack asked.

"He forgot it," Tosh told him handing it to him.

"Take me to where the bucket was found." He indicated to Tosh as he reached the front door. With speed born of fear they headed up the lane past where the TARDIS had landed.

Forcing himself forward Jack reached the gate where the bucket had been found. Looking around he tried to put himself in Ianto's shoes. What had happened to him for him to just leave? Ianto was incredibly reliable; he would do exactly as asked. He would not just wander off, the butterfly incidents of the past long gone.

He turned to speak to Tosh when he saw David Morgan racing towards them.

"What happened? I told you he needed to remain on the other side of the farm away from the house," Jack shouted at him, deeply out of breath.

"I'm sorry Jack; I moved the sheep up to the top field last night. It wasn't until he had left to feed them that I remembered what you said. I ran up here, but by the time I got up here he was gone," his voice wavering. "I've called the Sergeant McCredie. He has put out an alert, and currently the phone tree has been set in motion so as many people are being called as possible. Everyone on this side of the Island will be out looking for him. Well find him," he assured Jack.

His heart beating wildly Jack pulled himself up onto the wide top of the stone fence. Tosh joined him and held him steady. A gale that had been threatening earlier had now blown in and rain was beginning to sheet down. He squinted; the light had faded so badly he could see nothing. Climbing down, he picked up the bucket when David flipped open his cell phone.

"He's been seen. He was down by the cliff edge at the bottom of Toby's field." He called out.

Jack didn't wait to hear anymore. He threw himself down the field in the direction of David's pointed hand.

Rattling the bucket Ianto watched as the sheep raced over. He loved feeding the sheep; they really liked him, especially when he had their sheep nuts. They were sort of bald because they had lost all their fur; fleece he reminded himself, and it was all growing back. He hoped they weren't too cold. Mr Morgan had explained that in the winter they came into the barn, which was all nice and warm. Ianto could see why they liked it. They had a big area all comfy with loads of hay and straw. They were lucky they got to share the barn with Marigold. That's where she was today because her boyfriend had come over. He was all pink and huge like she was. Strange place to have a date; there was no kissing they just snuffled around each other and got all frisky.

The sheep gathered round him now so he concentrated on his task and he spaced out the nuts out so each sheep got a fair share. He counted, then he double checked, only fourteen; one was missing, there should be fifteen. He studied each sheep; it was the one with the spotted black face and big ears that was missing. Placing his hand to shield his eyes he looked around. His eyes followed the top of the field and there in the distance by the stone wall that bordered the lane, he saw her. She wasn't
moving, and he knew she loved her sheep nuts so something was wrong. He set up a brisk pace, and on reaching her he saw she was by the gate. Checking her over he saw a strand of wire had come lose and had tangled around a foot.

"Silly," he said, kneeling and unwrapped the wire from her foot. Freed he shook out her pellets.

"I know you love your sheep nuts, that's how I knew you were missing," he said as he watched her begin to eat her portion. Looking back down the hill he checked to see if the other sheep were okay; they must have finished because they were moving away. He moved forward to return to the farm, when he heard a strange noise. Over the wall a flash of blue caught his eye. Maybe it was Constable Dana, in her police car. He liked Constable Dana; at the Solstice fair she had taken him for a ride around the field in her police car with the sirens blaring. She had told him the sirens and lights needed a really good work up because there were not many people did naughty things on the Island. He had stuck his fingers in his ears; it was so loud, but it was such fun. It must be so cool to be a policeman or woman and ride around in the police car all day. The field dipped and was slightly lower than the lane. So he stretched his neck to get a better look. He was close to home; he looked at his watch, he was ahead of himself today so he had time to check if it was the police car he had seen. Dropping the bucket he climbed over the gate and stepped into the lane.

He froze; just down from him was the blue box. He stood transfixed to the spot trying to think over the day to see if he could recall if he had bee bad but the more he thought the more muddled everything got and he found his breathing got faster and faster until he was dizzy. He heard the strange noise again and the box disappeared.

He had a thought; he was so scared, this was his biggest scary thought. He often had dreams that the blue box would come and take Jack away. He was sure he had heard Jacks voice. Maybe this was a dream? Maybe he was imagining things like when he made up his games. He swallowed and moved to where he had seen the box. He looked down and there was an impression on the ground. He squeezed his eyes shut not wanting to believe it. He opened them. Yes, there were the marks in the mud and a thought started to go around and around in his head.

'Jack had gone the blue box had come and Jack and gone he had broken his promise.' He began to shake. He had done the bad thing and he had gone.

He walked slowly back to the gate and climbed over and found himself sitting with his back to the wall. He thought of home; drawing up his knees he put his head down and cried as he realised there is no more home. Jack was home, Jack was everything. No more being safe. No more cuddles or kisses or waking up in his arms, making Jack smile or getting a thumbs' up when he tried hard and got something right which made him feel warm inside.

It started to rain and he forced himself to think but the voices were screaming at him, telling he must have been really bad for Jack to break his promise. Struggling he went over the past days but nothing came to him. He felt all muddled as images whirled and collided. He forced himself to think when an idea began to grow. Maybe he was so bad that somehow the badness just came out without him knowing. If that was true then it was Ianto who was bad and no matter what he did, wouldn't ever stop the badness coming out.

Jack hadn't broken his promise. He had told the truth, there was no bad thing; it was Ianto who was bad.

Standing he looked down the field. He knew what he had to do. There was only one thing he could do; he had to stop the badness forever. He started to run down the hill towards the cliff, gaining momentum. The heavy rain stung his eyes and he felt his legs fly out from under him and he fell on his side. Overcome, sobs racked his body. A gust buffeted him and he pulled himself up and looked
around; he was near the cliff. He reached the fence and looked over but he couldn't hear the sea. Was this far enough up? He shook his head. When the bad man had thrown people off the bad place they were so high up they were in the clouds. He needed to be really high so he could do this proper so the badness ended for ever.

Looking around he realised he was in a dip and the fence followed the cliff top. Using the fence as a guide he followed it. Reaching the highest point he looked over and there were no clouds but he couldn't see the bottom. He forced himself to look around to double check. The rains eased momentarily and he realised where he was. He was in Toby’s field. It went from the bottom of their garden wall down to where he was standing. He could just see the garden wall and the lights.

He closed his eyes and thought about Jack, his arms around him holding him close. He felt so safe like nothing would ever hurt him again. His lips on his, how he smelt, how he tucked up in bed and told him stories or laughed at his jokes. He loved home but home was not a place, because Jack was home. Jack was everything.

He forced his mind into thinking and tried to remember what it like without Jack. There was just pain, fear, guards, terrible things, hunger, and people doing nasty cruel things trying to make him talk, forcing him down and hurting him deep inside. A wave of despair overcame him. Jack was gone. He had run off leaving him here on his own. He needed to jump and end the bad thing so there was no more bad Ianto ever. He sobbed, and put his foot on the first rung of the fence.

A shout caught his attention. The voice; it sounded like Jack but it couldn't be, it was coming from inside his head because he wanted Jack so much. He cried out because this was the badness making him feel like he was nothing because now he would be alone in the dark forever. He pulled himself up…. 
His heart pounding, Jack threw himself down the hill. His movements appeared to be reduced to wild fragments, each disjointed action connected only by the terrible desperate need to move forward. He tried to keep himself upright but the rain had made the grass slick. He felt his feet slide from under him and he found himself on his back. He cursed, and grunted; as he pulled himself up and began running again. As he got closer he could see that Ianto was attempting to climb the fence. The sound and shape of dark wings threatened to overcome him as he felt his life telescope into a singularity focused on his need to reach Ianto in time.

"Ianto!" he screamed out, desperate to get his attention, but his cry was drowned out by the squall. As he neared he could see Ianto had his foot on the second rung on the fence, trying to climb over, with a two hundred foot drop three steps past the fence.

Reaching him he wrenched him off, spinning him around and in one movement threw his arms around him.


"Sorry, sorry, sorry I'll never do the bad thing again, Jack please, please, I'm sorry, sorry, sorry," Ianto mumbled the words in a fast staccato as Jack tried to comfort him. "I'll be good. I didn't mean to be bad. It just came out," Ianto cried into his shoulder. "I don't know how it came out. Please don't leave me alone in the dark."

"I'm here," Jack told him, still trying to catch his breath, his whole body trembling from the effort of his race down the hill.

"I tried to throw myself off the cliff, I don't want to live," Ianto cried out.

"Oh, god no," Jack grasped him even more tightly as a shiver of terror coursed through him.

Ianto lifted his face to look at Jack with wild eyes. "I love you Jack, please, please don't leave me," he begged

"You are my life," Jack told him vehemently looking into his eyes. "I am never going to leave you."

"I saw the blue box; it came, this isn't real," Ianto growled then struggled to push Jack away and falling to his knees.

Falling with him Jack held on to his upper arms. "This is real, Ianto," Jack bellowed over the heavy squall which now hit them full force.

"I'm making this up because I need Jack so much," Ianto yelled back over the wind.

"I am real," Jack shouted back, pulling him to his feet and shaking him in an effort to make himself understood over the howling wind.

"This can't be real the blue box came," Ianto yelled back as the wind and rain of the squall passed over them easing somewhat.

"I am here," Jack said. He put his hand on Ianto's right shoulder then took Ianto's hand and held it firmly in an effort to keep him faced away from the cliff.
Ianto looked at him bewildered as Geoff, followed by Tosh, now reached them. Geoff, deeply out of breath, put his hand to his knees as Tosh skidded to a halt, panted heavily.

"This is not real." Ianto attempted to pull away again, twisting again towards the fence with more force.

"This is real, I'm real," Jack reiterated through gritted teeth.

Ianto began shaking his head. "No you are not real," he started to shout at Jack and took a step backwards. "You are in my head making me think you're real. It's a trick because I'm in the dark place," he screamed.

Jack looked around desperately not sure what to do. "Look, Tosh is here," Jack indicated with his head.

"I'm real." She moved forward and went put her arms around him.

"Tosh is in my dreams, so she would be here, because she was there with the bad man," Ianto stated loudly. Jack looked slightly taken aback and exchanged a glance with Jack.

"Well what about him?" Tosh said thinking on her feet and pointing towards Geoff. "Has anyone been in your dreams you don't know?" she argued. Ianto looked at her, confused, and then shook his head. "Okay, then if this man is not in your dreams then this must be real." She saw Ianto study Geoff in the fading light.

"I don't know, I just need Jack, I need Jack, real Jack," he wept as Jack tightened his arms around him. Ianto buried his face back into Jack's shoulder.

Geoff watched as Jack continued to try and reassure Ianto he wasn't imagining this because he didn't want to face the reality that Jack was gone.

Shivering in his soaked light clothing, Geoff knew they needed to get moving. Ianto was in shock and Jack looked close to collapse. It was evident that Jack had used every ounce of his strength in his dash down the hill. He glanced towards the sea and could see in the fading light another squall was heading their way. The consequences of remaining out there were dire; the situation was not going to be helped by an emergency trip to the nearest hospital due to all of them collapsing from hypothermia. They needed to move back up the hill and soon.

"Jack," Geoff said loudly as the wind began to buffet them more strongly. "We need to move, and get indoors. Do we need to call for assistance to get Ianto back to the house?"

"Already coming," Tosh pointed out. They saw Sergeant McCredie, accompanied by David Morgan, heading down the hill towards them, their arms laden with what looked like blankets or coverings of some kind.

"I brought these," Sergeant McCredie stated as he placed a tartan travel blanket around Ianto's shoulders.

Jack felt a tiny change in Ianto; he tilted his head to watch Sergeant McCredie as he called on his radio to confirm they had found Ianto and to call off the search.

"Let's get you up the hill before the next big blow hits," Sergeant McCredie said in his best 'I'm not going to accept any argument' policeman's voice.

"Okay," Ianto said in a hesitant whisper as he looked at the Sergeant. Watching the interaction Jack
realised that of all the people here he was the one Ianto was most like to respond to. He saw him as the ultimate good person protecting all those around him. He had taken a ride in his police car; something Jack knew Ianto had believed was a rare privilege and as a consequence could be trusted. He was also a local, someone not connected in any way to the past, along with David. Jack noted Ianto was watching with wary eyes but as each moment passed it appeared he was accepting this might be reality after all.

Completing his conversation on the radio, Sergeant McCredie put his arm around Ianto's left side as Jack moved to Ianto’s right and together they made cautious steps away from the fence and made their slow way back up to the top of the field.

Moving Ianto was not easy; he was dazed, and mumbling. It was evident his co-ordination had gone because he had difficulty putting one foot in front of the other, It was an awkward, difficult climb as they manoeuvred him up the slope. Their feet kept slipping on the soaked grass which forced them to their knees on more than one occasion.

Reaching the farm gate where they had found the bucket, David opened the gate. It was raining heavily again and the wind began to batter them, as they now reached the place where the TARDIS had landed. Ianto broke down as they reached this point, and Jack felt him go limp and all five of them had to help him reach the back door.

As they neared the cottage Tosh raced ahead and opened the door then disappeared inside. On reaching it Jack thanked both David and Sergeant McCredie then moved Ianto through the kitchen. Seeing they were no longer required Sergeant McCredie told Jack he was remaining in the village on standby if required. He put his finger to his forehead and withdrew along with David.

In an organised ballet of coordination Jack, Geoff and Tosh now enacted the plan Jack had outlined as they had walked down the lane towards the cottage.

Standing in the kitchen shivering violently Ianto clung on to Jack, as with firm movements he began to peel the now soaked blanket away, followed by his dripping clothes. As he got Ianto to step out of his jeans, Tosh appeared with every towel in the linen closet. In the background Jack could hear Geoff working to make a round of hot drinks.

"Ianto likes hot chocolate. It will need to have milk, half water, with three teaspoons of sugar," Jack called out. He saw Geoff nod.

Wrapping several towels around Ianto he began to dry him vigorously as Tosh appeared with clothes. Ianto, unresisting, let out the occasional sob and sniff, not taking his eyes off Jack.

"Now get the duvet off the bed," he told her as she disappeared again. He saw Geoff measuring out milk in a mug then pour it into a saucepan.

Jack shook out a pair of sweat pants and laid them on the floor in such a way that Ianto could just stand into them and he pulled them up as the duvet arrived. Instructing him, Ianto obeyed mechanically. Jack's heart sank as he realised that Ianto had partially regressed to his blank state. He was pulling the top down the tee-shirt and pyjama top when Tosh delivered the duvet. Jack draped it around Ianto as Geoff appeared with mug of hot chocolate.

Before taking it Jack stripped down to his boxers and tee-shirt and Tosh threw a towel around his shoulders.

"You need to strip completely" Geoff told him but Jack ignored him and eased Ianto onto the floor of the lounge by the sofa. He didn't care if this looked strange; he knew that Ianto was most at home on
the floor. Making sure the duvet was wrapped around him he now took the mug and tried to encourage him to take few sips. Tears continually flowed down Ianto's face and he struggled to take sips between sobs.

"Jack, I've made you a hot drink," Geoff indicated.

Jack ignored him as he placed it on the table. "Tosh, I want you to go to the pantry, there you will find a tin with sailing ships on it. Bring it to me with a desert spoon," Jack ordered as he encouraged Ianto to take a series of sips accompanied with soft words, unable to take break his gaze. He could feel his heart beating wildly in his chest and he fought to hold back the terrible darkness still crowding his own mind.

He felt a hand on his shoulder and glanced up to see Tosh had returned and was holding out the tin and spoon.

Both Geoff and Tosh watched as Jack opened the tin and removed a bottle.

"No," Ianto said as he saw the bottle maple syrup and began shaking his head.

"We only have this when you are very good," Jack assured him.

Ianto pushed Jack's hand away. "I was never good. The box came to take you away, because it's me who's bad inside …" he broke down as Jack held out the mug which Tosh took.

"So you saw the blue box. Did you see me go into the blue box?" Jack asked him now pulling back and lifting Ianto's chin.

"No, but I saw the blue box and I heard you talking, then it was gone and you were gone. I looked and looked at the place where it was. I looked really carefully but it had come and gone with you inside," Ianto told him.

"I didn't go, Ianto. I'm right here," Jack pulled Ianto towards him and just he held him close. A few moments passed and Jack felt the towel being removed and a blanket was placed around his shoulders.

"You did like the man in grey. I was bad, I didn't do a bad thing because I'm bad," Ianto said trying to form his thinking into words. "I tried so hard to think what bad thing I had done, but I couldn't think. Then I had this really big thought, and I knew you hadn't lied there was no bad thing. I'm bad deep inside every part of me is bad so it just came out and, and," he said in breaths as he looked at Jack whose eyes were filled with tears. "You were gone. I knew I was going to be alone in the dark and there was no being safe anymore. I don't want to live without you, no more home, no more anything. I can't live without you Jack…." Jack broke down now and took Ianto's hand and held it to his face.

"Oh Ianto…” He tried to say more words kept forming but he found it impossible to speak. He knew no assurance he could give him was going to make this any better.

As he watched the unfolding drama Geoff had both hands wrapped around the mug he was holding and took a sip of hot tea to warm him. Ianto was beyond distressed; bewildered and for some reason he could not explain Jack appeared to be paralyzed. He felt impotent to help, all his years of training had never prepared him for anything like this. An immortal and his lover seeming locked in some kind of tragic dance.

He mentally berated himself to stop thinking like that because regardless of the circumstances they were just two people. To focus he found his gaze falling to the sofa where just a short time ago he
and Jack had been talking. He put down his mug, took a step and picked up the drawing. This was not about any strange and weird events. The issue here was Ianto did not know who Jack was. Jack was the 'Man in Grey'; Jack had left, leaving Ianto bereft. He had seen the TARDIS again, and if he understood that Jack was the 'Man in Grey' Ianto might get angry but they could then explain that the TARDIS was not the vehicle of doom it was being portrayed as. It would become a simple means of conveyance, nothing more.

If Ianto knew the truth Geoff was sure this would resolve the matter. Jack could explain why he had left, and he had been here all the time caring for him. He felt a small glow of warmth; this was therapy in action he told himself. He could, use the circumstances and create a breakthrough for both men, Ianto's deep fears of loss being countered by Jack's reassurance that he loved him. Jack's big secret would be out and they could both move forward all neatly sewn up in one event.

Moving quietly he leaned over and then knelt down beside Jack and put his hand on his shoulder. "You need to tell him, Jack."

"Tell him what?" Jack stuttered as he looked up at Geoff.

"Who you are." He handed the drawing to Jack.

Jack looked at him as his whole being begin to disintegrate. Ianto looked, startled, between Jack and Geoff.

"Look at him Jack, tell him the truth, about the 'Man in Grey'," he encouraged.

"I knew it! This is all a big lie none of this is really real. I need Jack, the real Jack, I need him." Ianto started to back away.

"This is real Ianto," Geoff now went on his knees as Jack stared at him, his jaw dropped in horror.

"I knew this was a trick, a nasty horrible trick. When I saw Mr Morgan and Sergeant McCredie I thought this must be real but it isn't, is it? Jack has really run away and I'm going to be taken away to the bad place."

"No Ianto, Jack needs to tell you…" Geoff started to explain. He saw Ianto begin to lose control, shaking his head violently from side to side.

"I can't, "Jack stammered interrupting him loudly as the darkness that had been threatening came closer and the ground underneath him shifted. A dark chasm opened up in his mind as the effect of Ianto's pleas hit him like physical blows.

"I think you must, only telling him the truth will help. Once he understands he will calm down," Geoff insisted.


"You don't understand…" Jack stuttered barely able to speak the words as a wave of disorientation gripped him.

"Ianto needs to know the truth Jack, it will help." Jack shook his head. "Not knowing is causing him harm. I'm here; use me, use this opportunity to tell him. I can do this but I think this would be better coming from you," Geoff said strongly.

Jack felt his face go numb and he began to tremble. He felt the abyss move closer and the tiny thread
in him that had enabled him to hold on all these months parted. In desperation he moved forward in an attempt to gather Ianto in his arms, a final embrace before his terrible secret was exposed and he lost Ianto's love forever, he just needed to hold him….

Geoff felt and saw Jack slump forward, his arms outstretched in an attempt to embrace Ianto. He waited for words to follow and several seconds passed and he realised it was not hesitation causing Jack to be silent. With trembling hands he felt for a pulse; it was faint and reedy. Further examination made it clear Jack was alive but totally unresponsive and was insensible to any pain response. Geoff sat back momentarily and looked at Tosh who was trying to remain calm.

"What's happened?" Tosh asked trying to keep her voice steady as fear curled in her belly.

"Jack's collapsed," he said quietly still coming to terms with what had happened and he stood slowly, blinking. He stepped back as Ianto now started to rock himself with more force, his hands around his knees with Jack lying pressed up against him.

"Collapsed?" she repeated not sure she understood.

"Mental collapse of some sort," he said as much to himself as to Tosh.

"A what?"

"Oh god what have I done?" Geoff said under his breath.
"Oh god what have I done?" Geoff said under his breath.

"Geoff," Tosh said sharply.

Geoff stood rubbing his forehead trying to piece together the past few moments.

"Geoff explain," Tosh demanded trying to keep her voice calm, forcibly manhandling him into the kitchen "You said mental collapse; what do you mean?"

"I can't because I don't know myself," he snapped back as he now pulled her to the far side of the kitchen.

"Well you had better," she warned him.

"There's deep trauma here for Jack. It happened when I asked him to tell Ianto who he was," he replied his voice shaking along with his hands.

Tosh glared at him. "I figured that out for myself," she spat out. Ianto needs Jack; he's the only person who can reach him. How long before Jack comes out of this?" Her eyes flicked to where Jack lay crumpled next to Ianto.


Her eyes widened as the implications became clear. "I'm calling Owen," she said, flipping open her mobile.

"What can he do?"

"We're Torchwood!" she retorted as she scowled at him.

"We have to get him here, must I remind….oh of course" Geoff retorted and then slapped himself on the side of his head as he realised Owen could be here within minutes.

Tosh pressed speed dial then handed the phone to Geoff, then going to sit down next to Ianto, and wrapped her arms around him.

"I think we should place him into the recovery position," Owen indicated as he checked Jack's vitals.

"Where's the 'you-know-what' parked?" Tosh asked, her arms around Ianto as he leaned into her sniffing and his bottom lip wobbling.

"Doctor's scarpered. He just dropped me off. He's on standby if needed."

"Owen, I've hurt Jack haven't I," Ianto said, distraught, speaking for the first time since Jack had fallen towards him.

"No you haven't Ianto; Jack's just had a bad day. Things have gotten on top of him and he's so tired he's fallen asleep."

"I need Jack to wake up, to tell me if this is real," he said.

"We know Ianto; we're trying to get him back for you." He pulled out a tourniquet and a butterfly
cannula, and raising a vein he inserted it with skill into the back of Jack's hand. "I prepared this in the TARDIS. It's a combination of drugs one of which I've been working on to assist the brain though different levels of consciousness. We trialed it during the Maddock House incident with the phones, remember?"

"If I remember rightly Owen, it didn't work. It was only the removal of the alien from the phone network that caused people to come out of the trance they were in," she pointed out.

"I know but I've made some adjustments and I've added a stimulant… a powerful one, in fact the most powerful one we have."

"Powerful, how powerful?" Tosh asked.

"Remember that Judoon that fell through the Rift?"

"Owen! It's too strong," Tosh looked at him as if he had gone mad.

"What the worst that can happen? Jack carks it, right?"

"Owen...time and place," she hissed through her teeth inclining her head towards Ianto. "I can think of far worse scenario's that that!"

"Look I'm sick of this argument…" he stopped and took a breath as if to catch himself. "Hopefully this will work," he paused as if he wanted to say more but just pointed the syringe upwards. "I'm not completely stupid. I've checked over the formula with Martha Jones, and the Doctor has added a compound so hopefully this will work." He pulled off the needle cap with his teeth and injected the smoky liquid slowly into Jack's vein.

"And if it doesn't?" she queried raising her eyebrows.

"Then we move to plan 'B'. A scenario that will require the removal of certain persons to the 'you-know-what', and all manner of ructions I don't want to even begin contemplating because trust me I know from bitter experience we don't want ever want to enact plan B." Owen said exhaustion slurring his voice as he felt for Jack's pulse. He let out a sigh and pursed his lips as he concentrated.

A few agonising moments passed and Jack's eyes fluttered open.

"Welcome back," Owen said. Ianto burst into tears and he threw himself at Jack and wrapped himself around him.

Flipping his phone open he pressed speed dial and spoke two words, "It worked." Then snapped it shut.

Standing, Owen pulled Geoff to the far end of the kitchen where he was joined by Tosh.

"What the fuck did you do?"

"I'll tell you what I did, Doctor Harper: I fucked up," Geoff replied honestly. Owen took a breath and took a step back and saw the haunted look on Geoff's face. "This fiasco is entirely down to me. There is deep psychological trauma which can only be described as a mine field for both men here and I walked them right into it. If you want me to be even more blunt I can be but I assure you once this is over I'm going to give myself the biggest kicking of my life because I pushed two very emotionally fragile people over the edge. God knows what damage I have done." Tosh placed her hand on his arm and could feel he was shaking. "I don't need to spell out the possible consequences but I suspect I have put Jack's progress back weeks; god knows how he is ever going to trust me
again. And Ianto..." he paused as Tosh and Owen exchanged glances.

"You made a mistake," Owen interjected, his own anger dissipating as he listened to the man berate himself.

"Well, you didn't almost destroy two people," he snapped back

"Where do we go from here?" Tosh said sadly.

"Right now I am going to walk back in there and give Jack all and any support I can, but before then I just need a moment. If you would please excuse me," Geoff pushed passed them and went and stood watching the drama being played out in the lounge, his head bowed, hands to his face.

"There was no plan B was there?" Tosh asked quietly as she filled up the kettle with water.

"We pulled out all the stops here Tosh."

She looked at him curiously then she turned and picked up the kettle and began to fill it. "This wasn't just some formula was it?"

Owen shook his head. "Let's just say it was a group effort between me, Martha Jones, and the Doctor."

"And if it hadn't worked?" she asked pulling out fresh mugs.

"I don't want to go there Tosh. What I could do with is a coffee because I'm bloody knackered," he stretched.

"Long day?"

"Long months," he said quietly under his breath.

She handed him a mug and raised an eyebrow. "A month!" she said mishearing him.

"As I said Tosh we pulled out all the stops."

Standing back, Tosh, Geoff and Owen watched as Jack comforted Ianto. It was touch and go. He oscillated between guilt and the loss of Jack. It became clear Ianto believed that this comfort was something he had created in his mind because he wanted Jack so much.

After some persuasion that this was real, that he was a good man and using a combination of cuddles, kisses, and constant reassurance he calmed down enough to accept Myfanwy. This was a major step because Jack knew once Ianto allowed himself the comfort of her he had taken a first step back on the path to equilibrium.

Finally Jack was able to get him to take some maple syrup, the ultimate reward for good behaviour. Jack felt the band across his chest ease as he slowly encouraged him to take sips of the hot chocolate, now reheated. This was followed with porridge laced with syrup which Jack gently fed him a spoon full at a time.

As things calmed down, Jack promised him that he had been so good that tomorrow he could eat pancakes and maple syrup all day if he wanted. He was heartened that the corners of Ianto's mouth twitched.

"The drug you used; how long can I use it for?" Jack asked Owen bluntly as he lifted the mug to encourage Ianto take another sip of hot chocolate.
"I won't recommend using it for more than an emergency; a one off like we just did," Owen told him equally bluntly.

"The next few days are going to be critical. Ianto will have good moments and not so good moments. I need to be able to function and to do that I must be awake."

"I think that's doable," Owen admitted.

"How much energy will it return?" Jack asked him.

"About as much as now. You won't sleep as much but your ability to move around will be restricted. How long will you need?" Owen asked, pulling out a pen as Tosh handed him a pad of paper and started to work out some calculations.

"What Ianto needs is for me spend time with him on my own, just the two of us, so he can reconnect with me and see this as real. Right now I am not convinced he does, so I need to help him work through his emotions. It means I have to be able to get up and direct him."

"I can boost the dosage," Owen advised as he scribbled furiously then looked up "Three days," Owen replied, "you can use this three day max but there will be a price."

"There's always a price," Jack said grimly as he tried to stand but found it was impossible. Before he attempted to stand again Owen and Geoff pulled him up.

"Tomorrow, Ianto is allowed as much maple syrup as he wants. However try and encourage him to eat the syrup with something, but there are no restrictions." He now handed the mug to Tosh "Ben can deliver if you run out. Morag's number is on the wall," he added as Owen stood aside and Ianto now stood and put his arm around Jack.

"There is a security system built into this house which means it can be put it into complete lockdown. For peace of mind, I suggest we do that. Tosh, you will find the codes in a small blue book in my top right hand desk draw."

With slow deliberate steps they made their way upstairs.

Still dazed Ianto felt himself being undressed. Jack took him for a piss, but he felt so uncoordinated Jack had to help, to make sure he hit the pan. He felt embarrassed because he didn't want to have an accident and make a big mess but felt useless that he couldn't do this for himself. Jack pulled back the covers and Ianto got into bed. As he did he tucked the duvet around him then drew the curtains and turned off the main light, leaving on the bed side lights, filling the room with a soft glow.

As he slid next to him Ianto broke down again. Jack held him speaking in soothing tones as he stroked his face.

"How do I know this is real?" Ianto asked him still trembling. "Because I saw the blue box."

He took Ianto's hand and kissed the palm. "Feel me Ianto, I'm here." He put Ianto's hand on his face, then his chest.

"I'm scared I made this all up, I made a big fuss and got everyone scared and hurt you, but then I'm scared that the box really did come and took you away and this is all a dream because I need you so bad," he sniffed.

Jack cupped his hands around Ianto's face. "What you saw was real. The blue box came but I didn't go in it. See I am right here," he reassured him but his words had no effect.
Ianto clung onto him desperately, crying intermittently. He decided to take a new tactic.

"Look at me," he stated but Ianto just buried his face deeper into Jack's shoulder so he placed his hand under his chin.

"Look at me," he repeated more strongly and pulled his face up, all red and snotty from crying. Reaching out Jack pulled out some tissues and cleaned up his face. "You've had a tough day; you saw the blue box and thought I had run away from you. You got so scared you wanted to throw yourself off the cliff. You then had a mess of feelings that were very hard to understand," he reflected as Ianto scanned his face. "Then you felt disconnected like it was all a dream; like something you made up because you love me so much you don't want to live with the idea I might be gone. Something happened to me and Owen turned up then I woke up. Then we had a big cuddle, you had something to eat, and now we are in bed." He saw Ianto nod.

"I think you've had enough to deal with today. I want you to focus on me." He stroked Ianto's face. "This is my hand touching your face." He traced his thumb over his lips then kissed him. Then with tenderness he mapped out Ianto's body. After a while Ianto began to do the same with Jack. "Just you and me, here and now. Focus on that, we are in our bedroom, in our bed. I am touching you and you, me. I am real; I am here." He saw tears track down Ianto's face and kissed them away.

"I got so scared," he shuddered.

"I know you did Ianto, but no more scared now. We are here, this is me," he continued speaking softly gently caressing him.

Ianto took a deep sniff. "It is you. You have your smell, so this must be real because in my dreams there is no smell."

Almost choking with relief Jack just kept repeating his words as he pulled him into a massive hug. "I love you Ianto, there will always be a you and me," Jack told him gently as Ianto now settled on his chest to listen to his heartbeat. Stroking his hair and his face he noted when Ianto drifted into sleep. As he did Jack now broke down in too deep sobs and held him as close as he could.
In bed with elephants

Owen knocked and entered Jack and Ianto's bedroom. "I got here about ten minutes ago. Tosh has been filling me in," he said. "From what she says Ianto is doing better. More like his old self." He paused. "Well, his new old self." He smiled as he heard Ianto singing loudly away in the bath.

"He's had a great day today," Jack heard a splash and smiled. "There are times which I bless the routine because it allows him a sort of sanctuary where he is most comfortable."

Owen nodded his understanding. "How are you doing?" he asked.

"I'm holding on. I am not important," Jack told him.

"Jack where have you been the past two days?"

"Tosh tells me you made up some miracle potion, I need to thank you for getting me back," he said sincerely.

"You're welcome and it was no miracle potion; it was a scientifically worked out formula based on multiple disciplines."

"Tosh said it was a combination of compounds, including a stimulant and something the Doctor added?" He saw Owen nod. Jack narrowed his eyes and pulled at his lip in thought. "So how did you work out what you needed to use? It doesn't sound like something you can pull of a shelf."

"How? Let me tell you. First we picked up Martha, and then we landed the TARDIS on the roof in stealth mode, which according to Donna his companion must be the first time in history the cloaking device has worked. Hopefully we didn't crack any roof tiles. Utilising the scans on board we determined the problem."

"And?"

"You being conscious is living proof of the stubborn genius of three beings." Owen looked smug and put his hand on his chest. "Of which I include myself. And finally you can be thankful that your mate has a time machine," he added. He folded his arms as Jack looked curious.

"Is there something going on here I don't know?" Jack asked him slowly not sure if he wanted to hear the answer.

"Let's just say the compound I gave you that worked was not the first version we tried and leave it at that."

"How many?" Jack blinked.

"We had five," Owen said under his breath.

"Five!"

"Well it took time to get all the elements just right. By the third go we figured we had all the elements we just had to combine them in the right formulation."

"What I meant was how you managed to administer this five times."

"I don't think I fully understand it all, the Doctor gave this speech about time being a big ball of
wibbly-wobbly-timey-wimey stuff. Basically we went into the future to see if you would recover. You didn't. Then came and went backwards. It took a while to work out what we needed then we had to go gather it all together. Then we went from there. Sort of backwards reverse. Did my head in I can tell you."

"I think you had better start at the beginning," Jack told him.

"It all started when Ianto saw the TARDIS." Owen got the look. "Trust me; you don't want to know the entire saga. It's over, and we got you back. Time is safe; no 'Reapers' so we was meant to do this so let's just leave it at that," he warned recalling the Doctor had warned him he should only share so much and no more.

"How long?" Jack asked suddenly very quiet at the implications.

"I told Tosh a month but it was more like six," Owen admitted.

"Six months?" Jack looked horrified

"Yeah let's go with that," Owen told him. "Now the reason I am here enjoying your scintillating company is not to share the secrets of your seemingly miraculous recovery, it's to discuss how we get you off the stuff."

"The solution injected was an amalgam of several different drugs. One affects the brain's ability to reach awareness. It stimulates the posterior hypothalamus, which is responsible for triggering the histamine neurons in the tuberomamillary nucleus. In layman's terms, it kick-starts your brain, ready to wake up from sleep. If used too long it has a side-effect that means you could become dependent on this to wake up. So what I'm going to start doing as of right now is to reduce the dosage in incremental steps over the next two days. It's vital we get that particular drug out of your system as quickly as possible. To help I will be using a counter-compound to ensure any residue is removed. Once the drug has completely gone from your system you will sleep, how long for is unknown but from the projections it will be about as long as the drug was in your system. Unfortunately this is another side-effect, so two to three days. I will be here to monitor you and during that time."

"If this drug regulates that function and we remove it won't that mean I can't wake up?"

"You will because the counter-compound will bind with the histamine neurons in the posterior hypothalamus and ensure that you do," Owen assured him. "Trust me Jack, we have done an exhaustive amount of work on this to ensure that once the drug was out of your system you would be able to sleep as per normal."

"Okay, and once I wake up?"

"Then you will return to how you were just after your heart attack."

"No change then," Jack said as he nodded his understanding. "How did you figure this all out?" Jack asked bemused at the medical expert.

"I told you, Genius. Along with your friend Martha and with laughing boy with his chuckle buddy, Donna Noble."

"Laughing boy, chuckle buddy," Jack said with a twisted grin.

"Yeah well, me and the Doctor over the past few months have had our moments. He can be very difficult when he has a mind and as for Donna, she has got one hell of an attitude. Him and her are well matched."
They heard the bath now emptying.

"Is Geoff okay?" Jack asked quickly.

"I've never seen a man so shaken; he left upset and subdued. He was beating himself up pretty badly and he was muttering something about you and him having a lot to talk about. And in light of what happened for god's sake talk to him." He stopped talking as Ianto entered in his pyjamas and got into bed. Jack wrapped his arms around him and kissed the top of his head.

"I'll catch up with you later with the next dose," he said, retreating towards the door.

"Good bath?" Jack hugged Ianto who was all moist and smelling of the fluorescent blueberry bubble bath he loved so much.

"Wonder Duck, my super yellow attack rubber duck, sank all the naughty bad boats and then the attack sharks came up and ate all the bad people. Then there was another attack by submarines, of which Wonder Duck then dived and with the sharks they chased them all away to the darkest depths where a mighty battle was fought. First even bigger nasty bad people came up for the bottom. They were hiding under the flannel which was really an underwater city. Just when they thought the bad people would win a giant octopus came because it was sick of all the loud bangs and nasty noises and squashed all the submarines flat. The sharks and the octopus were really hungry so the feasted on the bodies of the bad men. Then we had big party where everyone said big thank you to the sharks and the octopus because it's nice to say thank you. And Wonder Duck gave everyone rides."

"And you are far less sticky," Jack pointed out and Ianto kissed his cheek.

"That's because I had a real good wash. The water got splashed about a bit and got on the floor but I used the towels to clean up so the floor is all good. I put the dirty clothes and towels in the hamper. Tomorrow I can help Tosh with washing them," Jack gave him a thumbs up and Ianto wiggled his face shining with happiness.

"Have I told you how much I love you today," Jack told him.

"Yes," Ianto answered. "And I love you just in case you've forgotten."

"I will never forget, ever, promise." Ianto leaned up and gave him a kiss.

"How much maple syrup did you get through," Jack asked after a few moments.

"I love maple syrup it's all sticky and sweet."

"Bit like you which is why you needed such a long bath," Jack teased.

"I like being sticky and licking my fingers clean. I like being sticky with maple syrup and I like being all special sticky." He lent and gave Jack a big kiss then pulled back.

"Now tomorrow, the maple syrup is going away." Ianto looked sad and pouted. "And I am going to get sleepy."

"Will that other man be coming back? The one who told you to do the scary thing?" Ianto asked softly.

"Yes he will."

"Oh okay," Ianto replied shakily and hugged Jack tighter, throwing leg over Jack's.
"He's trying to help me be less tired, so that's good," Jack encouraged. "Remember we focus on here and now."

Ianto nodded. "I like things just you and me. I like Tosh and Owen but I really like it when it's just us. We can shut the door and talk and cuddle and have laughs and jokes; talking, I talk and you talk, we do loads of things together, that's what Ianto likes." Jack kissed him again.

"Now tell me all the things you ate with maple syrup," he asked after several moments.

"It's a long list," Ianto pushed himself up onto his elbow " I had pancakes, toast, muffins, milkshake…"

"You had a maple syrup milkshake," Jack interrupted.

Ianto smiled, cheekily nodding his head. "Yep, it was de-li-cious…cornflakes, omelette…”

"Tell me you didn't," Jack said groaning.

"Tasted funny so not having that again but I thinking it was the cheese, cheese and maple syrup does not work." He saw Jack make a face.

"Anything else?"

"Porridge, crumpets, bananas. Bananas that was really good I've added bananas to my what's best with maple syrup list and a nice man tall man in a brown suit came and gave me a whole tin of maple syrup sweets," Ianto told him.

Jack stiffened. "The tin was huge and round with a great big red fire engine on it and he said he was sorry. I can't think what for because I've never met him. He just kept saying he was so, so, sorry and that he would try and make it up to me and this was a start. I put the tin in the special place with the other tin so I don't eat them all in one go."

"Oh," was all Jack could say at Ianto's revelation.

"He told me maple syrup comes from trees. I thought that couldn't be true and we went on the internet and he was right, and then he told me a great joke." Ianto's eyes widened. "How do you know there's an elephant is bed with you?" Ianto asked. Jack shook his head. "They've taken all the blankets and you're squashed up against the ceiling." He laughed then stopped when he saw a tear was flowing down Jack's face. "Sorry, did I make you sad?" Ianto said concerned.

"No I was just thinking how much I love lying in bed with you telling me jokes and how much I love you," he said holding Ianto close as Jack wiped his face dry with his hand. "I think that's a brilliant joke, do you have any more?"

"I love telling jokes, I've got loads. How do you know there's an elephant in the fridge?" Jack shook his head as Ianto squirmed desperate tell him the punch line. "There are foot prints in the butter," he burst out as he looked adoringly at Jack. "So I was thinking how would you get an elephant in the fridge, I asked Myfanwy and she said just open the door and put in the elephant. It was so funny I told Tosh and she laughed. Tosh then asked me, how did would you know there are two elephants in the fridge?" he wiggled then burst out the answer before Jack could respond. "Because you can't shut the door. This is another custard joke: "Why do elephants wear shoes with yellow soles? That's the bit you walk on" Ianto explained as Jack nodded in understanding. "So you don't see them when the float upside down in custard, I hope they don't meet any sharks because you would have elephant and shark infested custard."
"Where did you get all these?" Jack asked, his mood lifting as Ianto continued.

"It was the man who brought the sweets. He said he had heard I liked a good joke and he left loads. Upside down in custard that's so funny...what I want to know is how would you get an elephant into the bowl so there would still be room for custard." He thought deeply for a moment then replied, "I guess that's why it's a joke..."

Jack sat listening, his arms wrapped around Ianto and heard a knock on the door.

"Sorry to disturb you Jack, I need to give you the next dose." Owen popped his head around the door. "How you doing?" Owen asked Ianto as he walked around the bed.

"Jack loves me and I love him and that's all that matters," Ianto told him as Owen injected Jack. Ianto watched what Owen was doing very carefully.

Jack closed his eyes as he felt the drug flow into his veins and his mouth fill with strange metallic flavour and let out a sigh.

'Jack loves me and I love him and that's all that matters.' Jack pondered Ianto declaration. He felt a shiver of fear, but pushed the feeling down. 'Jack loves me and I love him and that's all that matters, ALL that matters.' he repeated to himself like a mantra trying desperately to convince himself this was the truth.
"First I want to apologise for what happened," Geoff said to Jack who was so weak he was lying down in bed, facing Geoff who was sitting opposite him. Now the drug had worn off and he had slept non-stop for three days, then returned to his post-heart attack state as predicted. "I misread the situation," he added.

"It's okay Geoff, this was my fault. I recognised the significance of the drawing months ago but at that time who could I tell? I should have mentioned it but would you have believed me?" He saw Geoff shake his head.

"I'm here now," he said kindly.

"The drawing...it's Ianto's last memory of me running away to the TARDIS," Jack said sadly "The man in grey as he calls him was the cause of all his endless searches," he went to explain about Christmas which now made far more sense to Geoff. "He believes that he caused the man to run away from him. When he was being tortured on the Valiant he begged for the man in grey to rescue him. Rescue never came be because he believed he was being punished for whatever caused the man in grey to run from him in the first place," he became distressed.

"And the other day he saw you and the TARDIS," Geoff reflected.

"You were there, you saw what happened. Ianto tried to kill himself."

"Why have you not told him you are the man in grey?" Geoff asked gently as Jack began to shake his head.

"I can't" he replied.

"Ianto loved the man in grey. You. He's been looking for you all this time."

"I know it sounds absurd. I should just tell him but I can't do it," Jack repeated.

"I don't think it's absurd, Jack," he told him gently being careful about how he phrased the following question, because he knew the last time he had asked Jack to tell Ianto it caused Jack to collapse into a catatonic state. "You told me about Christmas and how Ianto believes that it was his fault that the man in grey left. Tell me how you handled that?" he asked.

"I told him that maybe this was his worst mistake and biggest regret. That he was so desperate for answers, that he wasn't thinking and that he should have told him he was leaving. But nothing he did caused the man in grey to run away. That had he known he was hurting in the dark he would have moved heaven and earth to rescue him."

"What was Ianto's response?"

"He asked me why I couldn't be the man in grey and he told me his biggest fear was that he loved me and he might do the bad thing again and I would leave him," he said, using the tissue Geoff handed him to blow his nose.

"Jack there's more to this…if that was all there was to this you would have told him."

"Tell him I'm the cause of his biggest heartbreak?" Jack retorted. "I'm the person who ran out on him; the love of his life, who he cried out for when he was in terrible pain and who didn't come and
rescue him, who…” Jack petered out.

"What's your biggest fear here?" Geoff asked. "Well Jack, I'll give you ten out of ten for not using a
diversion this time." Jack looked at him after it became clear Jack was not going to reply. "Is this a
case of can't or won't reply?"

"Both," Jack replied.

"So we are back to exactly the same point we left before Ianto went missing. We can go round and
round in circles Jack, but unless you talk to me I can't help. I know full well I made a terrible error in
asking you to tell Ianto who you were. I cannot tell you how much I regret what happened. However
on reflection I realise it was the how and timing that was out not the intent. I say this because your
reaction has convinced me Ianto knowing your identity is one of the keys to what's going on here.”
He saw Jack go pale and knew he was on the right track.

"We have to have total honesty here. I am aware you don't want to tell me and part of your inability
is caused by the conditioning developed while you were a Time Agent. But there must be a way for
us to discuss this. I have a feeling somehow Ianto is tied up with all this and to help you I must
understand. Help me Jack; help me understand?"

"It failed," Jack said so quietly Geoff almost missed it.

"On the Valiant all my training...it failed." Jack took a breath lent his head back on the head board
and closed his eyes and gulped. "I have this fear of f-f-fire" he stuttered. "When the Master
discovered this he was relentless. I knew it was only a matter of time before he broke me
completely." He took a shuddered in breath. "At first I tried to strength the barriers. But so much time
has passed since I had been a Time Agent I had forgotten most of my training. Every day more of
my protection was stripped away. No matter how many times I tried it didn't work. Then without
warning it was gone. I had to do something. I was desperate."

"Are you telling me you created a new space?"

Jack nodded. "Geoff, it takes years to set up the controls necessary for this to be safe. Practiced
controls using incremental steps because it's a permanent feature of your mind. I had no choice."

"A new space but one without the controls that would normally keep this safe.

" He saw Jack nod and close his eyes. "It's this wonderful old English garden. Walled with a locked
gate and only I had the key. It had many parts, one was filled with flowers beds, and another was a
lawn with spreading trees. Hammocks, benches, there were paths that led to nooks and crannies, a
pond with a water fountain, statues …" he trailed off and smiled.

Geoff listened, surprised Jack was sharing this then realised that there were no controls there to
prevent him from sharing this.

"And Ianto, he was there. Knowing he was there safe. His touch, he held me, he said things that kept
me going. I could endure anything because I knew he was waiting for me."

'You have a garden here?' Jack broke his reverie and looked at Geoff, his forehead creased.

"You look confused," Geoff pointed out and Jack nodded.

Geoff stood. "I want you to come and look at something," he said. He helped Jack out of bed and
handed him his dressing gown.
Standing now at the window he helped keep him steady.

"Describe to me in details what you see," he instructed.

"The sea, a hill that rolls down. Sheep…" he said not sure why he was being asked this.

"And what else?"


"Really describe it to me like I was blind," he encouraged.

"There is a tall stone wall surrounding the garden with a brown gate which we never use; well, hardly ever use. It has this old-fashioned key we keep in the kitchen. Several fruit trees which we are training along the walls. It's too late in the year now but you can see where we planted berry fruits, raspberries, gooseberries," he smiled and chuckled. "You know Ianto was a bit miffed when there were no geese."

"Next to this is our vegetable garden. We tried companion planting this year so there was this incredible mix of flowers between the rows. Ianto's bird table, and next are beds and beds of flowers, as much as we could cram in with as much colour and scent to encourage butterflies…" he stopped as he made the connection and looked up at Geoff who then helped him back to bed.

Jack remained in thought for some time.

"A walled garden, filled with beauty," Geoff reflected. He looked at Jack, as tears began to flow down his face.

"I know this sounds crazy but I never made the connection."

"It makes a lot of sense Jack," Geoff said as recent events began to fall into place. "Ianto's drawings, which showed that you have calmer nights the more time you spend there. This garden is a recreation of the one you created in your mind."

"I see that now," Jack replied.

"And there's one more factor here isn't there? It's not just the garden, the garden was created but that is not your safe place it's…"

"Ianto," Jack replied for him. "I had nothing left just was one thought, a feeling. All I could think of was him. Holding him in my arms and having him hold me. In my darkest moments I created a fantasy. In it Ianto loved me. I told him everything: all my secrets, failings, mistakes and fuck ups and he loved me anyway. His love was unconditional; it gave me the strength to carry on. I used my feelings of love and the love he professed to me to give myself refuge."

"So Ianto and his love for you became the key to your sanity in that terrible place," Geoff reflected. "And remains so now?"

"He's everything… he's the reason I get up every day… he's keeps me here…he's my life," Jack reached out for the tissue box. "He must never know, I cannot tell him."

"He's been looking for you all this time Jack. He was so desperate you might have left he tried to kill himself."

"I know but it's all I have left. The Master took everything from me. He stripped me bare, I have
nothing else. And he took the man I love and handed him back a shattered remnant. The Ianto that survived holds a fragment, a shadow or reflection of that love. He loves me. Do you understand what I am trying to tell you?" Jack told him desperately.

"All you did was leave to find some answers. As bad as Ianto's memory is of you leaving, it's not that big a sin." He saw Jack shake his head.

"You don't understand, this is not about me just running off," Jack said through gritted teeth. He struggled to breathe. "If only it was that simple."

"Help me understand," Geoff encouraged.

"So you want the truth? Here it is: I didn't just betray him by running off, I'm the cause of every blow, every rape. Every scar on his body is a visual reminder of my betrayal."

"Jack, you were a prisoner yourself. How could you be to blame for what happened to him?" Geoff pointed out

"I released a monster. The Master...if I hadn't run off after the TARDIS she would never have gone so far into the future. The Master would never have been discovered." He closed his eyes "Then Ianto was left behind. He got left behind because I didn't check every level properly." He pointed to himself "I didn't check! I didn't check!" he shouted out.

"Every level of what?" he asked for clarification.

"The Valiant. The time paradox was righting itself. Martha and I threw everyone on board off we could find, including all the dead bodies...he was left behind...don't you see this was this was my fault...he is suffering for every mistake I made..." Jack broke down.

"That's one hell of heavy burden to carry," Geoff pointed out as he saw how heavily this sat on his soul. "Tell me about the final day on the Valiant?" he asked after a few moments as he worked through what Jack had told him.

"I was locked, chained in this small space, waiting for my punishment for my part in the mutiny..."

"Mutiny?"

"Yeah; Martha's family was on board: her mum, dad, and sister, Trish. Clive was forced to work as sort of a janitor mostly cleaning up after the Master had finished with me. Tish and her mum Francine were maids which gave them greater freedom. We worked out a way to distract the Master in an effort get me to the TARDIS and destroy the paradox machine. Unfortunately things went wrong from the beginning, and I ended up being killed..."

He took a breath. "I am not sure how long I was in there when I was dragged out and taken to the control room. The Master was all excited because he had captured Martha and was going to execute her." Geoff listened; he had seen the footage but Jack's first-hand account was fascinating.

"But the Doctor had tuned himself into the Angel Network; as soon as the Master was compromised I managed to arm myself. I fought my way down each level; on reaching the TARDIS I destroyed the Paradox machine. At that point Martha joined me. As time began to rewind we started to organise as many people as we could and got them the hell off that ship." He paused "We threw everybody we found off, I could swear we searched, it was a race...we knew by throwing them off they would be returned to their original state from the point just after the American president was assassinated."
"So after a year of torture, in the days leading up to the end you managed to organise a mutiny and then after supporting the Doctor you personally arranged an evacuation, checking each level of the Valiant with Martha Jones," he summed up. Jack nodded. "Describe to me your search. You used the word 'race'?"

"Yeah, good word. Everyone was running around in a panic; some were taking their revenge on those who had assisted the Master. Others were trying to escape. We were caught in this whirlwind effect, we only had so much time…" he stopped.

"Would it be fair to say this wasn't an organised systematic search using any blueprints? This was mad desperate dash to get as many people off as you could?" He saw Jack nod at the implications of his own words. "I think we have done enough for today." He stood and went on the bed and put his hand on Jack's knee.

"While I'm gone I want you to do some homework. I want you think about this: Ianto Jones has one memory, a single image; he has given it a title and knows he loved the man running away to a magic blue box. He has no idea about any of what you told me today. What I want you to think about is how would Ianto feel, if you were just a man who ran off to get answers? What would his reaction had been if you had returned and found him restored? And one more thing: if you could speak to the Ianto you knew what would he have to say about all this? What would his advice be to you in light of how the final moments played out on the Valiant?" He saw Jack deep in thought and stood. Opening the door he quietly left.
Standing next to the console on the TARDIS, Geoff observed as the Doctor manipulated the controls. He was still coming to terms that such a marvellous vehicle existed; she was without doubt the finest mode of transport he had ever encountered. From what he could tell and by the feel of her it felt like she was built of coral. He rubbed his finger along the console to confirm his thoughts; yes, coral. He drew back his hand as he recalled Jack and his conversation about the tactile nature of this machine and smiled as he watched the Doctor caress the lever he was holding.

He was about to ask a question when he found a small tin in front of him filled with individually wrapped sweets. Not sure how he would turn down a Time Lord he picked one. Unwrapping the leaf-shaped sweet he popped into his mouth and was immediately overwhelmed by sweetness.

"Young man just introduced me to maple syrup. I rather like them," the Doctor commented as he worked the controls on the console.

"Rot your teeth more like," Geoff replied, not sure where to put the wrapper when the Doctor stuck out his hand and he handed it over.

"So you are the man who gave Ianto his stash of wonderful sweets?"

The Doctor smiled. "Yes we had a fantabuloso afternoon. Maple syrup comes from trees you know."

Geoff creased his face in concern. "Are you sure that visiting was the best idea considering what happened?" he said.

The Doctor concentrated. "Did he tell you any good jokes?" He asked, ignoring Geoff’s question and unwrapping another sweet.

"He told me a few elephant jokes."

"Really? I told him those," the Doctor said proudly. "Do you think he would appreciate seeing a real elephant?" he asked seriously.

"I think Ianto would love that," Geoff replied not sure why he was being asked. "Are you thinking of bringing one here?" Geoff asked, suddenly concerned, trying to envision an elephant emerging from the TARDIS considering what had occurred less than ten days ago.

"No, I was just thinking when things are more settled I would like to take Ianto on an adventure with crocodiles and elephants with the odd dinosaur thrown in," he said, unwrapping another sweet and popping it into his mouth.

"I think Ianto would love you for life."

"Do you think such an adventure would make up for him seeing the TARDIS as he did?" he asked honestly.

"Trip to Legoland might." Geoff laughed when he saw the Doctor seriously considering the idea. "I have a serious question," Geoff asked.

The Doctor offered him another sweet and shook his head. "Aren't all questions serious?"

"What are your ethics in relation to time travel? I mean about changing the past and influencing the
future?"

"My race, the Gallifreyans, believed that they should only observe and never interfere with the lower races. I should add I was a renegade and have spent almost my entire existence in violation of their non-interference policies," he added grimly in response.

"I think that answers my question," Geoff nodded.

"Was there a purpose to your question?"

"My understanding is that the situation created on the Valiant was a time paradox centred on that vessel. That when the paradox machine centred within the TARDIS was destroyed time corrected itself. Except for those on board, time returned to exactly as it was just after the American President was assassinated." Geoff saw the Doctor nod. "So my question to you is: can you use the TARDIS to go back and take Ianto off before time rewrote itself?"

"It's impossible." The Doctor shook his head sadly. "The time vortex created when time rewound created a time distortion event. As the TARDIS was the centre of that paradox once she left it meant it was impossible to re-enter. In fact the time distortion was so great the time stream was not clear for months before or after the event. This distortion was reason why Jack did not return until several months after the assassination."

"That is a great disappointment," Geoff told him. "Yet in a sense I am relieved because the times I have contemplated the consequences would mean all sorts of ramifications with both positive and negative outcomes for those individuals involved. I guess, as a healer, prevention is far better than trying to be the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. Although I know I could not prevent Jack from his suffering, I was hoping I could save Ianto from his. Doing so would help Jack immensely." He felt a hand on his shoulder. "Jack has expressed a great deal of regret about his role in the final hours of his time on the Valiant. He believes that in those last chaotic moments he failed Ianto by not discovering his presence and removing him. In fact he blames himself for the entire sequence of events from the moment he ran after the TARDIS," Geoff added sadly.

"I know; Martha told me. None of this was Jack’s fault." The Doctor stated. "He was just part of a diabolical series of events that were outside of mine or Jack's control. The Master was a setup, a long play gamble, one of many in a costly disastrous war." He went on to explain his remark and Geoff listened intently, shocked to hear of the Time war's devastating result leading the extinction of the Doctor's people. "…if you want to blame anyone it should be me for leaving Jack behind on Satellite Five, or for that matter you may as well blame Rose."

"I think that deserves an explanation," Geoff said his head reeling with details of the Gallifreyans' descent into annihilation.

"Ah well, Rose saved Jack's life, but she had no control over the power she wielded. So instead of bringing him back for a life time she cursed him with immortality. She caused Jack to be a fixed point in time and space, which for a Time Lord is something extremely uncomfortable to be around. Jack is just wrong… I look at him and…"

"Have you said that to him, that he's wrong?" Geoff interrupted. The Time Lord looked uncomfortable. "I see," Geoff said as he now gained a greater understanding to one of the possible causes of Jack's beliefs in his own culpability. "Well, fixed point in time or not, nothing Jack suffered or his actions on the Valiant in those last hours negates what he perceives as his failure towards the man he loves. I was hoping there might be a way to save Ianto his suffering and be there restored on Jack's return."
"If it was in my power to return to that time I would have but it's impossible. If I could take Ianto forward in time and fix his mind I would have done so also," the Doctor admitted.

"So you've been into future on his behalf?" Geoff said startled at the Doctor's admission.

"I consulted some of the finest minds concerning Ianto's situation. I had to chase one for a year."

"A year!" Geoff burst out.

The Doctor looked at him, "Maybe it just felt like a year; hard to tell really, time seems to take on a strange quality when you are waiting for something. Anyway, the reason for the waiting was because unfortunately we had met previously and let's just say we didn't leave on the best of terms. In fact she swore she would never tolerate my presence again. So after leaving hundreds of message I sat at the front of her office until she saw me. Once she agreed she was honest in her appraisal and conclusions. To confirm her diagnosis she referred me to another who confirmed what she had found. From the damage the Master used a combination of a Sirius mind probe and Virtex Crystals to break Ianto. Nasty things; Sirius mind probes when combined with Virtex Crystals means that the damage is permanent and irreversible."

"How can you be certain this is what he used?" Geoff said then answered his own question. "The records from the TARDIS."

The Doctor nodded. "You see, Ianto Jones infuriated the Master because he couldn't break him. So he decided to destroy him. He wanted to leave him a shambling wreck, drooling from the lips, mumbling to himself as an object lesson and then keep him around as a sort of fool in his court."

The Doctor saw Geoff pale. "The combination of the probe and the crystals along with the torture Ianto endured destroyed him."

"I'm not sure about that," Geoff retorted. "They didn't destroy his fortitude or his courageous nature, his intelligence, his willingness to learn. And the Master never touched his capacity to love or be loved."

"Ianto is undeserving of his fate, as is Jack. And had I the power to do so I would act for both their sakes," the Doctor added bitterly. "Tell me if there is anything more I can do? This vessel, my knowledge it's at your disposal."

"You make a kind and generous offer and in light of what you have already done I cannot think of anything more you could do. The truth is right now there is nothing you or beings as mighty as yourself can do. Only Jack can act to move this forward."

"What does Jack have to do here?" the Doctor asked.

"What Jack has to do is to find a way out of the hole he has dug for himself."

"Hole?" the Doctor repeated to himself as he tried to come to terms with the man he knew as someone lost in the dark.

"It's a hole so deep and wide it's impossible to see the bottom or the sides. So dark there is no light. You see, Jack fears for his very sanity, his reason for being, and quite rightly so. I don't need to tell you how close we came to losing him on this very issue. He has one thing the only thing that has kept him going. It's a force so powerful it can heal the most wounded soul. Which I might add he has proven to himself, yet he is so frightened of losing this he cannot use the key he has to escape."

"You're talking about Ianto?" The Doctor checked. "Is Ianto the key?"
Geoff nodded. "We've touched on it here in our conversation. Jack blames himself for what happened, regardless of the circumstances. Due to the mind technique he used along with the torture, it's embedded within his emotional landscape. It's become part of his soul and that is what needs to be healed."

"You said he has the key."

"There is a key, and like all keys its opens a door. Doors can open to many things; in this case what is behind the door is what he fears because he has to tell Ianto the truth."

"The truth?" the Doctor repeated not sure he understood the truth to be.

"To tell Ianto the truth that he is the 'Man in Grey'." He went on to explain the significance. "But doing so he risks losing Ianto. Losing Ianto means the destruction of the last piece of Jack's soul. Ianto is more than the man he loves, Ianto loves him. It's that love and adoration that has kept Jack sane."

"Why is it so important? Why not move forward and come back to this?"

"It's important for two reasons, and both reasons are interwoven. Firstly, Jack feels what happened to Ianto was his fault. While he believes this there is no safe way for him to release the memories he has suppressed. This guilt is tied up to forgiveness. To receive that forgiveness Jack must tell Ianto who he is. Jack cannot move forward while he believes that what he suffered was justified because he believes he was the cause of Ianto's suffering. He will hold onto that suffering and pain as his just punishment. To let go he needs Ianto to hear and understand and at the end love him as much as he does now."

"Do you think Ianto would reject him?"

"What matters here is what Jack thinks," Geoff reiterated. "Ianto's memories are scattered no-one knows what Ianto recalls. What he does know is he loves Jack. He loves him so much, the very thought Jack had gone caused him to try and kill himself."

"Ying and Yang," the Doctor reflected.

"If you like. Two souls both broken, only whole when they are together. Ianto I suspect will always need Jack because he cannot function without him. Jack needs Ianto's love unconditionally; it's what's been holding him together all this time. There is a connection between them on a deeply emotional level. Jack's link with Ianto was forged on the Valiant. It was sealed when Ianto reached out for Jack at the institute. Something profound happened for both of them I am sure of it. Ianto reached out for the first time. I think he reached out because on some level he knew this was the one person he needed above all others. In that same moment Jack regained the anchor he had fashioned to enable him to survive. I cannot overstate the importance of this for Jack. His survival depended on the Ianto he created within his mind. On his return and found Ianto gone. He had told me how this affected him, how lost he felt. When Ianto reached out for him the connection was reborn anew. Considering the mental fragility of both men, I shudder to think what might have happened to them had they not found each other as they did."

"What happens if Ianto dies?" the Doctor asked.

"What do you mean if?" Geoff blinked in surprise at the Doctor's choice of words. "Surely you mean when?"

The Doctor bit his bottom lip. "Let me tell you what the Master intended as his revenge against Jack
once he found out who Ianto was."

The Doctor began to explain.

"That is the cruellest most vile, evil thing I have ever heard of," Geoff burst out as the Doctor finished speaking. "Tell me there is no more," he begged feeling sick.

"Dinosaurs, I think Ianto would love dinosaurs what do you think?" the Doctor asked quietly

"I think Ianto deserves every possible good thing in our power to grant and I think Jack is right next to him on the list," Geoff told him.

"That is something we can both agree on," the Doctor agreed.
Folding her arms around herself in comfort Tosh tried to calm herself and to figure out what was the hell she should do. Her instinct was to call Owen, and/or Geoff. Still smarting from Jack's response to leave Ianto alone and give him the time and space to work out what was going on for him, she went through her options. She could as advised and leave Ianto alone. Jack has assured her he was upstairs in case things escalated.

However she seriously questioned if Jack, in his current state, could actually prevent Ianto from harming himself or stop him doing some serious damage. Should she call for back-up in case it was needed? Her stomach turned over. Should she act now? She reached for her mobile. Would that make things worse if Owen and/or Geoff suddenly appeared? 'Possibly,' she heard herself reply and she dropped her arm. Ianto knew Owen; Geoff on the other hand...she left the rest of the thought unanswered.

She swallowed as she peered around the door into the lounge from the kitchen. Ianto's back was towards him which meant he hadn't seen her. She pulled back, relieved; not intimidated by his size, it was more his explosive verbal outbursts that had caused her current distress.

She had seen him distraught, angry, happy, anxious, sad, worried, and frustrated mostly with himself over his inability to express in words what he was trying to say. He could be talkative, silent, with every variation in-between but all within the cycle of life here at Rose Cottage. She was well used to his swings of emotion; he could go from being on the verge of tears to laughing out loud in what seemed like a blink of an eye. Next he would be struggling to understand and show exasperation with himself, then throw his arms around her in a huge hug and apologise. He was helpful especially where Jack was concerned. It was his job to take care of Jack's personal needs, from taking him up meals to helping him get about the house.

Trembling she let out a long breath as she attempted to recover from his most recent explosive outburst. She had tried to approach him in an effort to offer him a drink but the sheer volume of his demand 'Leave me alone' still ringing in her ears had caused her to stumble backwards and to retreat back to the kitchen.

This had all begun yesterday when had woken in a sullen mood. Clutching Myfanwy he had spent a great part of the morning looking out towards the sea. Never violent or rough she was shocked when he had thrown his lunch across the kitchen. Before she could react and or even ask what was wrong he had stomped upstairs and thrown himself on the bed next to Jack. Here he had remained for rest of the afternoon. Ianto refused to tell Jack what was wrong only saying, 'he wanted to hold Jack and be as close as he could.' Things improved marginally that evening and he allowed Jack to read to him. He picked at his dinner, only eating when encouraged by Jack.

Today, his mood was even darker; the same blackness one sees just before a storm roils off the sea and hits the shore. With crossed arms, a shake of the head and stamp of his foot he had refused breakfast. Pushing past her, he had moved into the lounge and set himself up to draw.

He began by laying out everything he thought he would need from the art room along with a ream of A4 and A5 paper. This was followed by his adding every coloured pencil, crayons and felt tip pen he possessed. Lying on his stomach he started. As he proceeded the energy he put onto each sheet seemed to travel from his fingers along his arms until his whole body was infected with anguish. Sheet after sheet were discarded sometimes from just a single line. Others he worked on until the picture was almost complete then screwed up the sheet, crushing it with his hands into a ball or tore it into fragments. Hours this had continued until the room was covered with discarded pages and torn
up sheets scattered like confetti. Those that met with his approval he folded over carefully and placed next to himself.

Muttering interspersed with sobs he finally stood. She shifted her weight and risked a look around the corner. The movement caused Ianto to stare in her direction. She took an unconscious step back at the wild desperate look in his eyes.

She retreated further into the kitchen. If only she could see what he was drawing. Maybe if she could get more than a glimpse then she could get an insight into what was going on for him? Then she could call Owen and get some advice on what she should do. She heard the what sounded like the French doors slam open and she felt a rush of cold air assault her ankles. Looking around the corner she saw Ianto had picked up the satisfactory drawings he had put to one side and gone into the garden.

She waited to see where he was headed. Hesitantly she moved forward and saw he now out of sight. As the garden sloped it meant he was hidden and therefore so was she. Moving forward she picked up the nearest balled-up sheet. It was tightly packed and she peeled it open. It was covered completely in thick black crayon. She picked up the next one by her foot. Smoothing it out she saw it was a tiny stick figure being struck with black and red arrows along with what looked like lightning strikes in yellow and white.

She glanced up to see Ianto was heading back, his head down. Gathering as many of the screwed-up balls of paper as she could she now moved out of Ianto's line of sight. On reaching the kitchen table she opened her arms and dumped them on the kitchen table and dealt with each one in turn.

Working at the next ball with her fingers she smoothed out the drawing. It was another - possibly the same - stick figure with a huge hand, totally out of proportion with the rest of the body. Another foot, a leg, always the red, yellow and black arrows. Sometimes the stick figure was bent over surrounded by bigger figures striking the smaller one with red blobs flying in all directions. One in particular caught her attention as she smoothed it out with her hands. This one was of the same stick figure in a box. The box was filled with blue. She took a closer look and found it was tiny tears or raindrops; no, tears she decided. The figure was crying, filling the room.

She heard the French door slam shut and glanced around to see Ianto had returned still clutching the finished drawings to his chest. Taking a quick glance around he placed the sheets he was holding on the floor. Turning in a circle he scanned the room. His gaze fell on the roll of newsprint. He picked it up and began to pull off all the paper from the roll in great sweeps of his arm. He continued until he was surrounded by paper up to his chest due to the amount of volume of paper on the roll.

Reaching the cardboard core he fell on the paper and began to shred it using his hands and feet tearing into to smaller and smaller pieces. Thrashing about he came across the cardboard inner. Breathing heavily he now stood and stared at it in his hand. With a roar he threw it across the room. It hit the corner of a large print with such force it fell first on to the sofa then slid to the floor. Lifting his foot he smashed the frame. Turning his attention to the sofa he heaved it over onto his front with a crash.

He spied Myfanwy; picking her up he shook her, screamed and began twisting her like he would wring out something wet. Using all his strength he tried to rip her apart.

"NO! Not Myfanwy," Jack said heavily, out breath from his efforts to reach the lounge. He had hoped leaving Ianto to draw would allow him to work through what was going on for him. He had watched from the bedroom window as Ianto had walked back and forward hitting himself on the head with his open hand. The suicide attempt aside Ianto never self-harmed. Ianto was losing control and, when got back inside all hell was going to break loose. Half way down the stairs he heard the
first crash. He forced himself to speed up but was so weak he had struggled not to fall down the stairs.

Grinding his teeth Ianto twisted the toy and then applied his teeth. Reaching in Jack snatched her from him and threw her back at Tosh.

Ianto's eyes flashed with rage and he leapt forward. Jack threw himself into his path and the momentum caused them to crash to the floor. Jack moved quickly and wrapped his arms and legs around Ianto in an effort to restrain him.

"Let me call Owen," Tosh shouted as she scrambled to rescue Ianto's beloved toy.

"Leave," Jack commanded as he held on with all his might, pursing his lips in effort.

"He's too strong Jack. You need help."

"Don't argue with me just do it," he bellowed.

"Let me call Owen, or Geoff; please?" she begged.

"I-can-handle-this," Jack panted out as Ianto struggled against him, tightening his grip as best he could. "GO!" he howled at her and returned his focus to restraining Ianto. Ianto was trying to push Jack away from him with all his might, groaning and spluttering. Jack, long practiced in this form of restraint knew that eventually the outburst would begin to subside. Out of control he needed a form of soft restraint that gave him something real to fight against. It only worked when strength for strength were equal, cancelling each other out. His muscles burning with effort Jack held on as Ianto used every last bit of his own strength to break free. As strange as it might appear to Tosh or any outsider Jack knew this would allow Ianto to constrain his rage, giving it a boundary. This in turn meant it was only a matter of time before he calmed down.

What seemed like an age but was less than five minutes Ianto stopped struggling and burst into deep howling sobs. Jack relaxed his grip slightly then pulled Ianto as close as he could, shifting his position to one of cradling rather than restraint.

Twenty minutes later the sobs faded to sniffs. Jack used the sleeve of his sweatshirt to wipe the snot and tears from Ianto's face.

"I don't know what to do," Ianto sobbed, speaking for the first time.

"I see, hear and feel that," Jack said quietly. "You were drawing." He felt Ianto begin to panic and pull away.

"I have this big feeling and it just keeps getting bigger. I tried to draw it but I couldn't get it right and the feeling got so big it came out."

"Are you angry?"

Ianto almost stopped breathing then nodded.

"Angry with me?"

Ianto looked up startled and began to shake his head vigorously. "No. Ianto loves Jack; he loves Jack so much he is filled with this huge feeling; bigger than anything," Ianto told him vehemently.

"Tosh then?"
"No. She's my friend."

"So something else, a feeling so big inside it got bigger and bigger until you exploded," he reflected and felt rather than saw Ianto nod.

"Can you tell me?"

Ianto shook his head. "I can't!" he wailed miserably.

"Let's rewind this to the beginning of yesterday when you woke up," Jack suggested and heard an uncertain, "Okay."

"Did you have a bad dream of things happening and you remembered something?"

"Sort of, but not something real."

"Sort of so like a memory but not a memory, a thought."

Ianto nodded.

"Like a memory but mixed up with bad hurts?"

Ianto's lower lip shivered.

"Myfanwy?" he pushed.

"Ianto doesn't deserve a dragon as a best friend. Only really brave people do."

"Ianto, you are an incredibly brave person. You survived the unthinkable and it takes courage to get up and face that every day."

"Ianto knows the truth," Ianto said burying his head in Jack's shoulder.

"What truth Ianto?"

"That I am bad through and through. I don't deserve to loved or be here in this place, having good things happen," he sobbed.

"Ianto you are a good, wonderful person. Nothing you have ever done is so bad that I wouldn't love you."

"That's why you must never know." He took a shuddering breath. "Because if you did, you would know Ianto was the worst bad person who ever lived. Even worse than the bad man who did bad things."

"Never," Jack gripped him closely, his heart beating widely at Ianto's admission and tried to work through what Ianto was telling him. "Ianto, you said you knew. Knew you were bad." Jack chose his words carefully and took Ianto's hand and held it to his chest. "I love you. There is nothing you can say that will make me love you any less." Ianto sobbed inconsolably and Jack felt his heart break.

"I want to hold you forever so nothing can happen to you," Ianto said in gasps.

"Nothing can happen to me. I'm right here," Jack explained.

"I know..." he started to say as Jack cupped his face.
"Ianto try and tell me."

"I can't. I am so scared. If I tell you, nothing good will ever happen to me again because Ianto only deserves bad things. I got so scared that I thought I would try and draw out the feelings but it made it worse and worse."

"Can you show me what you've drawn?"

"I can't. If you see them then you will know how bad I am," Ianto cried out. "I don't want you to see them, if you do then you will know how bad I am."

"Then you will have to tell me," Jack stated as Ianto looked at him with tear-filled eyes.

"I'm not brave. I'm scared that you will hate Ianto forever …." Ianto's words faded into nothing.

"Ianto you are the bravest person I know," Jack told him bluntly as he wiped away his tears with his hand.

"No I am not!" he shouted out. "You're brave, braver than Ianto could ever be. You escaped from the first bad place and then you came back for me."

Jack's mouth dropped open and he stared at Ianto and he felt all the air leave his lungs in one sigh. "Say that again Ianto?" he stammered.

"I was in the second bad place. It was away from the first bad place with the bad man. I could see the outside. I so wanted to go outside in the sunshine and feel air on my face because I had been in the dark so long. But I couldn't because there were bars on the windows." He screwed up his face in remembrance. "I could see there were trees and flowers and colours...so many colours. Day was okay but then every night they dragged me back to the first bad place and did nasty things that hurt me. They kept asking me the same questions over and over again. I hid myself deep inside and then when I opened my eyes I was back in the second bad place with the window."

"The second place," Jack repeated his mind reeling as he double checked what he thought he was hearing.

"They kept calling me James until you gave me my name," Ianto sniffed.

"I told them your real name is that what you mean?" Jack asked.

"No, I had no name."

"They called you James because they had no idea who you really were until Owen and I came," Jack reiterated.

Ianto shook his head. "No, I was empty. When you called me Ianto and I knew that was my name."

"What else do you remember?" Jack asked him gently.

"I spent daytimes in the place with the window with the bars. At first I thought that the first and second place were different places. As I was thinking this I saw the day guards talking to the night guards so I knew this idea was a way to trick me into thinking they was nice but every night the bad guards came." He took a breath. "I tried to escape but they kept finding me and bringing me back. I was so scared and lonely." He looked at Jack and began speaking softly. "Then you came. You brought me flowers and plants, books and puzzles. You stood with me and said nice things. I thought it was all a terrible trick to get me to talk, but I couldn't speak. I couldn't make a sound come out."
"You said I escaped from the first bad place and came back to rescue you?" Jack reflected still coming to terms with Ianto's recollection as Ianto began to shake.

"I was in the worst room," he took a shuddered in breath "Where they did the worst things. They hurt me deep inside. I was laying there fighting but I was held down. The cruel jacket thing was so strong I couldn't break out when the door opened. I begged them not to hurt me. Instead of the guards it was you," he said in wonder. "The nice man who brought me things and said nice words… and then you said it, you said, 'I'm here to get you out.' You took off the horrible jacket then you let me hold you. I held onto you close in case they dragged me away from you. I was so scared and muddled everything was going round and round in my head. My most scared time happened when the door opened, I thought the guards had come, and they had, but you shouted at the guards! And they moved out of the way! You shouted and said words and got angry and they moved out the way! I closed my eyes in case it was a horrible trick and next thing I was outside and you had your arms around me. I was all confused but as I stood there I had this huge thought. I knew why you had come and sat with me and brought me nice things. You had come to rescue me."

"You said I had escaped from the first bad place and came back for you," Jack repeated still trying to come to terms with Ianto's version of that terrible day, because as far as he knew Ianto had no idea he had been on the Valiant with him.

"In your dreams you ask the bad man not to hurt me over and over again. Sometimes you ask him not to hurt you and you call him by his name. So I know we were there together." He saw Jack acknowledge this with a nod. Although they had never directly spoken to each other about their respective ordeals it made complete sense that Ianto had worked this out.

"And that's how I know I was not brave," Ianto declared.

"How?" Jack blurted out bewildered. "How does that make you a coward?" He corrected himself. "How does me rescuing you make you not brave?"

"I've been having this big thought. I woke up with it and I have been thinking and thinking to work it out and I know I am not brave."

"Ianto help me out here," Jack begged.

"I was there in the first bad place, and so were you. I know they did terrible things to you. If I had been brave, really brave I would have fought harder. I could have rescued you but I didn't. You came for me but I never came for you," Ianto said as he broke down. "You were so brave to come for me because I was thinking you must have escaped then you came back for me. You knew I needed you. You kept me safe and said you were there to get me out and it was true, all true. Every word was true, you held me and held me and kept me safe. You made me feel better inside, and then we came here far, far, away from the bad places and I knew I was safe," Ianto told him.

Dumbfounded and momentarily speechless at Ianto's revelation Jack looked at Ianto, reeling as he felt something tightly bound around him release. Floating he felt like he had been freed from some terrible imprisonment he never recognised or understood. The rush of its release made him light-headed as he tried to focus. Holding Ianto close the feeling washed over him. Moments passed as the feeling held him in its reverence and he felt its resonance travel through his soul. He opened his eyes to see Ianto his eyes whirling with distress believing he had failed Jack. As he came back into himself he felt another growing imperative begin its relentless pressure and Geoff's questions came to him. This could not continue Ianto needed to understand the truth.

Taking Ianto's hand he wrapped his around it and pulled it into his chest and looked into Ianto's eyes.
"So you woke up with a huge thought and felt you let me down because you were not brave enough to fight against the bad man and rescue me." Jack felt Ianto whole body stiffen at his words. "I think we need to explore being brave. Can I tell you a story? It's about a very brave man," Jack requested gently.

"Okay," Ianto said a little unsure.

"I promise it will help. It's a very brave tale about a very brave man," Jack assured him and began. "This brave man worked at Torchwood."

"Like Owen and Tosh, Gwen and you," Ianto checked, not sure why Jack was telling him this but trusted Jack's promise that it would help so he pursed his lips in concentration.

"We did lots of different things at Torchwood. We went on all sorts of exciting adventures. Sometimes funny things happened and we would all laugh other times it was really scary."

"What is Torchwood?"

"Torchwood is a group of people who keep people safe. Our base was underground."

"Was it all nice warm and comfy like a Hobbit hole?" Ianto asked.

"Yes only much bigger. We worked from our underground base and went out on adventures. We had to work very hard to keep people safe because that was our job. We called it 'the Hub' and it looked a bit like an underground railway station in London like we saw in one of your books," Jack explained.

"Has it got loads of tunnels? Jack nodded. "I've have somewhere like that in my dreams. It's really big inside like a cave and Myfanwy is a huge dragon and she nests up near the top," Ianto added.

"Yes very much like that."

"So what did this man do?"

"He did lots of things. He looked after everyone by making sure we had all the right equipment. He helped me do all my paperwork because I am useless as things like that. His coffee was astounding." Ianto wrinkled his nose he was still coming to terms with coffee. Jack loved it but he was not sure it smelt lovely but tasted bitter. "His roles were to make sure we had the right information and be in the right place at the right time. And he made sure all equipment was put away properly in the right place once we were finished."

"I do that, I like everything in order and things are put away proper," Ianto declared. "Did he also go out on adventures?"

"Yes he did. Sometimes the adventure came to us. One night some bad flying monster fish got into 'the Hub.' They had very sharp teeth and they hurt Gwen and Tosh very badly. Injured himself he managed to find a way to beat them."

"How did he beat them?" Ianto asked and saw a smile grow on Jack's face.

"Ianto there are beings out there that don't take kindly to be covered in boiling hot coffee. As effective as this was he realised it was not hot coffee that was required; just coffee, the stronger the better. Coffee was the solution because for these creatures it was a deadly poison. Working quickly he moved Gwen and Tosh to a safe place and treated their injuries as best he could. Then he brewed up a massive batch of coffee and filled up several water cannons he found in Owen's locker."
"Woh," Ianto said wiggling slightly from excitement.

"As they swooped down to attack he gave them a good spray of coffee. Next thing they're flapping around and crashing to the ground and within moments they were all dead. Owen and I turned up at this point." Jack smiled to himself at the recollection of finding a very dishevelled Ianto soaked in coffee standing before an industrial-sized stock pot half-filled with black liquid. He recalled how Owen had dipped in a finger and made a disparaging remark about the quality. Rolling his eyes Ianto had aimed downwards and then pumped out the remains of the coffee in the water cannon he was holding directly at Owen's crotch.

"That was clever; I wish I could think that quickly."

Jack hugged him. "Then one day something terrible happened. A man called Harold Saxon became Prime Minster." Jack knew Ianto took very little interest in politics so explained what this meant.

"So everyone voted for him," Ianto struggled to understand.

Jack nodded. "That's right; the one with the most votes wins. To begin with everyone liked him because he had promised to make people's lives better. Then he called a meeting on board the fleet vessel. He killed the American President then unleashed these horrible metal flying monsters. He sent them out and they flew around people and cut them with sharp knives. He called himself the 'Master.' He felt Ianto shudder. "He started destroying everything and forced people to start building rockets so he could send the monsters to other places and hurt people there as well."

"He was a very bad man to make monsters kill people."

"Well as I said Torchwood had an underground base hidden away."

"And they went on adventures to keep people safe," Ianto squirmed caught up in the tale. "I bet they did something to help people," he said knowingly.

"Yes Ianto, the team at Torchwood decided to fight back. They set up a resistance. To keep themselves safe they all gave themselves secret names and the brave man I am telling you about chose 'Axel' as his name."

"Like wheels need an Axel? What does resistance mean?" Ianto asked two questions in quick succession.

"It means fighting back in every way you can but in secret. That way the bad people didn't know who was fighting them. And yes axel like a wheel," Jack explained.

"He must have been very brave standing against the bad man and his flying monsters."

"He was. Axel and the team at Torchwood fought back. He and his group did all sorts of things. They blew up railway lines, roads, and water mains. Attacked shipments meant for the bad man on the Valiant. Set up escape routes to move people to safe places, and brought them supplies like medicine and food. Axel did many brave things and the Master hated him and he made him angry."

"The bad man was scary when he was angry," Ianto admitted.

"Then one night something went wrong and Axel was caught. He was taken to the Valiant and held prisoner. Even here he was most courageous which means extra brave. The Master tried everything he could to make him tell him the other people's names who were helping him. But no matter what the Master did he refused to give him one name. They hurt him, and did the cruellest possible horrible things to him but he remained silent. He was so courageous that word got out down to the
people below and he became a legend. People on the ground fought even harder knowing how much he was suffering for them."

"That was very brave," Ianto admitted softly.

"Would you like to know his name?" Jack asked him.

Ianto nodded, thinking this was the bravest man he had ever heard of.

"His name is Ianto Jones," he said softly

"That's my name," Ianto said.

"That's right Ianto that's your name."

Ianto screwed up his face as he thought.

"And do you want to know where the Ianto Jones I knew is? Where the man who was known as Axel is right this very moment?" Jack saw Ianto nod as he looked into his eyes. "He's right here in my arms," Jack kissed him. "And he is the bravest most courageous man I have ever met and I love him," he said as tears flowed down his face.

"I can't be Jack how can that be me? I'm scared and worried all the time, how can this brave person who did all these things be me?"

"Well, Ianto, it's the truth. You are my Ianto Jones, you worked at Torchwood. You saved Gwen, Tosh, and Owen's lives many times over. You were 'Axel', the man who stood up to be counted even though you knew you couldn't win because that is the kind of man you are Ianto. You endured the unthinkable to keep everyone one you knew from suffering the same fate."

Jack paused momentarily as he felt an involuntary shiver run down his back. The truth needed to be told today; all of it. He had to trust Ianto was the man he believed him to be. All he could do was trust that Ianto had told him truth when he has stated that the love they shared for each other was all that mattered.

Jack took a huge breath and let it out slowly. "Now you will need to be very brave. You were right Ianto I was on the Valiant at the same time. The Master held me captive and really hurt me so I know how strong he was. I tell you there was no way you could have rescued me because there was someone else on board who was even stronger. You have met him; he is the nice man who gave you the tin of sweets. He was held prisoner as well. He's called 'the Doctor.' He's the man with the TARDIS, the magic blue box," Jack declared then held his breath as Ianto let go of his hands, placed them on Jack's shoulder and pushed away

"So the 'Man in Grey' was there! He came in the magic blue box and he didn't rescue me." Ianto broke down and Jack grabbed his hands.

"He couldn't rescue you Ianto, because he's me," he stated. "I'm the Man in Grey."

Ianto stopped struggling and looked at him, bewildered, the words echoed through his mind as he stared at Jack. "How…you!" Ianto stammered.

"We worked together at Torchwood. I was waiting for the Doctor a long time." Jack started to speak faster and faster. "Your last recollection is of me running off to catch up with him. Everything that happened, all your hurt and pain…" Jack broke down. "I left you a note telling you I was coming back, but it fell and…you never found it. Forgive me, Ianto, I never meant for all this to happen," he sobbed.
"I'm confused," Ianto said, blinking his heart pounding. He studied Jack as if he was seeing him for the first time.

"It's entirely my fault Ianto, everything…I'm so scared…I can't lose you. I love you so much. Everything I've done for you is because I love you."

"I love you Jack, please don't leave me," Ianto burst out as his fears of losing Jack came to the fore. That if Jack was the Man in Grey he might leave with the Doctor in his blue box.

"I'm never going to leave Ianto, never! You are my life. When I got back you were gone. I had no idea where you were; none of us did. You just disappeared. When we discovered where you were all I could think of was reaching you as fast as I could..." Jack stammered in explanation.

The confusion cleared from Ianto's face and his eyes widened in understanding. "So that's how you knew my name!" Ianto burst out. "Jack! You came for me!" Ianto threw his arms around Jack. "I've found you at last. You were here all along. You didn't leave me, you came, you saved me and took me away from the bad place," Ianto declared holding on to Jack with all his strength. "Now I know why I love you so much, you are my Jack. You knew my name and you came back to the bad place and stopped the bad things happening." He took a pause and pulled back to look at Jack. "I was confused because you were so like the Man in Grey. I wanted you so bad and I couldn't understand how I could love you and him so much at the same time," Ianto admitted.

"This has been my biggest fear Ianto, that you would hate me. Forgive me Ianto for not telling you and for all this. I was so scared you would never want to see me again," Jack told him.

"I could never hate you Jack, you are everything. I love you," Ianto assured him.

"So you never did anything bad Ianto, the Master was so strong; he did terrible things to you and to me."

"But you got away and came back for me. I was so confused to why you came to the bad place. Now I understand, you had to be sneaky," he added as it was Jack's turn to look looked confused. "You couldn't tell them who you were. If you had they would have taken you back and done more terrible things. So you had to hide so you couldn't say who you were, not to anyone, not even to me. You had to pretend, to get me away," Ianto explained.

"That was very clever and brave. It must have been so scary pretending and not being able to tell even me."

Jack listened to Ianto work this revelation through. The conversation had so many turns he was trying to keep up; he felt himself lose his focus when he heard Ianto ask a question. "So the Master must be gone if you're telling me this?" he asked cautiously. "You're telling me so it must be safe now?" he added.

"Oh yes Ianto we're completely safe. The Doctor defeated him," Jack said not sure exactly what he was being asked.

"So I don't have to scared anymore and worry about the bad thing?" Ianto looked hopeful.

"No you don't have to be scared anymore."

A dawning look grew on Ianto's face; he lit up as he made another realisation. "So that's why the Doctor came in the magic blue box. To tell you he had beaten the bad man and..." He let out a whoop of joy. "I love you Jack, we're free," he said as he kissed him, holding him as close as he could.
"Yes, he is dead and he can't hurt either of us ever again," Jack said when they pulled back.

"Good, he was not a nice man," Ianto declared. "What does defeated mean?"

"It means that, he is gone, dead forever," Jack stated.

Ianto now looked adoringly at him. "You came for me and you've been keeping me here safe all this time. Jack, you're my hero," he said trying to hold Jack closer if that were possible. "It means we can stay here forever and be happy and safe for real," Ianto told him. He looked up at Jack, still in wonder that this really was the 'Man in Grey'.

"Now we can both work at getting better." Ianto looked deep into Jack's eyes after several quiet moments passed. "I will help I've been trying really hard but I will try even harder."

"You help me Ianto, you help me every day by just being here. All I need is your love and I will get better," Jack assured him.

"I do love you. The feeling I have is so big you can't see where it begins or ends, up down or sideways. It's enormous and it will never run out."

"Ianto you're the most amazing person."

"I'm not sure, big feelings can be very scary. I think I scared Tosh and hurt Myfanwy." He was about to say more when he found Myfanwy next to him. "I am so sorry I didn't mean to hurt you," he told her as he pulled her between himself and Jack and gave her a quick check and saw as tiny tear.

"We can fix that," Jack told him. "All fighting dragons need a few scars. A couple of stitches and she will be as good as new."

Ianto smiled. "Yes, and now I know you are you, we can fix anything," Ianto declared.

Watching from the kitchen Tosh squeezed Owen's hand.

"I think that's my cue to leave," he said very quietly.

"Thank you," Tosh said as they moved towards the front door.

"You know it's bloody hard being the cavalry."

To his surprise Tosh kissed his cheek. "That's for being simply wonderful."

He looked at her touched at her gentleness. He moved to leave; reaching the door he turned. "When you get back, er...let's go on that date," he said quickly.

"I'd like that very much," she replied with a twinkle in her eye.

"Right then my trusty steed awaits. I shall now ride off into the sunset in the mighty TARDIS and go home and get myself a stiff drink." He put his hand on his chest. "And recover from the coronary I just had."

"Good night." Tosh blew him a kiss then closed the door, took a deep breath, and made a quiet squeal of joy.

His head on Jack's chest Ianto listened, comforted by the sound of Jack's heartbeat and felt himself drawn into sleep.
He found himself as he often did in his dreams in that strange open place with the pillars and by the silver waterfall.

He saw the Man in Grey running towards the magic blue box and he called out to him as he had a thousand times.

"Please don't go I love you." Ianto called out. To his surprise this time instead of running away the man turned, smiling, and ran up to him. As he got closer he realised it was Jack.

Ianto ran into his arms. "You're leaving?"

"Ianto, I have to go with the Doctor but I will be back I promise."

"What if I get lost and you can't find me?"

"I will find you, wait for me and I will come."

"But you might be gone for so long I might forget what you look like," Ianto pointed out.

"You will know it's me because I will give you your name."

"I will wait for you. I love you Jack."

"I love you Ianto." Jack took him in his arms and they kissed expressing their love for each other more deeply that any word could convey.

"Wait for me and I will come," Jack said as the kiss ended.

"I will Jack I will wait." Jack kissed him gently on the lips.

"I love you Ianto, remember I will use your name, I will call you Ianto Jones," Jack called back he started running towards the blue box.

Ianto watched as Jack now reached the TARDIS and leapt on.

"Remember," he heard Jack cry out as the TARDIS vanished.

"I am Ianto Jones," he mumbled to himself and felt Jack's arms around him keeping him safe and he slept.
On his hands and knees Ianto peered under the sofa. He must he here somewhere. They had been playing hide and seek. The rules were simple: Billy would hide and Ianto would find him. When Ianto found him he would get all excited at being discovered and leap about. And Billy could do the hiding so well because could fit into the smallest of places. If he could get his head through then the rest of his ferret body would follow. Ianto never ceased to be amazed at all the places he could fit into. Just last week Ianto had searched the whole house. Ianto had gotten really worried that he had gotten outside when he had heard a scratching noise in the laundry. Lifting the washing machine lid he had seen whiskers poking out the gap between the bowl and the side. Naughty boy, he had gotten into the back of the washing machine. Jack was none too pleased having to take off the back and there was Billy all covered in cobwebs. Ianto had given him a right telling off. Not that he ever listened, he just wriggled a bit then Ianto put him on the floor and he had bounded off all pleased with himself.

Ianto moved the sofa a fraction. He was certain he had gone under here because this was one of his favourite hoarding spots. It was under the sofa and Ianto thought he might be hiding something or checking it. Billy loved hoarding, finding special objects he hid in special places all over the house. Last time he had pulled out his hoard Ianto had found five socks, three bits of dry toast, a roll of shredded roll of toilet paper, three crayons, a pair underpants (Ianto's), a left slipper (Jack's) and a chewed cooked sausage. Ianto had been so proud it had been his best one yet!

Ianto pulled himself up onto his knees. Maybe he wasn't in the lounge at all. He listened. Tosh was all quiet so he wasn't in the kitchen but he had better check. Billy's latest trick was to lay his body along the floor and use all four feet to open the bottom half of the fridge-freezer. Once open he would steal and hide every slice of frozen bread he could around the house. If it wasn't bread it was frozen sausages, little rascal.

Or maybe he was in the pantry because he loved potatoes. Only three days Ianto had caught him trying to move a five kilo bag of potatoes up the hall. Billy had his teeth firmly around the tagged end and was jerking it backwards along the floor towards the art room. Or maybe Tosh had left the lid off the flour container? Yesterday Billy had tipped it over and was digging all the flour out. He was covered in flour and kept sneezing. Ianto had laughed so hard because every time Billy sneezed a shower of flour had shaken free making Ianto sneeze. The floor was covered in small footprints and Billy when he saw Ianto he started leaping about. He was so funny every day his antics made him laugh out loud! He raced into the kitchen…

"Ianto. IANTO!" he heard Jack bellow and knew where he was. Racing up the stairs two at a time he found Jack sitting up in bed reading the paper looking very annoyed. His lips were pursed and he was pointing towards movement under the covers at the foot end of the bed.

With one hand Ianto pulled back the duvet to see Billy. His teeth were firmly clamped around the toe end of the sock on Jack's right foot. He was using every muscle in his large lithe body in backwards jerks to pull it off. Before Ianto could reach down he succeeded and slid of the bed backwards. With quick movements and an arched back he took off in leaps and bounds of utter joy and headed towards the bathroom.

Following close behind Ianto picked Billy up. Holding Billy around his chest his long body dangled down. "Naughty," he said as he took hold of the sock and pulled. Billy, having gained his prize, was
not about to give it up without a fight and clamped his teeth down. There was a brief tussle and it was clear Billy was not going to give up the precious object. "Naughty boy, drop Jack's sock. You know how he hates cold feet." Ianto heard Jack sigh as he pulled on the sock. Billy stretched his neck forward but didn't let go.

Jack watched as Ianto, his lips covered in concentration, tried to get Billy to let go. "Ianto," Jack said in a long suffering voice he used when he spoke about Billy. "If you put him down and follow he will take to his hoard. Once he's hidden it you can bring it back." He gave Ianto a stern look.

"Good idea." Ianto placed Billy down. Billy leapt away and proceeded to make the particular deep noise he did when he was especially happy and scurried down the stairs.

"And while you're there see if you can find the rest of the socks and articles of clothing he's taken," Jack shouted out as Ianto followed on behind. "And shut the door you know the rules," he said to Ianto's retreating back. "Bloody animal," Jack said in exasperation as he heard the door close. He used his feet to move the duvet back and then shook out his paper.

Several moments passed when Ianto thundered up the stairs.

"I've got the sock," he declared triumphantly handing over the sock to Jack who pulled it back on his foot.

"Where is he now?" Jack asked trying to keep the irritation he felt out of his voice.

"I pulled his hoard out and he's putting it back," Ianto said with glee. "He had seven socks, a pair of underpants, Tosh's, an old piece of pizza, and 11 pieces of Lego," he said proudly as Jack looked pained.

"That animal is foot obsessed," Jack told him crossly.

"He can't help it Jack, he loves feet. He only steals things that are important to him. He loves me and Tosh and he loves you even if you get grumpy with him." Ianto explained as Jack let out a sigh.

"We're going to play tubes now," Ianto told him.

"Just keep the door closed. You know the rules, the bedroom is out of bounds," Jack reminded him.

"I will." Ianto said.

Jack heard him bound down the stairs. Jack let out a deep groan. He was not much for pets; he disliked cats, had no particular fondness for dogs, but ferrets until now he had held no opinion. In hindsight he realised he could have put up with a cat or even a dog. Billy was the bane of his life. The only reason he tolerated him was for Ianto's sake. He was stinky, hard work, and naughty. However his being there was the first true independent action Ianto had ever taken, and he presented Jack with a 'fait a compli' he couldn't say no to.

Ianto had promised that he would take all his care onto his own shoulders and Jack wouldn't know he was in the house. Famous last words. True, Ianto lavished time and affection on him and took on every aspect of his care. That said the animal had a mischievous spirit that meant he was impossible to ignore and was in truth a bloody nuisance. Jack felt he had enough to deal with let alone a high maintenance pet. He was trying to mentally prepare himself for the next stage of his recovery, releasing some of his memories. Jack had to admit this small interlude as Geoff and Owen worked out the safest way to proceed was most welcome. Instead he had to deal with having the whole house disrupted by a very rascally and annoying animal.
This has all begun three short weeks ago with the arrival of the weekly Island community newspaper, 'Island News'. Ianto hated the national and international news. He refused to watch, listen or read because he said it was full of bad people doing mean things to good people or it was about horrible things happening like terrible fires or earthquakes. As a consequence he ignored the daily newspaper which Jack devoured, reading cover to cover.

The local news was different. Monday saw the arrival of the local rag tabloid. It listed all the comings and goings across all three villages and included the fishing news. To outsiders the paper was filled with advertising, local gossip and reports on trivial events. However Ianto found it fascinating, because it was full of news about people he knew, and reports of local events he took part in. He had spread out the paper on to the floor and read bits out to Jack of particular interest as he always did. Turning to the classified page he suddenly went quiet and studied it with great interest.

The day after Ianto asked to use the phone and for some money. Money was an aspect of life Ianto was still coming to terms with. He had thousands in trust for him, the compensation money from the 'Canary Wharf' incident, sale of his flat and car along with his substantial savings meant he was wealthy. Ianto understood you could buy things with money but often didn't make the connection that he could buy things for himself. Jack knew this was partly down to his continuing inability to choose things, which was improving but he still struggled with. So he was only too happy to release some funds to him via a debit card.

Ianto was very secretive and over the next two days he spent a lot of time on the internet only asking for help to make sure he had their home address spelt correctly. He and Tosh were intrigued to just what Ianto had been up to. More Lego they imagined, or a gift for someone but nothing prepared them for what happened next.

Jack had been in the kitchen helping Tosh as best he could with dinner when they heard Ianto being dropped off home by Mac in his van. This was not unusual as he spent every Wednesday afternoon working with Mac on his motorbike. After the drama of the previous weeks it was a welcomed return to normality and they both looked forward to Ianto bringing them up to speed on the project.

The door opened and Ianto entered the kitchen with a struggling animal firmly in his grasp.

"Meet Sir Henry Bilbo Baggins the Third, or Billy for short," he announced to their stunned faces. Mac entered carrying a cat cage filled with bags of something Jack couldn't quite make out.

"It's a ferret," Tosh said taking a step back and pressing herself against the bench.

"A very large blond ferret," Jack added blinking as he watched the animal squirm and twist in Ianto's firm grip.

"Yes he is a ferret. He's been very naughty and the lady who had him didn't want him anymore. I saw his picture in the paper and I wanted him, because I love him," Ianto explained.

Mac placed the cat carrier on the kitchen floor then left again.

"You saw him and you loved him?" Tosh questioned incredulously.

"Yes as soon as I saw his picture I knew I loved him," he explained his eyes shining in remembrance. "He was free to a good home. I went and saw the lady and I promised he would have the best free home ever. Free means you don't have to pay anything. But I would of if she had asked."

"I know what free means," Jack interrupted.
"Thank you Mac," Ianto said as Mac now placed a cat litter tray and a large bag of cat litter beside the carrier.

"Your welcome. And good luck," he wished them then left and closed the door behind him.

"What did he mean by good luck?" Tosh asked curious at the tone of Mac's voice looking between the objects of the floor and the struggling animal in Ianto's grasp.

"Billy's very naughty," Ianto told her his eyes glowing.

"Naughty?" Jack asked watching as Billy twist in Ianto's arms in an effort to escape.

"He's a bit bitey and he's a handful," Ianto explained as the animal squirmed.

"Bitey?" Tosh repeated and saw several deep puncture wounds oozing blood on Ianto's thumb.

"The lady didn't want him because she said he got all out of control when she let him out and bit her lots, but I reckon he's just lonely and bored." Ianto lifted the ferret up to his face. "He's so naughty, he's already bitten me." Billy lunged at his nose. Not perturbed and keeping a firm grip on him Ianto pulled him back then stroked down his long body talking quietly to him.

"Ianto!" Jack burst out in exasperation. "Where are we going to keep him? He stinks!"

"I've ordered a better cage for him with a hammock so he can stay in the lounge and I'm going to give him a bath," he announced with great eagerness.

"A bath! You are going to give that a bath?" Tosh said as she watched the animal struggle showing his impressive teeth.

"I'm going to put him down now because he told me wants to have sniff around," Ianto told them and placed Billy on the floor. Jack immediately put his feet on the chair and Billy took off into the lounge. Tosh closed the interconnecting door to the hall to keep him on the lounge-kitchen area.

"Isn't he cute?" Ianto said a happy smile growing on his face as Billy began to explore. Jack stood now and took a look at Ianto's deeply punctured thumb.

"If you say so," he said and Tosh brought out the first aid kit.

Jack looked at Tosh who had raised her eyebrows keeping an eye on the animal which had now reached the other side of the room. Billy stopped when he came across one of the ice cream containers Ianto used to store all his Lego pieces and using a front paw tipped it over, spilling the contents over the floor.

Ianto took an excited intake of breath as he watched him proceed to tip over each and every container. "He's so clever!" he declared and Tosh placed a sticking plaster over his thumb.

Over the next few days it became clear as deliveries were made to just what Ianto had spent his money on. Gone was the tatty cat cage Billy appeared to have spent a large part of his life in, replaced with a palatial four-tier affair with ramps connecting each level which Jack helped him assemble. This was followed by the delivery of several meters of clear air con piping and a large number of coloured tubes, a pet tent, igloos, ping sized balls with bells in them, sleeping sacks and a hammock. He had also bought a sort of cat tower with tubes which Ianto explained was adapted for ferrets that liked things with holes and was close to the ground. Also Ianto appeared to have purchased every kind of ferret treat and several bags of specialist food and oils for Billy to try out. Jack marvelled at the sheer number of products one could order for ferrets including special oils, food
and shampoo. It would appear from the sheer volume Ianto had bought them all. However Jack did concede after he had visited several specialist ferret websites that Ianto had actually been restrained when faced with the sheer volume of products available.

True to his word Ianto proceeded to give Billy a bath which much to Tosh and Jack's amazement be appeared to enjoy. Leaping about and making a particular noise indicated he was clearly happy with the event. Jack set aside several towels just for this use and admitted that he smelt much better. Ianto explained he had been de-scented and de-sexed so wouldn't smell as bad as he could have. Also the shampoo he had chosen meant he should smell sweet and gave his coat a lovely silky feel.

Over the next couple of weeks Ianto words proved he was right. Billy was bored and lonely and the pair thrived in each other's company. Billy came out twice a day to play, supervised because on his own he tended to try and wreck the place. He and Tosh also saw something in Ianto come alive. Having something to care and be responsible for one hundred percent and fuss over they watched Ianto blossom and immediately noted his speech improved. Ianto also delighted in the more naughty aspects of Billy's nature. All ferrets have a quirky nature and this would appear to be a match made in heaven. Truth be told Billy lived to play as if the whole world was there for his entertainment and Ianto was only too happy to oblige. Three hours a day; two in the morning and one at night, were now set aside where the pair would play themselves into exhaustion.

Jack shook out his paper, and out of the corner of his eye he saw the door open. He closed his eyes and groaned. A few moments later he felt the bottom of the duvet move.

"Ianto, IANTO!" he shouted and he heard Ianto head up the stairs just as he felt the sock on his left foot start to come off.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is dedicated to the real 'Billy' now waiting for me at the 'Rainbow Bridge' with all my other ferret babies. All the incidents involving noted above are based on real events. I credit Billy for saving my daughter's life by bringing a ray of sunshine that daily made us laugh breaking her depression.
His heart pounding Owen raced down the corridors of the TARDIS keeping a tight grip on his medical bag. He was not sure how much more of this he could take. What the hell had gone wrong this time? The session today aboard the TARDIS was meant take Jack into a light hypnotic state and look at one of Jack's most innocuous memory from his time aboard the Valiant. Nothing heavy, just light and easy, a test run! He approached Jack's quarters and the door swung open.

"What the fuck happened? " Owen demanded as he burst into see Jack curled up on a queen-sized bed. Jack had chosen his own quarters on board because (Ianto's arms aside) it was the one and only place he felt completely safe. Being there also meant there was no possibility that the procedure could be inadvertently interrupted.

"One at a time," Owen held his hand up as both Geoff and the Doctor started to speak.

"We don't know what happened," Geoff replied. "We followed every step you and I outlined. I placed Jack into a light hypnotic state. Then I started a guided medication to get him completely relaxed."

"And then what?"

"See for yourself." Geoff indicated the screen on the wall. Owen recognised it as one of the many devices they had trialled during their mission to bring Jack back after the TARDIS incident. It was a way of directly looking into the subconscious.

Owen turned to see it was blank. "Oh god, are you telling me he's back in a fugue state?"

"Worse," Geoff said as the screen now came to life and Jack began to scream and writhe on the bed. Owen moved over to the bed with Geoff in an attempt to keep Jack from falling onto the floor.

"Is that it?" Jack screamed out. "Is that the worst you can do?" Jack spat out several teeth along with a mouth full of blood. The Master waved his hand and indicated his guards move back from their efforts. Infuriated the Master began to pace up and down the deck hanger.

The Master began to mock, "brave Jack shouting your defiance, 'bring it on, do your worst', is that it?"

The Master was handed the blood covered bar. He examined it then laid it down on an instrument table to re-join an array of medieval spiked weapons. He looked at Jack who was tied to a metal cross his body already showing signs of recovery. The Master snorted in disgust and toyed with a long sturdy piece of rounded metal which resembled a poker. "You know this is a lot less fun than I thought it would be. What is the point of torture if there is no effect? Beating you to death is becoming a bore it takes several of my guards at least half an hour and then you just bounce back."

"Sorry to disappoint." Jack retorted.
"Yes Jack, you are very disappointing. So in light of my inability to make any progress, I've been doing some research and I've found out something about you."

"So you found out that with my body and looks I get to have a lot of sex." Jack looked the Master up and down. "However surprising as this may sound I have standards," Jack sneered.

"You're a fixed point in time and space Jack; it would be a wild ride. As you are a freak I wouldn't touch you, but a large number of the guards assure me that you are quite the performer." Jack spat blood in his direction.

The Master let out a sigh and went back to the table. He picked up a blow torch and lit it. Holding the flame to the end of the poker, it went first red then white hot. He grinned as he saw Jack swallow and lose his entire colour which was impressive as he was covered in blood.

"I was thinking it's been awhile since I paid attention to your eyes," he moved the white hot metal towards Jack's face end on. Jack closed his eyelids in futility and struggled against the ties holding him to the cross. The heat seared his eyelashes and his nose filled with the tang of scalding metal. He braced himself against the searing agony to come when the Master pulled back and began laughing.

"No, I have something much better planned. I have found something out that is simply delicious." The Master snapped his fingers and the double doors opened. Jack heard a rumbling and he watched as a life-sized metal bull appeared. It was heavy and required several guards to make it move. Eventually it was placed side on to Jack, who noted it had a small man sized panel. It was a curious device made of highly-polished bronze; it had a metal platform underneath stacked with cords of wood between its legs reaching to its belly.

"As you know I am very fond of some of the Earth's more inventive punishments. When I read about this one I just had to make a copy." He rapped his knuckles on the side indicating it was hollow. "This is a recreation of 'The Brazen Bull'. You seal someone inside." He lifted the panel facing Jack. Jack looked at it in horror and began to shake. "And you light the fire underneath. Oh I should explain. It has a set of pipes inside allowing the victim to breathe. What makes this so special is that the pipes inside amplifies the screams of the victim in such a way they sound like the roaring of a bull." The Master picked at his nails and bit at one for a moment. "But you know me I never believe second-hand accounts. It could all be utter nonsense so I thought a demonstration was in order to test this out."

The Master clapped his hands and a few moments later a man was dragged him held upright between two guards. Naked, the man was unrecognisable, covered in a mass of bruises and blood.

"Don't recognise him? I know it's been a while Jack but even you should know who this is." The guards threw the man down before the Master.

"Ianto," Jack whispered and began to struggle against the bonds that held him to the metal cross in a futile but desperate effort to reach him.

"Ianto Jones has been most difficult; in fact he has been impossible to break." He stood before Ianto and gave him a kick. "He has remained silent and refused to give me any more playmates. He also caused me a great deal of aggravation causing the delay of a very important project. The tone of the Master's voice changed. "Ianto Jones, formally of Torchwood Cardiff, now known as Axel, I sentence you to death." He indicated the guards move forward and place Ianto in the bull.

The room filled with Jack's screams.

"Jesus Christ," Owen blurted out. He struggled to hold on to the contents of his stomach as the scene..."
reached its inevitable conclusion and the screen went blank. All of them took a moment to recover in the silence that followed.

"How long as the cycle been going on?" Owen asked as moved Jack into a more comfortable position.

"Three hours," the Doctor replied his face tense with worry.

"We've tried everything," Geoff told him as a scene began to play out.

"This is not right. As far as I can recall Jack and Ianto never met on the Valiant, "Owen pointed out.

"Yes we know when this first started we went through the records. This is not an actual memory, although the rapes and the bull are confirmed," the Doctor told him and Owen gagged.

"So what the hell is going on here?" Owen asked as he and the Doctor and Geoff all looked to each other in turn.

"I can't say with any certainty but it could be that his memories have melded with his guilt," Geoff suggested.

"I thought that was now sorted after he told Ianto everything," Owen added.

"The subconscious is very complicated," Geoff told them. "Jack's even more so. There are layers upon layers and on top of all this is the mind technique he's used."

"But this is not an actual memory this looks like a nightmare," Owen interrupted.

"Does that mean Jack is in a dream state as if he were asleep?" the Doctor asked, curious as he watched both Geoff and Owen absorbed in the discussion.

Owen snapped his fingers in realisation at Geoff's words and opened the bag he had brought with him. He pulled out the 'Bractavian scanner' he had used previously. It hummed then clicked. Leaning over Owen pointed at the screen face. It indicated Jack was now in a restful stage of sleep just having completed a very active cycle of some form of REM sleep.

"We need to wake him up," Owen pointed out.

Geoff looked at him in frustration. "We've tried. Why do you think we called you?" Geoff snapped. A sound caught his attention. His stomach turned over as he looked across at the wall and the screen came to life.

"Is that it?" Jack screamed out. "Is that the worst you can do?" The Master grimaced at the man before him…

"I don't think I can handle seeing this again," Owen groaned as he attempted to soothe Jack who fought him off almost falling off the bed screaming profanities at him. "I'm going to make a suggestion but you're not going to like it."

"I think we should consider all options," the Doctor said.

"Ianto is the only one who can help," Owen suggested.

Geoff's eyes widened. "Bring him here! Are you out of your mind? Do I have to remind you about what happened last time he saw the TARDIS?"
"I know, but he knows about the TARDIS and the Doctor now," Owen pointed out.

"And what if we bring him in here and he can't reach Jack. What then?" Geoff retorted.

"Look, Jack needs Ianto. I've watched with my own eyes how Ianto helps Jack during his nightmares."

"This is different; you would be bringing him into a totally alien environment. We would be removing him from everything he knows and throwing him in the deep end. If Ianto gets upset he will need Jack," Geoff argued.

"What about we take Jack into the garden, then get Ianto..." Owen suggested

"Something is happening," the Doctor interrupted and pointed to the screen.

Jack ran down what appeared to be an endless tunnel towards the light. He couldn't recall how he had escaped but he had. The howls of the pursuit were coming closer. The 'Garden'; he must reach the 'Garden'. He would be safe with Ianto, he needed Ianto. The incantation of the name caused stone walls to appear before him. The walls looked different from what he recalled; they should be smooth and clean. Now they were covered in a tangled carpet of twisted branches and leaves growing up from below and hanging from above.

An idea came to him, 'climb'. Jack looked up and saw the walls extended above him into infinity. Cursing, he started running again. His mouth went dry as he heard the baying of and howls of those chasing him getting closer. He ran in an awkward manner, stopping and starting in jerks almost tripping over his feet as he checked the wall for any kind of opening.

He recalled something; he needed the door. Just as he formed the thought a large green door appeared. With relief he turned the handle but it was locked. He kicked and shook the door screamed and pounded on it but it would not open.

Placing his head on the door he sobbed. 'Doors need a key, a key, a key', his mind echoed. He looked down: no key hole. He double-checked and saw faded letters painted on the surface. It was a question only something he would know written in Boeshane. "I called her fluffy fuzzy boots," he said in a whisper in his native language as he recalled his first pet. As the words left his lips the door swung open.

Moving inside the door closed with a slam. He felt a wave of relief course through him. Jack fell to his knees and took in great lungfuls of air. Slowly the burning in his chest eased. He stood and looked around.

"Ianto," he called softly looking around, surprised normally he was right here.

Calling out a few more times, he felt a feeling of dread grow in his stomach as he walked down the shelled path towards the fountain.

"Ianto."

"He's reached some sort of safe place," Owen said letting out the breath he had been holding on to. All three of them took a moment to admire the slice of paradise Jack had created in his mind. No garden on earth could match its perfection. The garden had a timeless beauty that all great gardens seem process. Geoff smiled to himself knowing that the garden was actually are reflection of Jack's love for Ianto. His thoughts were interrupted when the image seemed to flick. He dismissed it then saw some of the colours had becoming muted.
"Oh dear," Geoff suddenly stated as he came to a realisation.

"What's happening?" Owen asked "Why is the garden beginning to fade?"

"Ianto is not there," Geoff stated as he now watched as one of the major trees slowly began to disintegrate from the top down and stream away in swirls.

"I can see and hear that," Owen pointed out.

"Ianto's not here," Geoff repeated.

"Is Ianto the key here?" The Doctor asked and Geoff looked at him. Geoff hit himself on the head. "Key, Jack has been talking about a key. I thought he meant it was a key to opening a door."

"You are not making any sense," Owen pointed out.

"Not a key, a keystone," Geoff explained.

"What has that got to do with anything?" Owen asked thoroughly confused as the pond Jack was standing beside began to sink into the earth becoming a white space.

"What is a keystone?" Geoff asked quickly.

"It's the central stone that holds up an arch," the Doctor replied.

"And what happens when you remove the keystone?"

"It collapses," the Doctor replied.

"Shit!" Owen said as he now understood.

"Ianto is the keystone. He is what held all this together. To cut a long story short Jack created this place to retreat to when he couldn't cope any longer. He built it on the only thought he had left, his love for Ianto."

"So where the hell is he then?" Owen asked.

"That Ianto no longer exists," Geoff said quietly.

"It's in his mind! How can he no longer exist?" Owen exclaimed.

Geoff wiped his hand over his face and went on to explain the significance of what was occurring to the garden on the screen. It was a representation of Jack's love for Ianto. When Jack and Ianto reached out for each other it bonded them emotionally to each other. It meant in that instant the Ianto in his mind amalgamated with the real Ianto Jones.

"It means the Ianto Jones we need is now outside the garden. We need the real Ianto Jones," the Geoff pointed out.

"Oh fuck," Owen said under his breath.

Chapter End Notes
The 'dream machine' used in this chapter is with kind permission from Secrets-and-Smiles. This was a device used in her excellent story 'Dreams.' 'Dreams' can be found on fan fiction dot net.
"Are you out of your fucking mind?" Owen burst out.

"Not less than an hour ago you made the same suggestion yourself," Geoff pointed out.

"Well I was wrong. It was a stupid suggestion and I can't imagine what I was thinking. It would never work," Owen said.

"How do you know it won't work? Saying the word 'garden' got him there," Geoff pointed at the screen.

"It's how the hell do we get him into Jack's mind is the bit I'm struggling with," Owen retorted.

"Well have you got a got a better suggestion?" Geoff threw at Owen, who was standing, his arms crossed.

"What, we just walk up to Ianto and say, please come with us into the magic blue box. The same magic blue box whose very sight caused you to try and throw yourself over a cliff. Said box by the way is bigger on the inside than the outside. Here's the nice man Jack run off with, and oh by the way Jack is trapped in a nightmare in his old room on board, in a garden, in his mind, where you are supposed to be, but you're not, you're out here and somehow now we have to get you in there which apparently is impossible so…?"

Geoff interrupted Owen's tirade. "We are running out of time because I have no idea what will happen once the last fragment of the garden in Jack's mind dissipates." He pointed to the screen.

"Okay, Mr Genius Psychiatrist, how do you suggest we should handle this?" Owen glared at Geoff.

The Doctor walked between them and headed for the door. Reaching the door he turned. "You two coming?"

"Where the hell are you going?" Owen demanded as the Doctor moved into the corridor and started to stride towards the console room.

"As I see it there is only one person who can help." The Doctor reached the console and flicked a switch so the screen from Jack's quarters was now mirrored on a screen on the console. The Doctor looked at Geoff. "If I am not mistaken you said Ianto was the keystone."

"So we just bring Ianto here and get him to kiss Jack better?" Owen screamed at him.

The Doctor spun himself around and pointed as Geoff. "You get back to Jack." He now pointed at Owen. "You are coming with me." He threw a handle on the console and the door opened.

"Fucking mad the pair of you. How the hell did I ever get involved with this shit?" Owen said under his breath and grabbed the Doctor's arm as he passed which caused him to stop mid stride.

"Trust me. I'm the man with the nice maple syrup sweets and the elephant jokes," the Doctor said with a smile.

"What are you not telling me?" Owen asked.
"There are two words, Doctor Owen Harper, that need to become part of your vocabulary. The first is trust."

"Trust," Owen repeated looking sceptical. "And the other one?"

"Hope." The Doctor stepped out the TARDIS door into the garden at Rose Cottage. Turning his head to orient himself he strode up to the French windows and knocked.

"That's it? Hope and trust?" Owen retorted as they saw Tosh come towards them, wide eyed. Ianto fixed his eyes on the magic blue box and gripped Myfanny close as he listened.

He creased his forehead in concentration as Owen spoke.

"Jack is having a very bad dream and he needs you," Owen explained quickly. "I know how good you are at helping him when he has very bad dreams."

"I hold him and tell him I love him. And I tell him I forgive him which is an extra big sorry," he looked towards Tosh for reassurance who gave him a thumbs' up. "But Jack's not here he's with that man. Jack told me he was going to do some sort of thinking and dreaming this afternoon about being with the bad man." Ianto made a connection and continued. "So when he did the thinking thing did he start to have a bad dream?"


"Okay, but I don't know where Jack is," Ianto pointed out.

"He's in the TARDIS," the Doctor told him and pointed into the garden at the TARDIS.

"He can't be in there it's too small," Ianto pointed out. "Unless he's standing up asleep and if he falls down I can't lift him up on my own," he said quietly. "He's very heavy and I'm not allowed to lift heavy things, it really hurts."

"Well this is a special box and I promise it's bigger on the inside than this house and garden," the Doctor said. Ianto looked at the TARDIS and the tall thin man in the brown suit in disbelief."

"Can Tosh come with me? And I need Myfanny," he said unsure of the situation. "Of course Myfanny and I will come," she said taking his hand.

"What about Billy? I've never left him on his own he might get all worried if he's wakes up and I'm not here." The Doctor looked across at the large long blond animal lying on its back curled around in a U-shape in a deep sleep suspended on a hammock within some kind the four tier cage. "I love him and he loves me, and I don't want him to think that I would just go away and leave him," he added.

"Ianto, I promise that Billy won't even know you're gone," The Doctor said but Ianto still looked hesitant. And they all held their collective breaths as Ianto worked through his thoughts.

"I need to say goodbye to Billy and tell him where I'm going." Ianto said standing and handing Myfanny to Tosh. He opened the door of the cage and with gentle care lifted Billy out. Billy stayed fast asleep and remained completely limp as Ianto cradled him close to his chest. He gave him a kiss and stroked him gently

"Jack needs me, so I'm going out for a bit. He's in the magic blue box. Which is outside and looks scary. I don't really understand what's going on. I need to be brave like the other Ianto so even
though I'm really scared I have to help Jack because he's having a bad dream. So I'm going to hold him, tell him how much I love him and kiss him better. I just wanted to let you know how much I love you and daddy Ianto will be back soon. Daddy Jack loves you as well even if he gets grumpy. When we come back and if you've been a good boy I'll let you have one of his socks. I've also got a real treat for you because I hidden some marshmallows around the lounge and kitchen for you to find because I know how much you like looking for things. You be a good boy and don't get into any naughty trouble and I will be back soon." He kissed the animal's sleeping form and gently put him back in his hammock. He pulled himself up and turned to the Doctor, Tosh and Owen.

"I'm not sure how much he understands, because he never listens. But I wanted to let him know I love him and I will be back because I don't want him to worry."

"He's a wonderful boy," Owen said putting his hand on Ianto's shoulder, not sure what one says in this situation.

"He's a very naughty boy. You ask Tosh, he steals all her bread. And last week he shredded all the toilet paper into little bits and made himself a nest," Ianto said taking Myfanwy from Tosh.

"I hope you know what hell you are doing," Owen muttered under his breath.

"You're coming along nicely," the Doctor said aside to Owen as he opened the French doors.

"What?" Owen snarked when he realised the Doctor had heard him.

"You used the word 'hope'," the Doctor pointed out.

Owen snorted, "Well if we're going to 'Hope Springs Eternal', we are screwed because none of us have the directions."

"Trust," the Doctor added and smiled as Owen started to mutter under his breath again and followed on behind.

"Woh!" Ianto said as he stepped into the console room of the TARDIS and turned around staring in wonder. "I thought you were telling me a big lie, but it was true." The Doctor winked at him.

"You need to come now," Geoff said entering the room and saw Ianto scowl at him.

"I don't like you," Ianto stated outright and pulled a long face. Tosh and Owen turned to him startled as this was the first time Ianto had actually spoken of his dislike of anyone in his daily life.

"I'm sorry Ianto but I like you," Geoff said then pointed at the screen which was now almost devoid of all detail except for Jack who was standing on an every decreasing circle of green.

Leading Ianto down the corridor they came to Jack's room. Opening the door, they saw Jack was lying on the bed, motionless. Ianto immediately laid down next to him and took him in his arms and started kissing his face. They watched as Jack wrapped himself around Ianto.

"It's me Ianto," Ianto said, now stroking Jack's face.

On an ever increasingly small square of lawn Jack felt like he was coming apart. Everything he had touched was brittle and crumpled into dust. He had just one thought, one feeling left. "Ianto, Ianto, please hear me, I need you," he cried out.

He heard what he thought sounded like a musical note. Jack looked wildly about as he tried to make out where it was coming from; it sounded like chimes of some sort. He concentrated; the notes
sounded so familiar. The sweet sounds tore at his heart.

Holding Jack close, Ianto kissed and told him how much he loved him. Kissing Jack again, Ianto paused; he heard music. It was his song, his special song. When he was in the first bad place in the dark, when he thought he would never see the light again, he had heard this song in his head and had seen beautiful pictures. It had no words, just a sweet melody. He hummed along and he felt his eyes growing heavy…

"Something is happening," Geoff said as Tosh, the Doctor, and Owen lifted their eyes from the bed to the screen. At the same time they heard Ianto humming and looked down and saw Ianto close his eyes.

Humming Ianto heard words. The song had never had words before, but he did what he was told; he closed and then opened his eyes. His eyes widened as he saw Jack before him looking completely lost. Ianto pulled him into his arms. Jack broke down into howling sobs. Ianto knew this sound. He had made it himself once, when Jack had taken him out of the bad room. It came from deep within and he knew Jack needed to cry out his pain just like Jack had allowed him to cry out his.

Jack buried his face into Ianto's shoulder and felt strong arms envelop him. Stroking Jack's back Ianto told him he was safe, that he loved him, that he was found. As they stood locked in their embrace Ianto tried to work out what had happened. One moment he was in the magic blue box holding Jack on a bed and now he was here. It was like a dream but real. He closed his eyes for a moment then opened them again. Didn't matter; Jack had been lost and now he had found him.

"I couldn't find you. I called and called and then the garden started breaking up, it just broke into dust," Jack sobbed finding words for the first time.

"Well, the garden is here now," Ianto pointed out. Jack lifted his face and saw Ianto was right. Jack pulled out his tee shirt and blew his nose. Jack pulled back slightly and looked around then back at Ianto.

"You're not wearing your suit," Jack pointed out confused as he saw Ianto was dressed in a tee-shirt, jumper and jeans.

"Silly. I don't have a suit and if I did it would be daft to wear in the garden. It would get all messy. I only wear my best clothes when we go out special. Like that time we went on a date. We went to the café and held hands and we squeezed each other's knees under the table and then kissed loads in the car," he declared.

"Ianto," Jack repeated, looking around bewildered to see the garden had fully reformed, but it was different in a way he couldn't put a finger on at this moment. Standing back Jack took hold of Ianto by the shoulders.

"How...how did you get here?" Jack asked.

"I was doing my reading and Tosh was helping me when the magic blue box came. It was so strange; it just appeared, one moment it wasn't there and then it was! Then Owen came with the man who gave me the maple syrup sweets and the jokes. Owen told me you were having a bad dream, and you needed me. I was scared because I didn't want to go into the magic blue box. But you needed me so I decided I had to be real brave like when Ianto became Axel and he found a way to fight back. So I asked if Tosh and Myfanwy could come with me and they said yes. I said a special goodbye to Billy just to make sure that he knew where I was going and I loved him. I promised if he was extra special good he could have one of your socks. That is okay?" Ianto questioned. "I know he's a real naughty boy but he does love you and I thought that he could get rewarded with a treat
like I used to."

Jack blinked. He was not sure what had happened, but this was the real Ianto and not the Ianto he had envisioned. This was a dream but it felt so real, surreal in fact.

"Of course," Jack took Ianto's hands into his own and kissed them. "But how did you get here in this garden? Because I created it in my mind," Jack asked.

He saw Ianto look thoughtful. "I'm not sure. But I think it was the special song. When I was in the first bad place I heard this song and it made me feel all happy inside." Jack closed his eyes and listened; yes, he could hear it too. He smiled in remembrance; whenever he had been here in this place he had heard this song. He looked at Ianto in wonder as he joined with him, humming the tune.

"That's it Jack," Ianto enthused, nodding. "That's my special song, and it must be your special song too. When I came into the magic blue box and held you it came into my head. And I heard words which is funny because it didn't have words before. The words said close your eyes and I did and then it said open your eyes and here I was." Jack was about to speak when a butterfly fluttered by. Jack did a double take because he had never seen one the size of a man before. It flapped its wings in lazy sweeps just enough to keep it off the ground. The deep blue on its wings shimmered as it passed.

"I love butterflies," Ianto said and his eyes lit up as he saw something a few feet away. "A fountain!" Ianto said excitedly taking hold of Jack’s hand and pulling him along.

Reaching it lanto dipped his fingers into the thick brown liquid. He closed his eyes and he sucked his fingers. "Emmmmm yum maple syrup," Ianto said as he dipped his fingers in again.

Jack stood back for a moment. The liquid didn't look thick enough to be maple syrup and anyway he smelt coffee. He looked down and saw in a hollow a small shell-like cup. He scooped it out and dipped it into the liquid. Taking a cautious sip of the dark liquid he rolled it around in his mouth to experience the full flavour. It was best coffee Ianto had ever made. Draining the small cup he trailed it into the liquid and filled it again.

"I like this garden," Ianto declared. Jack finished his fourth cupful and felt his head clear. He looked around; it was the garden he had created but then again it was not. It was just as beautiful and wondrous but had become even more magical.

Ianto gasped and his eyes widened with excitement. "I wonder if there are real gooseberries here and not like the trick ones we grew?"

"And snapdragons are real snapdragons," Jack added as Ianto clapped.

"There could be bananas! If we find bananas I am going to bring them back here to this fountain. And I am going to dip them in and eat them all. Then I am going to drink this fountain dry," Ianto announced. "Because bananas are on top of my 'what's best with maple syrup' list and a fountain like this needs to be drunk up every last drop."

"Let's go see," Jack caught up in Ianto's excitement. They went around the fountain and followed the pink shell path into the next part of the garden.

How long they took exploring the garden Jack could not fathom. The time stretched on like one of those long endless summer afternoons of childhood that never seems to end. Each turning seemed to lead them to new surprises and wonders. Real gooseberries and snapdragons, and butterflies of every size and colour. Goldfish that did underwater dances, flocks of birds who chorused serenades,
squirrels who juggled acorns made of silver, chocolate crocodiles with in-built clocks in their tummies, and knee-high elephants who followed them around demanding to be fed Lego cakes. There were climbing trees where the only way down was via long winding slides. Vistas of sheer beauty that took their breath away, to waterfalls of lemonade surrounded by trees with leaves made of crisps and inverted mushrooms filled with dip.

Eventually the garden led them back to the fountain. Nearby they settled into a hammock built for two under the spreading canopy of a shady tree. The leaves sparkled in the sunlight like diamonds, scattering rainbows which danced on every surface. Rocking back and forth gently they kissed and whispered sweet nothings to each other and made love. Jack, his head on Ianto's chest, was filled with a sense of peace and he let out a sigh of contentment. Safe in Ianto's arms and gently rocked by the light breeze he felt himself drift into a light sleep. As Jack drifted off to sleep Ianto heard the song singing to him, singing to him in words again. He listened very carefully and knew exactly what had to do.

A gentle shaking woke Jack followed by a deep kiss. He opened his eyes to see Ianto was looking about. Jack followed his gaze and saw the garden seemed too have shrunk. He felt a moment of panic. Ianto kissed him again and then swung himself out of the hammock. Jack blinked and saw Ianto had a sturdy long object clipped on his belt. He was sure it hadn't been there before.

Ianto unclipped the object from his belt and activated it. "Is that a lightsaber?" Jack said not sure he was seeing what he was seeing.

"I have always wanted one of these," Ianto said taking a wide a stance and began to slice the air around him.

"While you were asleep the song told me we have to leave the garden. But the bad man is out there and he is really mean and it's not going to be easy to escape," Ianto explained then held out his hand. "I'm Luke Ianto and I am here to rescue you." Ianto pulled Jack out of the hammock.

"You're Luke Ianto and you're here to rescue me?" Jack repeated, confused.

"You're meant to say, 'aren't you a little short to be a stormtrooper?'" Ianto instructed with a glint in his eye.

"Aren't you little short to be stormtrooper?" Jack repeated, not sure where this was going.

"Yes Prince Jack. I am here with my mighty Dragon Myfanwy to take you to freedom," Ianto announced grandly. Jack heard a mighty roar in the distance and felt the vibration through his feet.

"You will need this." Ianto handed Jack a wicked looking blaster. As Jack was weighing it up in his hand Ianto turned off the lightsaber and pulled Jack into a massive snog.

When they pulled back Jack saw the garden appeared to be folding in on itself. He looked back to Ianto who was looking serious.

"Now all the bad guys will be in white and bad man Darth Master will try his best to get us so we have to keep moving." Jack looked at the weapon in his hand. "Don't worry, it never runs out of bullets," Ianto told him and Jack looked at the blaster with renewed enthusiasm.

"Now I need you to promise me that I will get my reward later," Ianto said squeezing Jack's arse.

"Oh Luke Ianto, I am going to so reward you," Jack said trying to keep a straight face as he began to enjoy himself.
"Excellent. I like my rewards with lashings of naked and us chasing each other with loads of kissing and orgasms," Ianto told him as the collapsing of the garden sped up and faded around them.

"Get me to safety and the reward shall be yours," Jack announced with glee as they found themselves in a dark corridor.


"This is for luck," Jack said, kissing Ianto on the cheek.

Burying his face Ianto's shoulder, his arms tightly around his waist, together they swung across the abyss. They could both hear the shots of those above them firing down and ricocheting off the walls.

The arrived with a thump and Ianto looked up and shouted, "Missed! They are such rotten shots," Ianto pointed out. Jack had to agree. With the prolificacy of ammunition the other side wasted he would have thought at least one shot would come close.

Taking each other's hands they ran down the corridor. Turning the corner they were confronted with twenty of the Master's henchmen. Without hesitation Ianto flew towards them, screaming. Jack followed, screaming and firing. The men, startled, turned and ran. Jack bellowed with Ianto as he fired into the backs of the running men. Several of the men screamed into their radios asking for help. A few moments later a door crashed down from above cutting them off. Jack and Ianto skidded to a halt.

Out of breath they look around. If they were not careful they would be trapped and before either of them could say a word the door behind them now slid into place. They backed themselves against the wall and braced themselves for the attack they knew would follow.

The panel now moved aside on the other wall exposing a corridor and they saw Darth Master. As he came towards them he morphed and his robes fell away becoming the Master.

Ianto pointed his lightsaber in the Master's direction. "You hurt me and you hurt Jack and did mean spiteful things. You are a very, very bad man."

"You will never escape. This place is impregnable, which means there is no escape," the Master crowed.

"You need to be punished and there is only one punishment for really bad men like you."

"I am untouchable and you and Jack will be in my power forever," the Master snarled.

"We will defeat you," Jack shouted back.

"Never! I am too strong."

"Not as strong as my dragon. Myfanwy," Ianto screamed out.

As her name left his lips Jack and Ianto heard an ear-splitting roar which shook the room. Myfanwy crashed through the walls and flamed the Master who was shaking with fear. He burst into flames, screaming and writhing. She tossed him in the air and brought down her jaws silencing him once and for all.

Grimacing she swallowed him whole then placed a front claw down, bowing slightly. Ianto cavorted onto her back and put his hand down to help Jack up.
Jack placed his arms around Ianto's chest and Ianto kicked with his feet. Her back muscles rippled with power and she launched herself into space as Ianto, holding his lightsaber aloft, cried out his victory. Jack threw back his head and laughed as they soared amongst the stars.

The blackness of space dissolved and Jack opened his eyes.

He was laying on his bed in his room in the TARDIS. Ianto had his arms around him, firmly embracing him. He took a deep breath and buried his face into Ianto's shoulder.

"Welcome back," he heard Owen say.

"How long?" Jack croaked clearing his throat and Ianto helped him sit up.

"About two hours," the Doctor told him.

"Two hours, it felt like we were there for a lot longer," Jack said.

"I don't think it was in real time. Everything we saw was in extreme fast forward," Geoff spoke for the Doctor and Owen, who nodded.

"That was certainly an original rescue and I must say Myfanwy was a real heroine," the Doctor told them both.

"Yes she loves to snack on the bad man but she tells me he tastes nasty and bitter," Ianto explained and everyone laughed.

"How are you feeling?" Geoff asked after a few moments passed. He saw Jack glance over to Ianto and he pulled him in close.

"I think we need to explore what happened," Owen added.

"We need to go home. We just battled our way out of the Valiant," Jack said and he saw Ianto smile.

"And I need to check that Billy's been a good boy and give him his sock," Ianto said taking Jack's hand and pulling Jack to stand. Turning Ianto picked up Myfanwy and led the way out.

Chapter End Notes

The 'dream machine' used in this chapter is with kind permission from Secrets-and-Smiles. This was a device used in her excellent story 'Dreams.' 'Dreams' can be found on fan fiction dot net.
Sanctuary

Opening the French doors Ianto helped Jack into the lounge. Tosh immediately moved past them to the kitchen and began to make a hot drink. After helping Jack reach the sofa, Ianto immediately went to check on Billy who was still fast asleep curled up on his hammock.

"I am so proud. He's been a real good boy," Ianto announced then to and help Tosh in the kitchen.

A short while later the Doctor, Owen and Geoff left the TARDIS deep in discussion deep in discussion. It stopped the moment they entered the lounge and settled down on the comfortable chairs. Quickly Tosh took their request for a drink. She returned a short time later and handed out a hot drink to each. Ianto followed and handed a hot cup of coffee to Jack from the tray he was carrying. He took his own mug and settled as close as he could to Jack.

"Putting aside hope and faith we're been trying to figure out what happened," Owen began.

"What did you see?" Jack asked as their eyes were drawn to Ianto who was drinking his hot chocolate, using a desert spoon and with loud sips making his enjoyment evident.

"We saw Ianto close his eyes and in an instant he appeared on the screen and the garden on the screen reformed around him," Owen replied.

"Ianto, can you tell us what happened?" Geoff asked.

"I was real scared. When I saw Jack I knew he needed a hug and a kiss. When I laid down I heard the song. It sang to me."

"Song?" Owen queried and the Doctor looked curious as he sipped his tea

"It's my very special song from when I was in the bad first place." Ianto began to hum tunelessly. "I heard the song and then it did something funny."

"Funny?" Geoff repeated.

"Funny because it started saying words. The words said close your eyes." Ianto closed his eyes. 'Then the words said 'open your eyes'." And he opened his eyes. "When I did I was in the garden. Jack knows the song too."

Everyone looked at Jack.

"When I was on the Valiant I heard the same song, and in the garden just before Ianto appeared," Jack explained.

"So you both heard the same song?" Geoff asked Jack and saw him nod.

"Clever old girl," the Doctor said quietly.

"I think that needs deserves an explanation," Owen said turning to the Doctor, curious at his comment.

The Doctor cleared his throat. "The TARDIS is not an object; she is a living entity, grown and nurtured. As each TARDIS grows they develop an inner emotional awareness. She is a conscious being. In this case she was forced to become the centre of the paradox. Her very matrix was used against her will."
“That sounds like a kind of rape?”

The Doctor inclined his head towards Geoff who had made the comment. "In a sense; helpless, bound, forced to do the will of another. She reached out and touched the minds of those she saw suffering along with her and sang to them, offering them comfort in the only way she could," the Doctor replied. "She is driven to help because she has become imbued with my will." He looked around at the questioning faces. "It happens over a long period of time, if a Time Lord and TARDIS are together for a sustained time." A small smile played across his lips. "In this case I suspect she reached out of her own volition."

Geoff nodded as he recalled the conversation he had had with Jack a few weeks previous speculating that the Doctor was in a relationship with his time ship because of the way he treated her.

"So she reached out to help in the only way she could, reached out on an empathic and telepathic level, and sang," Owen spoke.

"When I was in the dark, I was very scared. I thought I would never see the outside again. I heard the song; it sang and sang and I saw pictures and they made me happy because I wasn't in the dark anymore," Ianto said and Jack put his arm around Ianto who leaned into him.

"Do you recall this from your time on the Valiant?" Geoff now asked Jack and saw him nod.

"It was in the back of my mind. It was like a soft melody that you can't quite remember but it's there, but not there." He shook his head. "Sorry I'm not explaining this very well. It was only when I was in the garden today that I recalled the song fully," Jack told them.

"I'm curious," the Doctor interrupted. "You said the song had words."

Jack shook his head. "I never heard any words, only the melody."

"I heard words. The words told me loads of special things." Ianto smiled as he now handed his mug to Tosh.

"Did she always speak to you in words?" the Doctor asked.

"No. When I was in the first bad place I only heard the song. It was only today I heard words."

"Curious," the Doctor commented and sat back in contemplation.

"The words were funny, like they were words but not words."

"Like images?" Owen checked.

"No silly, I know what a picture looks like. Sometimes when I was in the first bad place the song made pictures that made me happy. But these were words." Ianto paused as he thought. "Words that were different."

The Doctor leaned forward and smiled. "I think I understand. The words were not like we are speaking here in English but you could understand them?"

"Yes. Like in the 'Hobbit' when Bilbo speaks different words than the dwarfs," Ianto agreed.

"Clever old girl," the Doctor repeated his earlier statement. "So she sang in words," he added a few moments later.

"Yes; some were things like close your eyes, open your eyes. And others were more tricky," Ianto
"Tricky how?" Owen now asked and saw Ianto still in concentration.

"When we were lying in the swinging thing under the tree and I was holding Jack, he fell asleep. I started to hear very big words. I had to really listen and they had to be done over and over loads of times so I wouldn't forget. The words said I had to help Jack escape and that was the easy bit. The words said it was like one of my dreams so I would know what to do. The garden had to be closed and the bad man would chase us and we had to fight our way out and Myfanwy would help." Jack took Ianto's hand. "The words said Jack would get scared when the garden got smaller but not to be sad because we have a real garden." He sat back and closed his eyes.

"And the words said..." he struggled, "the words said it was very important that I tell Jack and the man I don't like that the garden is gone forever but I was to say the real garden is still here. Everything is now real." He creased his forehead as he thought then opened his eyes and looked at Geoff

"I don't like you. Every time you come something bad happens. I told the words that I don't like you but the words said you were a good man and you were trying to help Jack get better. They said you had helped me get better. I had big row with the words but they said you were the man that would help Jack. And I had to say this word for word, because it's very important." He closed his eyes.

"The memories are locked deep inside Jack but they are now safe to come out because the garden is gone."

"I'm sorry you don't like me Ianto. I like you very much. I think you are an amazing man. I thank you very much for being able to put aside your dislike of me to help Jack," Geoff said as Jack put his arm around Ianto in support.

"That's very big of you," Owen said in support and saw Ianto pull himself up a little straighter.

"The words said I should trust you because she said that you would help Jack get better," Ianto said looking at Geoff.

"Was there any more to the message?" Owen asked quietly.

"The garden is closed. Everything Jack needs is now set in place. It's safe for the memories to come out. That Jack would need loads of love, hugs, kisses and looking after. And the words said I would be a great help, because Jack needs me. And I told the words that I would love Jack forever and ever."

"I think I understand," Geoff said as he worked through Ianto's statement. "Can I explain a little about the creation of the garden in your mind?" He looked at Jack, who nodded.

"It sounds like the garden we witnessed, as wonderful as it was, was a kind of trap. It means no matter how careful we were, every time we accessed any of your repressed memories your subconscious would always steer you towards the garden as a place of safety. Like a sort of feedback loop. We saw it happen with just one spoken word. It was an emergency shelter created without the normal checks and balances. As a consequence it had major inherent flaws because it was dependant on Ianto. Once the Ianto in your mind fused with the real Ianto Jones, it meant the garden in your mind would fall apart if you ever returned. The TARDIS, by somehow allowing Jack and Ianto's consciousnesses to interlink, halted the disintegration allowing the garden to reform. Due to the fragile nature of the psychic boundaries I suspect that it would have been impossible for Jack to escape without help. Once escaped, the garden has either been removed or sealed off somehow." Geoff smiled "Which means moving forward. We can now safely release your memories."
"He would have to stay forever. The words said only I could get him out. That it would be like one of my dreams. And I have one dream where I always escape and beat the bad man and it always has Jack in it," Ianto told him.

"Wow," Owen said.

"Clever girl," the Doctor said as a small smile crept onto his lips. His thoughts were interrupted when he heard a scratching noise. Turning he saw the ferret was awake and had his feet on the bars of his cage and was looking into the room with an air of excitement.

Ianto gasped when he saw him. "Billy, you have been such a good boy Jack has promised you one of his socks."

Jack leant down and pulled off the sock from his left foot and handed it over. Ianto leaned in and kissed him.

"Excuse me," Ianto said moving to the cage. "I need to give Billy his reward." He opened he cage and the animal bounded out. Kneeling on the floor Ianto held out the sock.

With clear and obvious joy, Billy snatched the sock and in a leap backwards took off towards the kitchen with leaps and bounds.

"Billy thinks Jack has the best stinky feet in the world," Ianto told them nodding.


"You'll be the first I'll call if ferret aliens ever fall though the Rift," Owen joked.

"Well, there are the Mustelaides on Signi Eight," the Doctor said seriously.

Owen rolled his eyes. "Are you telling me that there is a race of beings out there that are like ferrets? Next you're telling me they mad for socks…"

His arms wrapped around Ianto Jack settled making himself more comfortable. Ianto stirred slightly and Jack drew him closer. Jack loved this moment as they fell asleep, Ianto safe in his arms, knowing nothing could hurt either of them in this moment. A warm glow began to grow in his chest. It was overwhelming in its intensity. It was one of utter wellbeing. He couldn't fathom it; it felt was so strange, alien. It took several more moments before it came to him. He was feeling happy. A huge smile grew on his face. He couldn't recall the last time he had felt this happy. He wracked his brains trying to think why he was so happy but nothing came to him. A thought came to him 'Not without reason.' Today he had visited his sanctuary, been rescued and seen the worst monster in the universe defeated in the company of the man he loved. It was like a connection had been forged within him. He could feel the change deep within himself; he could sense it. Several more moments passed when it came to him. He had given up something.

He kissed Ianto on his forehead and Ianto snuggled in. What could it be that he had given up that could make him so happy? His eyes flew open... it was control. He had given over his control. He has been trying to control himself, his fears, and the terrible darkness that threatened to overwhelm him. That control had become all consuming. In allowing Ianto to rescue him, he had given over his control and he had escaped. Not only had the 'Monster' that had haunted him in the form of the Master had been defeated; it had been destroyed, eaten alive. Jack felt a wave of relief at the memory. For the first time he had seen the Master beaten; if that could happen then there was a way out. He could move forward at last because he could give over the control of his therapy to Geoff. A huge weight lifted off him and he felt momentarily dizzy.
There was so much to deal with but now he knew he had the inner reserves to face it because he knew he could overcome it. He had been witness to it. He had reached his garden, and instead of being pulled back into torture he had escaped, and seen the Master destroyed.

All he needed was Ianto, his hero, by his side, lightsaber in hand, riding the mighty Myfanwy. He felt a momentary loss of the garden in mind and Ianto's words came to him, the garden was real, a few feet away, a living sanctuary. A refuge from the dark times to come as he now began the long journey to recovery. A tear formed and he kissed Ianto again.

"I know you can't hear me but I love you and I bless the day you came crashing into my life. I'm not sure what I did to deserve you. I am so grateful."

"You're welcome," he heard Ianto murmur.

Smiling Jack held him close and he began to make plans. Winter was coming, and if he worked hard together with Geoff spring would be here soon and he would have enough energy to work in his garden. And he would fill it with beauty, butterflies…and Ianto.
Questions!

Tosh picked up the first wedding magazine from the pile she had set up on the kitchen table. They had arrived that morning from her long-time girlfriend Samantha. When Samantha had asked for her help and said she would send up some magazine she wasn't expecting a box of twenty. They were filled with post-it notes with questions which made it clear confusion reigned. It was surprising because normally her stalwart friend knew her own mind. Samantha was one of those lucky people who, when faced with a choice just could make her mind up in an instant. She never had doubts. Getting married however seemed to have unhinged this part of her personality. There was so much choice she couldn't choose. Should she wear white? Have a carriage? Limo? How many bridesmaids? Groomsmen? Should she have a theme? If so, what sort? Colours, flowers, cake; who to invite? Sit down meal or buffet? Doves, photographs, venues, traditional, more laid back...the list was endless. Tosh turned the page.

A half hour had passed when Tosh heard Ianto enter the room. She looked up and saw a look of serious purpose on his face. Tosh recognised the look; it was a particular glint in Ianto's eye and was accompanied by a set look to his jaw. Tosh knew what it meant and her stomach twisted as she heard the words, "I want to do some cooking."

Ianto loved to cook, but she wondered if he had always been such a disaster in the kitchen. When they were at Torchwood together he was renowned for his wonderful coffee but she noted he always brought in food already prepared. She recalled Jack had made a few comments about Ianto's non-existent cooking ability. At the time she had thought it was good-natured ribbing. As she thought about it now Jack had always managed to divert offers of a home cooked at Ianto's into a restaurant meal.

Ianto did try and he could help prepare, peeling carrots, or a make hot drinks, sandwiches and mashed potatoes. It was the basics and he loved helping in any way he could. However anything complicated, and even with supervision, things went wrong.

"And what were you thinking?" Tosh asked cautiously hoping he wasn't going to say the dreaded word.

Ianto clapped his hands together. "I want to make a cake."

Tosh felt a lump of dread settle in her stomach because no matter how much effort or care Ianto put in he had the hand of death when it came to cooking cakes. His failures were legendary. Jack had joked just the day before that they should just throw the ingredients in the bin at least that way they save on the power. Even Marigold had turned up her nose at his last effort. It had taken a week of rain before it had finally dissolved into the ground. It was so heavy Tosh was convinced the birds wouldn't eat it because they knew flight would be impossible if they did. "What sort of cake?"

"A fruit cake!" he declared. "Billy loves dried fruit and we are going out tomorrow afternoon to my first 'Ferret Club' meeting I was thinking I could make one for all the ferrets."

"That's very thoughtful." Her mind went over the list of ferret products Ianto had, hoping there was one for severe indigestion.

Ianto pulled open one of the kitchen drawers, took out a large recipe book and handed it to her. She looked up the index, to see if there was a recipe that Ianto couldn't ruin.

"What about this one?" She pointed out a recipe they hadn't tried before.
"Boiled fruit cake," he read out the title, thought for a moment then nodded. "I think Billy will really like that because he loves raisins. And if Billy likes raisins then the other ferrets will like them too and by bringing a cake all the other ferrets will be his friend." He took breath and looked at Tosh. "It's very important because this is his very first real play day where he will meet other ferrets. I would really like it if he had a friend and if I take a cake we might get to go again."

With care they went down the list of ingredients and started to lay them out on the bench.

"There is something I always wanted to ask you." Tosh directed Ianto to add all the dried fruit they had measured out into a saucepan. "Why does he have such a fancy name?"

"Billy?"

"No. 'Sir Henry Bilbo Baggins the Third'?"

Ianto became dreamy. "When I was looking through the paper and I saw his picture, words came in my head. They said, 'love me, feed me, protect me', and then when I saw him for real I knew his name was 'Sir Henry Bilbo Baggins the Third'. "

"It's a very fancy name," Tosh said as she got Ianto to carefully measure out the sugar.

"That's because he deserves a fancy name so no one can ever forget him."

"Trust me Ianto; no one who ever met Billy could ever forget him."

Ianto added the sugar along with butter and juice to join the other ingredients in the saucepan. "I love him very much and he loves me. We play and chase each other. He hides things and he makes me laugh every day."

"Now we need to turn the heat to low," Tosh instructed and watched as Ianto carefully turned the knob to a low heat.

"We had better be careful because last time the cake came out real bad, and I want this one to be extra special good," Ianto told her.

"Well, you stand there and watch it come to the boil and give it a quick stir." She handed him a wooden spoon.

Ianto immediately attacked the mixture with vigour, almost causing some of the contents to spill. "Gently," she demonstrated.

With Ianto settled she tidied the kitchen and returned to her magazines.

"That's a looks interesting Tosh, it's got loads of people all dressed up," Ianto said looking over her shoulder and stirred the contents of the saucepan gently.

"They're wedding magazines," Tosh said not paying any attention as she read the first post-it note which had one word on it: 'HELP!'

"What's a wedding?"

"It's where two people who love each other very much get together and have a big party. First they say special words that tell everyone how much they love each other," she explained. She was about say more when the magazine was lifted out of her hands.

"Everyone is dressed up real fancy. I don't think I've seen clothes like that before," Ianto said
showing her the picture. Tosh stood and went to stand next to him

"They are wearing special wedding clothes. Everyone dresses up because it's such a huge moment in someone's life." She pointed at each person in term. "She's the bride; her dress is all in white. This is the groom. It's the bride and groom who are getting married. Bridesmaids, they help the bride; groomsmen, they help the groom."

She heard the saucepan boil over and moved over to rescue it. As she left the saucepan to cool Ianto sat down at the table examining each picture in-depth, totally absorbed. Tosh joined him and picked up the next magazine on the pile and turned to the next post-it note.

An hour had passed before they realised it. Tosh stood to check the contents of the saucepan had cooled enough to add the eggs and flour. Ianto came to join her and she managed to divert his attention by getting him to grease and paper the tin. She got him to stir the mixture a couple of times, trying to temper his enthusiasm for giving it a thorough thrashing. Scraping the bowl they tipped the contents into the tin. Carefully Ianto placed it in the oven and Tosh set the timer.

Washing up Tosh could see that Ianto was deep in thought, biting his lower lip. "How do you know when to make a wedding?" Ianto asked slowly.

"That's a good question. Normally when two people have been dating, hopefully they fall in love. They then decide that they want everyone to know how much they love each other. It's like a big coming out party where you tell everyone how serious they are about each other. It means they want spend your whole lives together as a couple."

"What's a couple?"

"It sort of an unofficial togetherness. When people are in love they start doing things together. The start sharing each other's lives very closely …"

Ianto interrupted. "What sort of things do they share?"

"Sometimes it can be sharing what they do. For example one person might like running so the other person might join in or just cheer the other person on but other times..." she stopped as thought about how to explain this. "It's sort of the next stage on from dating."

Ianto eyes widened." I asked Jack out on a date and we went to the café. He said yes because he thinks I'm handsome. We got all dressed up. Jack drove so we could keep all our clothes nice because it had rained and there was a lot of puddles in the lane. We held hands, and later we kissed loads in the car." He stopped. "So is being a couple the next stage on from dating?"

"Yes. You move in together, live in the same house and share a bedroom. They care and support each other."

"I live here with Jack. Jack said this is my house. I don't really understand what that means but he said it belongs to both him and me. He showed me a massive load of papers with big words. I got confused but Jack read some them and showed me mine and Jack's name. He said it means this is my house I own it along with him. Does that make us a couple?" He looked at her.

"Yes, and you are also lovers. I mean you share a bed and practice," she nudged him and Ianto smiled.

"Yes we do! And we have loads of cuddles." Ianto turned back to the magazine and slowly turned a page. "So two people date, then fall in love and become a couple where they move in, and are lovers. They do loads of practice," he said more to himself as if confirming the sequence of how this
worked. "How does everyone in these books," Ianto turned to the page where people had sent in typical group pictures of family and friends at a wedding," know when to have a wedding?

"They just do," Tosh said.

"So everyone decides when two people fall in love, date and becomes a couple, there should have a wedding."

"Not quite. It's the couple in love that decide they want to make their feelings known to everyone. It's called commitment."

"That's a big word."

"It means they are choosing to spend your whole lives together. Part of that is wanting to share it with all your family and friends. It's a declaration to the whole world how much they mean to each other." Tosh turned a page.

"So it's a big huge love thing?"

"Oh yes very much so. It's the ultimate expression of love. You love each other so much that you want to spend your lives together and you are joining with each other so that you become one."

"Have you ever had a wedding?" Ianto asked.

Tosh shook her head. "I would love to but so far I've not been very lucky."

"That's sad Tosh. I think you should fall in love and have a wedding."

"Well first I need to meet someone and go out on a date."

"You like Owen maybe you should ask him." Ianto told her.

"Well once I get back to Cardiff…"

"You should ask him next time he comes. Go to the café. If you ask nicely Maureen will put maple syrup on your ice cream."

"I will keep that in mind," Tosh added.

"What does ultimate mean?"

"In the case of weddings it means the one biggest, most perfect thing."

"So if you love someone the best in the whole world you get all dressed up and have a huge party then tell everyone how you love each other," Ianto reflected back his understanding.

"Yes."

"But how do you get to a wedding? How does that work? I mean does everyone just decide and say you should have a wedding?"

"Well sometimes the couple, the two people in love, decide together. Normally one or the other asks the other to marry them."

Ianto went still and looked at her. "How?"
"There are lots of ways. Normally the one doing the asking set up a romantic evening and then ask them."

"Like how?"

"Well it doesn't have to be a romantic evening but a special time where the other person asks. They set it up to be special," she struggled to explain.

"But what do you say?"

"Well you say, 'Will you marry me?' and then you offer your lover a token, normally a ring."

"A ring?"

Tosh lifted up her hand for Ianto to examine the one small ring she wore. "You buy a special ring called an engagement ring. It means you are engaged. Then you organise a wedding."

"Who wears the ring?"

"Normally it's the person who says yes," Tosh replied.

"How do you get a ring?"

"Normally it's from a jeweller's." She saw Ianto's look of confusion. "It's a shop you buy rings and jewellery." Tosh opened the magazine to find a picture filled with rings.

"So if you love someone very much and you want to spend your life with them and want them to know how much you love them you ask them to marry you. You give them a ring as a kind of promise that it will happen. And if they love you back they will say yes and wear the ring," Ianto summed up and Tosh nodded.

"So what happens at a wedding?" Ianto asked after several moments passed.

"Well it depends on what kind of wedding you want," Tosh began. "That's why my friend Samantha sent all these up because there are so many things that you can do for a wedding. What's important is the couple getting married have the kind of wedding they want. Everyone makes it special just for them. Sort of mix and match." She could see Ianto working this through.

Later that afternoon Ianto sat cross legged out on the floor, the magazines spread around him. He had been silent for a considerable time for which Tosh was very grateful. She had never known Ianto to ask so many consecutive questions in one go. She rubbed her forehead to ease the pain.

She saw the TARDIS materialise. Standing she moved to open the French doors as Jack reached them.

"Good session?" She moved as Jack passed then collapsed on the sofa in an exaggerated heap.

"Heavy, but productive," he replied and looked around the room, his gaze settling on Ianto. "What have you been up to?"

"Nothing I'm just helping Tosh," Ianto answered very quickly bringing all the magazines together and pushing them behind himself.

"And we made a cake," Tosh told him and she saw Jack flinch and look at her, alarmed.

"It turned out well," she assured him and Jack sank back.
"It's for tomorrow. I wanted to make a fruit cake for Billy's first play date. I really want him to make friends so we can go back another time," Ianto said and he moved to next to Jack on the sofa. "Are you really okay? I always get a bit worried when you go in the TARDIS," Ianto asked and put his arms around Jack.

"Yes I am. It all went well." Jack looked towards the garden kissing the top of Ianto's head.

"And you made a cake?"

"Yes it's a boiled fruit cake but I got busy with something and Tosh had to finish it off." Ianto looked across as Tosh gave him the thumbs up and he smuggled into Jack.

"Busy?"

"Very," Ianto replied.

Hearing the toot of a horn Tosh opened the door to see Ianto cradling Billy who was stretched out fast asleep along his forearm. There was the sound of a horn behind him and he waved his hand.

"Did you have a good time?"

"Yes we did. Billy made loads of friends. Ferrets make friends very quickly. There was Whiskey, and Bobby, George and Tusken; those were just the boys. There was Rascal, Beauty, and Dasher; those were the girls. I was a bit worried at first in case the other ferrets didn't like him. I put him down and after a lot of sniffing each other's bums they then started playing. I found out that they sniff their bums then they lick each other's necks and try to sort each other out." He laughed. "It was so funny; Billy was trying to walk with Whiskey, Bobby and Tusken on top of him. Then Billy and the others did the same to Whiskey. He played so much he's all tuckered out. He fell asleep ages ago," he said gently easing him onto his hammock.

"How did they like the cake?" she asked as Ianto tucked a small blanket around him.

"Oh they loved it!" he declared. "It was big hit, I put the cake down on the floor and they went right for it." He started laughing as he tried to speak. "They made such a mess. There was cake everywhere; it was all over the floor, along the hall. Whiskey had a right dig at it. It was hilarious they hid bits all over the place. That's why I'm a bit late I stayed to help clean up," he told her.

"So did you meet lots of nice people?"

"Yes I did. They are all as mad as I am. We talked and talked and talked. I told them all about how naughty Billy was and what he gets up to and how much he love Jack's socks. And they told me all about how naughty their ferrets were. We talked about what food was good, and treats and oils. It was so interesting."

"So are you going to join the club?"

"Oh yes I am. I handed over my ten pounds." He took out his wallet and showed her the receipt. "I get sent a newsletter every two months and a card with my name and a number on it. I am member 138. It will have a special plastic cover. It will come in the mail. I've even made a special place for it." He opened his wallet to show her the slot. "Next time we're meant to meet at Gary's house. But he has to ask his mum first. I also got given a list with everyone's names and telephone numbers so we can ring and talk to each other." He took a deep breath and pointed to himself proudly. "And I am now on that list."

"It sounds like you had a wonderful time," Tosh smiled as Ianto now unpacked his backpack.
"Is Jack upstairs asleep?" he asked quietly looking around to make sure they were alone. "I have something to ask you and I didn't want Jack to know what I am asking." Ianto looked serious and closed the hall door.

"It's about weddings." Tosh braced herself. She had hoped he had finally run out of questions. He had been relentless and had just had the equivalent of the most intense breakdown of romantic love, weddings and all that it entailed in less the 24 hours. "When I was looking through all the magazines all the wedding things was between ladies and men. Does that mean only ladies and men can get married?"

Tosh blinked and thought fast on her feet. "No, love is love. If two people love each other and they want to they get married. It can be same sex couples, like two men or two women or like my friend Samantha, who is a lady, is marrying a man." Tosh saw him take a deep breath. "The magazines have mostly men and women because there are not as many men who marry each other but there are many websites we could go to that deal just with two men getting married or two ladies."

Ianto looked visibly relieved at her words. "I was a bit worried that maybe only ladies and men could get married, because there was nothing in the magazines that had two men. Because that wouldn't be fair if two men loved each other and wanted to get married and everyone else could."

Opening the door he double-checked they were alone closing he looked serious. "Do you think Jack will say yes if I asked him to marry me?"

Tosh stared at him for a moment then gave herself a mental smack on the head as she realised every question Ianto had asked had been leading to this. Her thoughts went to how Jack had held Ianto in his arms almost continually for nine months. Filled his life with the love and constancy he so desperately needed and even put up with having his socks stolen out of his deep and abiding love of this man. "Yes I think he will."

Ianto relaxed. "I think so too but I thought I had better check." Ianto went over to his desk and pulled out a pad of paper. She could see it was filled with list that filled every line. Ianto smoothed out the top sheet. "First I have to choose a ring. I don't want it to be girly so I drew this," He flipped over the page and showed her a drawing of a flat band of gold with a small indented heart with a diamond in it.

"I want to organise a spring wedding in the garden. I want it to be spring because Jack said he would be a bit better then and spring means new beginnings. And the garden is very special. Billy is going to be the ring bearer. I'm going to ask Mac to give me away. I want to invite all my friends like Morag, Marigold and Mr and Mrs Morgan, you and Owen even the Doctor can come and loads of other people I have on my list. And I want to tell everyone I love Jack with all my heart so everyone knows and I am going to love him forever and ever."

A tear trickled down Tosh's face. "I think that will be beautiful," she burst out and hugged him.

"Have I made you sad?" Ianto hugged her back, confused.

"No, it's that people cry lots at weddings because they are so happy." She took out a tissue and blew her nose.

"I had better add tissues to my list," Ianto said.

"Hey if there's a group hug I want in," Jack said walking into the room.

"Is everything okay?" he asked seeing Tosh looked flushed and appeared to be crying.
"Jack, everything is the most wonderful it is possible to be," she dabbed her eyes with a handkerchief, "with more wonderful to come,"

"I like that," Jack said putting his arms around them. "More wonderful to come."

"Extra special exciting wonderful to come," Ianto agreed.

Jack became cautious. "We're not talking more ferrets here are we?"

Ianto shook his head. "No, something even better," he kissed Jack's cheek.

"That's alright then," Jack agreed as he gave Ianto a huge hug.
Joy to the World

Ianto lay in bed, looking at the ceiling, trying to remain as still as possible. He was so excited he could hardly contain himself. He looked at the clock. It was too early to get up. Today was going to be huge. He closed his eyes as he tried to calm down; it was taking all his patience to lay here and keep still. He wanted to run up and down the stairs, race into every room, round the garden, down the lane then back again, then run up and then down the stairs a few times more.

Today was Christmas Day. Christmas was awesome. He wasn't sure he fully understood what Christmas was about. He had been read the Christmas story; it was a about a special baby, who had been born in a barn with all the animals. There had been some sort of star and three wise men with presents, 'Frankenstein, mirth and cold' and they weighed the baby in a manger whatever that was. His mum and dad were there because there was no room at the Inn. Jack had explained this was like a hotel. They were on their way to 'Nas' are 'us' with a donkey because everyone had to be counted. Ianto was puzzled he could understand the hotel being full in summer because of all the summer visitors. But this was in the winter the hotel would be empty and even if was full there was bed and breakfast places like Mrs McCormack's. And even if all the bed and breakfast places had been full someone on the Island would have offered them a place to stay. It was very strange how they had ended up in a barn, even one as comfortable as Mr Morgan's. That's where Marigold was right now all tucked up in straw, all warm along with the sheep. Maybe there were no bed and breakfast places then because it was such a long time ago. That didn't matter because everyone still remembered and had a huge party.

Christmas was amazing. For a start there were special songs you could sing along too. There was so many; Tosh had ordered him some Christmas CD’s. His favourite song was 'Jingle Bells'. Jack made him laugh because every time he played that song, Jack kept calling out 'the bells, the bells' no matter where he was in the house,he was so funny.

Other than the special baby there was a man who brought presents. He was all dressed in red and called Father Christmas. He had rain-deer with horns on their heads. He wondered if they liked being all wet or if it just rained a lot around them making them all wet. One had a nose that was all shiny like a red glowing ball. He felt really sad for Rudolph the way the other rain-deer made fun of him but then it got all foggy and his shiny nose had helped find the way. Ianto understood about fog. Sometimes it got so foggy you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. So having a shiny nose would be right useful.

Father Christmas lived at the North Pole, which was north and there was a big pole with red stripes on it like a candy cane. The pole was there to make sure everyone knew it was the top of the world. He lived there with elves, who were little creatures who made presents for all the children. He wondered if Father Christmas got lonely. It must be hard to meet someone who was not an elf. The North Pole very cold...he had a thought, maybe that what the wise man had given the baby in the barn, snow, that was cold or maybe ice cubes. Very strange present when you think about it but maybe cold things were more important long ago. He nodded to himself and wondered if Father Christmas had to worry about polar bears because they lived at the North Pole as well. He hoped none of the elves got eaten because polar bears were so big and elves were so small. It must be very annoying trying to make presents and having to worry about bears so maybe they had some kind of bear alarm.

Father Christmas was very kind because once the presents were made he took them to all the children. He must have some sort of magic to be able to visit everyone's house in one night. Ianto had gotten a little worried that Father Christmas might set off the alarms if he wanted to drop off any
gifts. Jack has assured him he only visited children and as there were only grown-ups here they would buy each other presents instead. Ianto thought that was a good idea because Father Christmas had enough to to.

He wished Tosh could have stayed for Christmas because she was his best friend but she had been there a while and needed to go back because she was going to have Christmas with her family. He had made sure he had given her his presents before they left. There was one from him, one from 'Billy', one from Jack and loads more from the people in the village. There had been so many he had to help her carry them to the magic blue box.

As she had left two new people had come to stay to help out: Gwen and Rhys. He had been a bit worried to begin with because they were new people. Then he remembered they had given him Lego on his birthday and the wonderful crocodile card so he knew he was going to like them. He had given Rhys and Gwen a huge hug to say thank you for the Lego and the card. Then he had helped them get all settled. Jack had bought a new bed so they could sleep in it together. The bed just fitted in the spare room and was real comfy. Ianto had bounced up and down on it just to double check. He had helped Tosh make it up all nice using his most favourite bedding that was all red and covered in racing cars.

Since they had arrived they had been very busy and had done loads of cooking; mince pies and sausage rolls and he had made sure they made Jack favourite, 'banana cream pie'. Gwen had never heard of it and had had to look up the recipe. He had assured her it was Jack's absolute favourite. There was a turkey which they were going to roast. The turkey was huge. He had never known there were giant chickens. Rhys had told him they take a long time to cook so Rhys was going to get up early to put it in the oven.

Last night Gwen had made something called stuffing. Ianto thought that was so funny; stuffing and then you stuffed the stuffing into the turkey. It had breadcrumbs, apples, and walnuts in it. He told Gwen that he thought it was very strange when she had pointed out he was the man who had put maple syrup on a cheese omelette.

He had agreed with her that maple syrup and cheese did not work but she has assured him this would taste lovely. He knew some things just worked and he would give it a try. Then he had shared his what's best with maple syrup list. He was so proud; Rhys said it was very impressive that meant extra special good. He liked Rhys, he drove a big truck. Rhys had shown him loads of pictures from the 'Harwoods' website. His trucks had 'Harwoods' written on the sides and Rhys drove them all over England delivering things. Not only that; he gave great hugs and even played with Billy.

It was going to be such a big day. Mac was coming to share lunch and so was the nice man with the magic blue box who given him the tin of maple syrup sweeties, called the Doctor. Gwen said they would pull out the big table and lay it out all special. It was going to be a sit down dinner with a table cloth and everything laid out all nice.

Along with the turkey there was going to be roast potatoes, gravy, Brussels sprouts, cranberries sauce, parsnips, and bread sauce. Afterwards there was Christmas pudding and custard, with loads of sweeties in special boxes and something called Turkish Delight. There was also some special cracker things which he had no idea were for. He had shaken one and it sounded like it had something inside; he had asked Rhys and he had told him they were for Christmas dinner. Everyone got one and the person opposite you pulled the other end and got a surprise. This was why Ianto loved Christmas, there were so many surprises.

When they weren't cooking they had filled the house with decorations. Ianto had made paper chains which Rhys had helped him put up. There was even a real tree in the house, it smelt lovely but kept
dropping needles on the floor. Rhys said it would go all brown unless the kept the water level up. Right now it was still green. He had got a bit worried but Rhys said it would okay for at least two weeks, so that was okay. The tree was now covered with loads of special things called ornaments. There were special balls that were very delicate. It meant you had be careful because they broke real easy. Then they had put on tinsel, ribbons, and little teddies with wings that dangled down. Finally Jack had put the angel Ianto had made special on the top. It was all sparkly red and gold. It had taken him ages to make it because Billy kept stealing his glue pen and tipping over the sparkles. It was so pretty. When it was all finished Rhys had turned the main room lights off and then turned on the lights on the tree. Ianto had gasped as the room filled with colours as the lights went all blinky on and off.

Billy was a rascal because he kept climbing up the tree. Firstly he made the tree shake from side to side and Ianto thought it was going to tip over. He had made Ianto laugh out loud because his face had poked out from one of the braches and he looked like a naughty ornament. Secondly he kept trying to steal the lights and if he wasn't doing that he was drinking the tree water. Ianto knew he only drank it because he couldn't tip it over no matter how hard he tried, little scamp! Gwen had called Billy a pest when kept digging at the presents so Ianto had put them up high until everyone had gone to bed then put them back. He wondered what his presents were. He had checked them all when he put them back under the tree. There were so many with his name on them. Just before he went to bed he had spent ages looking and shaking each one gently trying to guess what they were.

He had already had one present early because Jack had given it to him last night. Jack had told him it was not something he could wrap up. Jack was right; it was the best present ever, even better than Lego. It was the sort of present you could do over and over and Jack said he could have another one tonight.

As much has he loved practicing this was the best practice ever. They had kissed loads then Jack had told him to just lay back and enjoy himself. At first he was a bit confused because he liked it when they kissed each other. Then Jack kissed his penis; it had been a long slow kiss, then fast, then slow again, with loads of different bits in-between. It lasted for ages and ended with the best orgasm ever. Jack thought of the best things and Ianto couldn't wait to try kissing Jack's.

He felt Jack stir and tried to hold still. Today was the day! He had thought very hard about when to ask Jack to marry him. He had come up with loads of ideas but nothing seemed right. Then he had found out about Christmas. Christmas was perfect, everything was all decorated and there was a special meal. And if he gave Jack a special present no one would feel they were missing out because they would all have presents of their own. He couldn't have come up with a time or place more special than Christmas Day if he had tried and he had.

Right now Jack's present was all hidden. He had had it made special with an inscription and everything. It had arrived the other day by special delivery. Rhys had kept Jack busy so he didn't see. Gwen had asked him how Ianto knew it would fit. He told her that he was going to try and measure Jack's finger when Jack was asleep. He was worried Jack might wake up, but then Tosh had an idea and talked to the Doctor. He wasn't sure exactly how but they had worked it out. He felt a flutter in his stomach so he lay and practiced the words in head to make sure he had them just right.

Jack turned over and opened his eyes to see Ianto, wide-eyed, looking at him. "Hello wonderful," Jack said sleepily.

"I am so excited. It's finally Christmas Day," Ianto said with a tremor in his voice. Jack gave him a hug. "I hope you like your present."

"I know I will," Jack told him, curious to what Ianto had planned. He was not sure what to expect.
There had been an air of excited anticipation for weeks that seemed to grow daily. He knew something had been delivered and there was lots of whisperings and conversations which stopped whenever he came into the room. At first he had been worried Ianto had planned a brother or sister for Billy, but Tosh has assured him his surprise was a ferret-free zone. It was all part of that 'more wonderful to come' that had had Tosh in tears. What sort of wonderful he couldn't even begin to imagine; well today he would find out. His current theory was it was garden-related. However it couldn't be large or it was well hidden because no amount of careful fossicking had revealed what it was.

"Tosh helped me, we had to order it in special and even the Doctor helped," Ianto declared.

Jack looked intrigued "The Doctor?"

"Yes, he helped me in a very special way," Ianto admitted. "But it was Tosh's idea to ask him for help." Jack shook his head as the mystery of what was going on deepened.

"I hope you like your present," Jack said a few moments later.

"Oh, I did, it was awesome," Ianto told him, wide-eyed, biting his lower lip.

"I meant the one under the tree," Jack teased. Ianto got up on one elbow to say something more when they heard a tap on the door. The door opened and Rhys popped his head around.

"It's Christmas; cup a tea, sausage rolls, mince pies and opening presents," he declared. Ianto jumped out of bed and grabbed his dressing gown then helped push Jack out of bed.

Yawning, Gwen took a good sip of her tea. It had been years since she had gotten up this early on Christmas morning. The whole of Christmas had become a bloody chore. Christmas shopping seemed to bring out the worst in people and she didn't even want to think about grocery shopping. Over crowded supermarkets with overloaded trollies being pushed by frazzled looking individuals or couples arguing over what wine to buy. Long queues at the checkout stuck behind some 400 pound man who didn't realise the importance of personal hygiene; trapped from behind by a woman with a screaming bunch of unruly children, whose child rearing skills seemed to consist of dire threats and swarms of smacks which had long ceased to be effective; children climbing all over the displays asking for more, bellowing their lungs out.

If you could spend Christmas with friends it would make all the hard work worth it. But no, you had to put up with visiting the very people you tried to avoid the other 364 days of the year. A day of forced conversations followed by uncomfortable silences, trying to avoid any controversial topic which in truth was everything. It was normally a day of overeating, drinking, and watching the Christmas specials on television.

Instead it had been wonderful. Ianto's first true Christmas. He was full of sheer exuberance which made her see the event with new eyes. Every moment of their time here had been magical. No major supermarkets here, it was all so personal. Morag's shop was like Aladdin's cave. It seemed she had stocked it with the best Christmas fare on offer. Everyone was so organised. You worked out what you wanted, gave your list to Morag and it was all delivered. God it was wonderful.

The whole Island seemed to get in the spirit, with every door sporting the most wonderful wreaths. She and Rhys been invited to several Christmas events including a village carol sing off. There had been to a Christmas pudding hurling competition. Rhys had managed to hurl a Christmas pudding 30 feet, coming in a respectable tenth.

Every event had been followed by a supper, which appeared to involve every cook trying to outdo
each other. She had never seen so much food. It was all so different and she had loved every moment. And today a huge surprise for Jack. It was so exciting.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the French doors. She looked up to see a familiar face. She got up and slid the door open.

"I'm not late am I?" the Doctor said entering with his arms full of presents.

"Tea's in the kitchen, Rhys is going to bringing some warmed mince pies and sausage rolls in just a moment," she said as he placed the presents under the tree.

Jack walked in. "You made it," Jack pulled the Doctor into a hug.

"I wouldn't miss this for the world. Ianto's first Christmas and I hear rumour of a surprise," he winked at Jack then smiled.

"I keep being told that, you don't have a crocodile or real elephant I should know about?" Jack asked him raising his eyebrows as the Doctor tried to look innocent.

"Presents!" Ianto said entering the room holding a plate and a mug.

Soon the room was filled a large heap of Christmas paper and the room was rang with 'oh thank you', 'how did you know' and 'I love it'.

Jack loved his new hand-knitted winter jumper, and gardening tools.

Ianto was ecstatic with his large haul of Lego which included a pirate ship from 'Pirates of the Caribbean' with a DVD of the first film which everyone promised they would watch after dinner, much to Ianto's delight.

Finally there was only one present left. Ianto had insisted it be last. It was a small box which Ianto now produced as everyone became silent. Ianto became all shy, knelt on both knees and he bit his lip as he watched Jack open it.

Flipping up the lid, Jack saw it was a gold band with single diamond inlaid in a star. In the ring was a scroll. Unrolling it with great care he saw the edges were filled with hand-drawn red and pink hearts. On the scroll in Ianto's messy handwriting was…

"I love you Marry me."

Ianto went on one knee and took Jack's hand. "Will you marry me?"

His throat blocked with emotion Jack stood and pulled Ianto into his arms, enveloping him. "Yes, Yes, I would love to marry you," he said as he recovered and pulled himself and Ianto back onto the sofa.

Ianto took the ring box from Jack's trembling grasp, took out the ring and showed Jack the inscription on the inside. ' Ianto loves Jack ' with two tiny hearts engraved either side.

"I didn't want to make it girly, so I had it made special," Ianto told him seriously.

"And you all knew," Jack burst out as Rhys handed him a handkerchief to dry his face.

"Oh yeah Ianto's been planning this for weeks," Gwen told him winking.

"Tosh was here and she had loads of wedding magazines. I asked her lots of questions." Ianto saw a
look of understanding grow on Jack's face. "She said that if you love someone best in the whole world, you ask them to marry you. We are going to have a wedding in the spring. And I am going to tell everyone how much I love you," Ianto told him as Jack sat back. Ianto lay in his arms. "That way you will be mine forever and I will be yours forever."

"Ianto you are the best Christmas present I could have ever dreamed or wished for," Jack told him as Ianto snuggled into his shoulder. Taking Jack's hand he slid the ring onto Jack's ring finger.

"Now we are engaged," Ianto declared. "You're my fiancé."

"You said that very well," Jack told him.

"I've been practicing. Gwen helped me."

"Congratulations," the Doctor said with his mouth full of mince pie. "Now about that crocodile..."

"You didn't," Jack burst out.

"No, but the look on your face. However as I am in charge of your honeymoon I thought Ianto might be interested in this." He handed a wrapped present to Ianto. Ianto unwrapped it carefully to see it was a DVD.

"What's a dinosaur?" Ianto struggled to read the back cover.

"Let me tell you about the real Jurassic Park," the Doctor said.

"Congratulations," Gwen said squeezing Jack's arm as they stood in the kitchen and he showed her the ring.

"Wedding magazines...I think I vaguely recall something?" he said creasing his brow.

"You can blame Tosh for this one, she's maid of honour for her friend Samantha, who's getting married. Samantha was having difficulty deciding a few things. Tosh offered to help and she sent Tosh just about every wedding magazine she could find. Ianto got his hands on them and he asked her hundreds of consecutive questions about love, romance and marriage," she told him.

"And you knew?" Jack queried.

"Well, she couldn't answer them all on her own. I tell you, the emails and texts were flying. I learnt more about weddings than when I was organising mine and Rhys's." Gwen paused for a moment. "Tosh told me he then went all quiet, and when he got back from his first ferret meeting he declared he was going to ask you to marry him." Jack felt everything over the past weeks fall into place and gave her a look of understanding as he now recalled the hug, Tosh's tears and where the concept of 'more wonderful to come'.

Jack and Gwen moved aside as Rhys checked the turkey. "As soon as Gwen and I got here he asked us a few things just to double-check. He asked me how I had proposed to Gwen. Said Gwen was sitting on the sofa. I said it might be a good idea if you were sitting down."

Gwen nodded. "Marriage to Ianto is the ultimate expression of love. It's joining you together as one. You will become one in every sense; you will be husbands. You should know he's planned this down the smallest detail including flowers, what you're wearing, and I think if you're not careful Marigold could be a bridesmaid," Gwen added.

"No, Marigold is not going to be a bridesmaid; Tosh is. I am going to ask Mac to be my best man
and he is going to give me away," Ianto declared as he joined them.

"It's going to be traditional then?" Rhys asked.

"Tosh said you could mix and match so it will be all sorts of things. That way it will me mine and Jack's wedding and not a copy of someone else. We will have special clothes. And there's going to be invitations, wedding cake, food, dancing and I'm going to tell everyone one that I love Jack forever and ever."

Jack took Ianto's hand and kissed it. "And I'm going to tell everyone how much I love you, and how you make me the happiest man alive on this planet," he added as Ianto gave him a big grin.

"I am so happy. I told Myfanwy you said yes so she said she was going to not flame anybody today. Now I'm going to let Billy out and give him his Christmas present and his sausage roll," he told them.

"Okay every one watch your feet," Rhys warned.

An hour later everyone was sockless as Ianto chased Billy through the wrapping paper. Billy had hidden his sausage roll for later somewhere under the sofa.

"It's wonderful seeing you both so happy," Gwen said put her arms around Jack's waist.

"Right now I am so happy I could shout it from the roof tops and write it in the sky."

"Now I need to tell you that I'm making a special pouch for the rings," she said with a grin as she pulled away.

"Pouch?"

"Yeah Billy's the ring-bearer" Rhys told him as Jack groaned.

"Well at least it's not Marigold," Gwen smiled at him.
Taking a pillow Jack placed it between his shoulder blades. Shifting his weight he made himself comfortable. He was under orders to stay in bed and be prepared for a surprise. He heard footsteps followed by the door opening.

"Surprise," Ianto said as he placed a tray with a cooked breakfast onto Jack's knees.

"Did you make all this yourself?" Jack asked as he picked up the knife and fork.

"Yes I did," Ianto replied proudly.

"Wow this looks wonderful," Jack commented as he cut into the fried egg.

"Gwen helped a little bit because it was lot to get ready all in one go, but I did the toast and she helped with the egg. The egg wouldn't come out of the frying pan proper so that's why it's a bit mashed."

"This is a wonderful," Jack said and Ianto squirmed with delight.

"This is part one of your surprise," Ianto told him.

"I like the rose," Jack placed some egg onto his fork and indicated the red rose in a small vase with his knife.

"It's not one from the garden because it's too early for the roses so I bought this one special."

"Was this one of those I saw in Morag's shop?" Jack picked up the mug and took a good swallow of coffee. Ianto nodded.

"Wow! This is good coffee." Jack looked at him in wonder as he smacked his lips to savour the taste.

"I've been practicing, that's part of the surprise," Ianto told him. He saw Jack become emotional.

"It's wonderful. Your coffee was and always will be the best." Ianto squeezed his hand.

"I wanted to make today extra special because I love you and today is for everyone who loves each other," Ianto told him.

Jack finished his breakfast and Ianto removed the tray and placed it on to top of the dresser. He opened the bottom drawer and took out a large envelope and two gifts wrapped in paper covered in red hearts.

"Happy Valentine's Day," Ianto announced and handed over the large envelope and gifts to Jack. As Jack took them Ianto moved next to him. Once Ianto was settled Jack began to open them.
Giving his attention the envelope first Jack saw there were two cards inside, one larger than the other. He took out the smaller card first. He saw it was one the many that had been in the card stand at Morag's shop. Jack knew Ianto had examined each one with great care reading the inscriptions before he had moved to the counter with his choice.

The one he had chosen had two roses, one white and one red on the cover. Opening it Jack read the inscription written in Ianto's hand.

'I was lost and I forgot your name and now I call you mine'

'You searched and you found me and now you call me yours.'

Oh Ianto that's beautiful," Jack leaned over and kissed him.

Pulling back he reached out for the box of tissues he kept on his bedside table. Blowing his nose he now pulled out the second card. It was much bigger and hand-made. Ianto snuggled in as Jack examined it.

"I couldn't find exactly what I wanted so I decided to make something special." Jack noted the front had a huge heart red heart with 'I LOVE YOU' made up of tiny pink red and white hearts forming the letters. As he opened it Ianto began to speak.

"It's so hard to say how I feel. Even with all the cards I couldn't find just the right one. The feeling I have is so huge so I decided to draw how I felt. I got thinking about how I love you is like the garden. I mean the real garden. It's not just one feeling. Its feelings all together. That's what makes gardens so special they have loads of parts that all come together into one thing." He pointed to part of the drawing with flowers, trees, bench, swing seat and small pond. "See, here there's all pretty colours and smells. Here we grow lovely vegetables to eat. The whole garden is a filled with loveliness," he pointed to the walls. "And the walls are your arms because when you hold me I know nothing bad will happen to me again like before and I feel safe."

"And butterflies and birds," Jack added grabbing another tissue.

"Oh yes they are very important because they have wings. And love has wings. The feeling I have just grows and grows and flies all over the place."

"And who is this?" Jack pointed to a small creature which appeared to be hovering just above the ground holding a bow.

"That is Billy shooting arrows of love, like Cupid."

"I see."

"Yes, I was thinking I love him so much," Ianto kissed Jack, "but not in the same way as I love you and I think it would be funny if Cupid was a ferret."

"Indeed," Jack laughed at the idea of Billy flying around, shooting arrows of love into people.

"And this is where we are going to be married," Ianto pointed to an arch covered in roses. "And everyone will know just how much I love you."

"And how much I love you," Jack said as he gained another kiss.

Ianto now handed the first gift to Jack. Jack placed the card down carefully and pulled off the wrapping to expose two small teddies each holding the same red satin heart. "You don't have a teddy
bear and when I saw this I thought you could have two."

"This is very sweet and I know the perfect place to keep them," Jack told him as he picked up the final gift. Opening it he saw it was several candy hearts wrapped in cellophane tied with a red ribbon.

"I had these made special," Ianto showed him each heart in turn. "This one says 'Ianto loves Jack', this one is 'Jack loves Ianto' and this one says 'Jack and Ianto 4 ever.'"

Jack gave Ianto a kiss. "You know these give me an idea. You know how we are giving each guest a small gift they could take away from our wedding? We could fill each glass with some candy hearts just like these." He saw Ianto's eyes widen. "How difficult would it be to get a lot more of these made up?" Jack popped one into Ianto's mouth then one into his own.

"Not hard at all. You just have to say how many you want. I ordered them through Morag's shop."

"Excellent." Jack said, "When we are in there today picking up the invitations we can put an order in."

Jack now pulled himself out of bed. "I wonder how many we'll need?"

"I reckon around five hundred," Ianto said as Jack carefully placed the teddies and the cards on top of the dresser to display them.

"Five hundred it is." Jack gave Ianto a thumbs up.

"I love getting married," Ianto sighed happily as he took the tray and headed back down stairs.

"Everyone's waiting," Maureen indicated a table towards the back of the café. "I'll bring you a coffee just as I finish serving these customers." She moved away and Jack and Ianto both made their way over to the table set up across the others side of the room. He noted the others were already gathered. Today was the first meeting of the Jack and Ianto wedding event co-ordinators. Even after nearly four years Jack was still amazed at the raw enthusiasm the community showed for all and any milestone events for the families here. No birth, wedding, graduation, death or special event went without some kind of community involvement.

Ianto made a huge grin when he saw Mac. "You came."

"Well I am your best man and so I thought I had better find out just what I'm getting myself into," Mac said as Ianto went and sat next down next to him. "And anyway I wouldn't want to miss this evening." He winked at Jack who looked at Mac curiously. There was a Valentine's dance and supper which Ianto was very excited about, being their first public outing as an official couple. Jack couldn't think of any reason why this should be up for comment.

"The Village has a sort of event we do every Valentine's Day, it's not for outsiders," Mac added and the others gathered nodded. "I haven't been to one for years, but then again I've had no cause, so I guess it will be a surprise if you've never been to anything like this before" Jack narrowed his eyes.

"Oh a surprise," Ianto winked back. "I already gave Jack his surprise this morning."

"It was breakfast in bed, two cards and a teddy," Jack added quickly realising that the comment might be misconstrued and didn't want to upset some of the gathered company. Honor McAlpine, chairwoman of the local Woman's Institute, put a hand on Jack's arm. "It's okay Jack; we're old, not dead. Some of us still recall what happens on Valentine's Day. It's like birthdays; one gets all sorts of individual treatment…" Jack almost choked on his coffee.
"It was cards and a gift, breakfast in bed," Jack interrupted, anxious to explain.

"Is that what they're calling these days?" Maureen sat down and Morag now joined them.

"Call what?" Morag said as she pulled up a chair.

"Breakfast in bed," Honor said.

"Ianto did you make breakfast in bed for Jack?" Morag gave him a thumps up. "Well done."

"It was an egg on toast with coffee. On the tray I had a red rose in a little vase. And I gave Jack two cards one I made myself, one I bought and two teddies with a heart and some candy hearts,"

"You are such a romantic," Maureen let out a sigh and slapped Ianto on the arm.

"And what did Jack get you" Morag asked.

"It's a surprise and he's going to give it to me later," Ianto replied. Jack groaned as he saw Maureen and Morag raise their eyebrows.

"Okay let's get started," Honor interrupted. "I call this meeting to order."

"Okay," Honor said taking a sip from her cup, supplied from what appeared to be a never-ending stream of tea from the supersized teapot in the centre of the table. "Firstly Ianto, I think you are very wise to reconsider the doves. I think it was a wonderful idea. However after the dove catastrophe of 2002 the dove company has refused to return to the Island. Thank you Jack for the compromise of setting up a small dovecote and have doves already in the garden for the wedding." Ianto took Jack's hand and gave it a squeeze.

"Mac, you are going to source the marquee to see if one will cover part of the garden for the wedding breakfast."

"Morag, you will approach Malcolm and Mark to arrange the removal and storage of the furniture from the first floor of Rose Cottage and its replacement after the event." Morag nodded.

"The W.I is going to arrange the wedding breakfast buffet and beverages, and Ianto we will need a clear number of guests by at least four weeks before. We will then work out costing's so we can get the order to Morag in plenty of time for the supplies to be delivered." Ianto nodded.

"I will thank the crew of the fishing vessel Mermaid and will accept their offer to set up transport from the village to Rose Cottage so the lane does not get blocked. Sergeant McCredie and Dana have advised they will organise and supervise parking around the Village."

Ianto looked worried. "Don't worry Ianto, we won't start until Sergeant McCredie and Dana arrive," Jack assured him.

"So that only leaves one thing; the cake. Have you made a decision?" Honor looked towards Ianto.

"It's so hard; I want one with loads of levels. I know what I want on the outside but it's on the inside I can't decide." Ianto took out a drawing.

Honor, Maureen, and Morag all let out a huge sigh as they handed the drawing around. "Oh Ianto that's beautiful." Mac crossed his arms and leaned back to ease the pain in his backside.

"It's just that Jack loves a certain type of cake and I really wanted it to be something Jack would really love," he added. "But I don't think it's the kind of cake you can put icing on. And if I choose
one sort of type of cake then some guests will miss out because they won't like what Jack and I would like."

"Well, if you had a wish what type of cake would it be?" Maureen indicated.

Ianto smiled. "Banana or Carrot cake," he replied without hesitation.

"How about this?" Maureen said as she took a sheet of paper and began sketching out a design. "Four layers, two of carrot cake, two of banana. It would work if you removed the columns."

"As well as the main cake, we could bake a separate sort of cake made of cupcakes. We can include all different kinds: chocolate, coffee, vanilla, and so on; that way people will have their choice if they don't like the main cake." Maureen saw Ianto hesitate. "Both can have the same theme as you've chosen and Jack's favourite can be part of that."

"So Jack and I can get to cut the big cake together but everyone gets what they want," Ianto agreed his eyes shining.

"What do you think?" Jack suddenly found he was the centre of attention.

"I think that's a wonderful idea," he added.

"Excellent," Honor said, rubbing he hands together. "We meet back here in two weeks."

"And now I believe Jack has a surprise for you Ianto," Morag said as Jack used his mobile.

Jumping up and down on the pavement outside the cafe, Ianto couldn't believe his eyes. It was the village fire engine and it was coming around the corner, heading up the street towards him.

"Happy Valentine's day," Jack said as the engine pulled up. Ianto looked at Jack in awe; it was like Jack could read his mind. He had no idea how he did it. The only soul he had ever told he dreamed of being a fireman was Myfanwy and Billy.

"You think of the best things," Ianto said as a fireman jumped down to the pavement.

"Ianto Jones, to ride on the fire engine you have to become an honorary fireman. Do you accept?" Thomas the head of the volunteer fire brigade asked.

Ianto nodded his head; unable to speak he was so excited.

"As an honorary fireman you will need to wear all the right gear." Thomas handed Ianto an extra-large yellow jacket which Jack helped him get into.

"You will need this," Jack added taking out a pin-on tag with, "Ianto Jones Honorary Fireman Island Bay" inscribed on it and pinned it to Ianto's jumper.

"And finally this," Thomas placed a fireman helmet on Ianto's head. "Are you ready?"

Ianto nodded. Thomas stepped back onto the machine and held out his hand.

"Oh yes," Ianto said in one breath as he was pulled aboard.

"Now we will be going down to the harbour, where we've had a call that some walls need hosing down. Then we will be back in time for the evening festivities." He banged on the top of the cab and the fire engine started down the road, the sirens and lights blazing.
"Now that is a very unusual Valentine's day gift," Morag said as the fire engine disappeared around
the corner.

"Don't worry; I have an even better one planned for when we get home," Jack grinned." Now tell
me what is about tonight I should know?" he asked. Morag, Honor, and Maureen steered him
towards the centre of the village.

Gwen raced towards the centre of the village. She was not sure why she was here. When she had
seen the police car it had set her heart thumping because she thought that something had happened.
However Sergeant McCredie had just said nothing was wrong but she was invited to attend a very
important event and her presence was essential. She had groaned because she was going to catch up
with Rhys via 'Skype'. She had no idea what was going on. He would say nothing except to find
Morag near the centre of the village. Looking around the crowd she strained to see over the top of
those gathered. From the look of it the entire population of this part of the Island was there. She
pushed her way through and saw Morag who waved her over.

"What's happening? Sergeant McCredie just told me to find you here."

"It's ribboning day," was all Morag would say as she indicated towards the centre of the village.

Gwen looked about and saw it had been transformed. The Island was curious in a way because it
didn't celebrate events like the mainland. Christmas for example. Aside from the Christmas wreaths
there had been none of the normal Christmas illuminations you would expect. It would appear they
had their own set of events, unique to them. She looked up ribbons extended out above her in a circle
of every colour and formed a huge wheel above the crowd, meeting in the middle. Here all the
ribbons came together and were swirled around the stone plinth that was a feature of the centre of the
village.

"Oh," Gwen said more out of politeness that understanding. She was about to ask another question
when the chairperson of the village committee stepped forward.

"Welcome one and all," he spoke into a microphone and was greeted by the crowd who called out
their welcome to him. "We who are here today stand as one. We are one community, one people,
and we stand with those past and honour them as we now honour and support those brave couples
who will wed this year."

"I call forward Michael and Mary, Fredrick and Diana, Jack and Ianto. We call you forward by your
first names because in this moment you are not here as members of your families but as part of the
community."

Gwen saw the couples move forward as their names were called. She noted that Ianto looked a bit
concerned and was standing as close to Jack as he could.

"To be successful in their wedded bliss they will not only need to support each other, they will also
need their families' support from us, the community they live in." He took a breath. "I ask all those
who are gathered here today as representative of our community pledge your support to Michael and
Mary, Fredrick and Diana, and Jack and Ianto through good times and bad. Ensuring that no matter
what occurs in their lives, we stand arm in arm to shield them when required, help them stand on
their own merit and ensure that they never have to face the future alone no matter what it brings. Do
you so pledge?" he called out his voice rising in cadence.

"Aye!" resounded through the streets of the village Gwen felt all the hairs on her arms stand on end.

Turning now he went to each couple and, taking one of the ribbon ends asked each couple to hold
hands. He wrapped the ribbon around their joined hands until each couple was connected to the stone plinth that was surrounded with ribbons.

"These ribbons link each of us to each other. We here are individuals, couples, families and the community."

"We who are gathered today bless each union. We wish that each union be blessed with the bounties that come with being married." He paused and turned to Jack and Ianto. "We know that your union may mean that those blessings will be different because no children may come forth from your union. But every one of us here knows that not all couples are blessed with children. This means your blessings will take other forms. We pray that your union will bless us with tolerance and understanding. Let these ribbons which now bind us together, be a reminder that life can be hard and unforgiving but with hard work come wonderful gifts and great joy. Only together are we strong. Every person who lives here is part of a whole. Only with support can we thrive and more forward."

"Bless Michael and Mary," he called out and those gathered threw paper streamers forward showering the first couple.

"Bless Fredrick and Dana." More streamers were thrown.

"Bless Jack and Ianto." Morag handed one to Gwen who threw her streamer in a cascade of paper that flew through the air from every direction.

The man now moved to remove the ribbon from the pole and un-wrapped their hands.

"Now we have pledged and blessed Michael and Mary, Fredrick and Diana, and Jack and Ianto. We will now escort them to the village hall where they will take the floor in the first dance of the evening as ribboned couples." He bowed as everyone now clapped.

"That was amazing," Gwen said as she turned to Morag.

"It's one of our little traditions," she said as an understatement.

"I don't think there's anything little about it," Gwen replied as they followed on.

Holding Jack's hand Ianto moved forward with confidence. To begin with he had been unsure of what was going on; there were so many people here. He had held onto Jack's hand tightly then; as things began to happen he had looked into the crowd and he found he was surrounded by everyone he knew on the Island. There was Mr and Mrs Morgan, and Mary Morgan with her husband John with the baby, and Gwen. Morag and her husband Ben, Mac, Maureen, all the nice ladies from the W.I. Thomas and all the people who helped put out fires, Malcolm, Mark, Sergeant McCredie, and Dana. There was Farmer Jo from along the way. The nice man who drove the school bus. All the nice blokes from the fishing vessel with the otters. All his friends from the Ferret Club, the man who had taken his photograph after his birthday party. Everyone. And now they were covering him with ribbons which meant they all belonged together. He felt so happy. Today had been wonderful. Jack leaned in and gave him a quick kiss. They held hands as they walked up the road to the village hall. He was so excited; he couldn't wait till the dance because he had been practising with Gwen for the wedding, and now he would try it out for real. He waved at Sergeant McCredie as he passed and started up the steps to the hall.
Because you loved me

Chapter Notes

The music for the wedding is Pachelbel's Canon in D Major

The title of the chapter and words from the song for the first dance comes from Céline Dion- Because you loved me.

Ianto carefully threw some grain around the dovecote then stepped back as the four white doves who were now permanent residents in the garden flew down and greedily began to snatch up the wheat.

"I wondered where you were," Jack said placing his arms around Ianto's waist.

"There was so much busyness yesterday I wanted to make sure they had full tummies because they might get scared with even more people here today…” They both turned when they heard a familiar voice ring out.

"Oh my god it's beautiful."

"I am so glad you are here," Ianto burst out. He saw Rhys and Gwen heading towards them and threw his arms around them in a three-way hug

"Ianto it's amazing," Gwen smiled as they pulled apart and Ianto took her hand and led her to the centre of the marquee that covered the top third of the garden.

"This huge truck arrived. It had come over on the ferry. Putting it up was like a huge puzzle with lots of different parts. I was a bit worried but Mac was here and he made sure everything was done right." He pointed to the floor. "Then once it was up they laid a floor; it's wooden, and then then put in carpet."

"It's green," Gwen commented.

"Like grass. It's good that it's carpet because it needed a vacuum and you can't vacuum grass," he laughed. "And it needs a lot of vacuuming because people keep walking on it. I was a bit worried but the nice ladies said they would give the carpet a final going over just before the guests come."

Ianto indicated upwards to the strands of lighting hanging down. "After the carpet was down Marcus came - he's Mr MacDonald's son - and put up loads and loads of lights. Last night they tested them. They look all pretty like stars at night."

He pulled her over to an area that had been set up to play music with two large standing speakers. "This is where Marcel is going to play music, so we can have dancing."

"First dance as a married couple." Gwen squeezed his hand. "Did you manage to finally choose a song?"

"Yes I did. I had to listen to a lot of songs but then I found the perfect one."

Moving they now came a flower covered archway. It stood so that the tent acted as a frame, its back
open exposing the rest of the substantial garden. "I spent a lot of yesterday threading all the roses on. I had loads of help because the ladies from the W.I came."

"I love your theme," Gwen said with a sigh.

"I love roses they are so beautiful and they smell lovely," Ianto agreed. "They are the best most special flower and I reckon the shape of a rose is what the heart of love would look like." He took a breath and became serious. "I was worried we might run out of roses but Morag told me she had ordered in extra and we used up every one. Except the one red one with a long stem which I will carry and the white one with a long stem that Jack will hold," he continued. "And today the chairs have arrived along with the tables for the food. The food will be arriving soon. All the furniture from downstairs is gone," he declared.

"I saw that," Gwen agreed.

"Mark and Malcolm came with a big truck and wrapped everything and I mean everything: our big chairs, coffee table, desk, sofa, T.V., and computer in great big grey blankets and carried them all out and put them in the truck. The room was so empty I could hear my voice echo. They then brought all the long tables…” They passed through the French doors.

"How you holding up?" Rhys asked as they watched Gwen and Ianto walk away.

"A bit tired; it's been a busy week. I will feel much better when this is all over. He's put so much work into this. I want it to be perfect for him."

"And for you," Rhys pointed out.

Jack nodded. "Yes, this is for us, but this is Ianto's day. I want to give him this one perfect moment of pure happiness." He handed Rhys a pair of new socks.

"What's this?" Rhys asked.

"They're from Ianto, in case I get cold feet," he said, smiling as a dove flew in front of them to snatch a last grain from the ground.

Rhys took the socks and laughed.

"He told me that I was to keep them with me just in case."

"As your best man I will keep them in a safe place." He winked at Jack.

"Ring?"

Rhys patted his pocket. "All safe and sound."

"Billy?"

"He's upstairs wrecking our bedroom," Jack said with a grimace. "And on that note I am going to need coffee."

"You know the doves and the dovecote are a nice touch. Why was it you couldn't release doves?" Rhys asked as they headed back towards the house.

"You know the Island has a reputation for being very windy." Rhys nodded. "Well this one time, it was blowing a gale, and when I say gale, I mean a gale, more like a hurricane…"
Ianto walked around the lounge holding a large pad of paper, double-checking his list. Everything looked amazing. When he had first seen the tables he was a bit worried because they looked a bit rough. But then a whole bunch of ladies he had never met before came and put white tablecloths over them. They were huge and covered each table without any joins. He had a closer look because they were so big and saw they had a lovely pattern woven in.

Now each tablecloth was covered; he had never seen so much food. Two tables were for all the savoury things. There was a ham on the bone, chicken, mini pizzas, little sausages on sticks with sauce, and sausage rolls. In fact there were a lot of different things on sticks. There was cold roast beef in slices, cheese rounds, and sandwiches of every different type. Smoked fish, salads, greens and potatoes, along with bowls and bowls of dip and crisps. Next to that was a table full of cups and saucers and a huge urn. He had never heard that word before. One of the nice ladies explained it was a way of heating up a lot of hot water for all the cups of tea and coffee everyone would need without having to boil a kettle. He had to agree it would take a long time to make a cup of tea for every guest using the kettle.

The best table was set up with desserts. Ianto was sure every one of his favourites was on there, from chocolate logs, jelly, and trifle, to ice cream. And in the middle was a space for the cakes.

When he had first seen them he was blown away. The cupcakes were on a stand and looked like actual roses. Actual roses! He had done a double-take because they looked like a giant bunch of delicious roses.

The other cake looked brilliant too. It had four layers all in white and at the top was a pair of doves kissing. Down the side was a cascade of pink, red, and white roses. They curled around each layer; it was so pretty. At first he had thought they were real tiny roses like the cupcakes but when he looked closer he realised they were made of icing. It was on a golden stand that made it stand out special.

By its side was a special knife Jack had ordered. It had their names and the date of the wedding inscribed down the knife bit for when they cut the cake. Jack said it went with the glasses they were going to give everyone which also had their names and date of the wedding on it. Each one was filled with a little parcel of candy hearts. The parcels were cellophane tied with red, pink or white ribbons. That had been another busy job washing all the glasses and wrapping all the hearts. But now they were all laid out nice next to the cups and saucers, one for every guest. However the knife was something they would keep and every year they could cut a cake on their wedding anniversary. He had never thought of that. Jack thought of the best things and it meant they could remember this special day every year forever.

Turning he heard the sound of vacuuming behind him start up and his tummy turned over. It was almost time. He looked and saw Gwen, accompanied by Mac. He had arrived earlier and had gone upstairs to change.

"I think it's time you and went and got yourself ready," he said smiling. "We can't have Jack left waiting."

"I've been making sure everything is done right," Ianto told him. "It's really important that everything is done proper. I want this to be the best I can make it because I love Jack so much I want everyone to see this is the best wedding ever."

"Ianto you've done a wonderful job but it's time now for you to go and get ready," Gwen said kindly gently removing the list from his hand.

"You look good Mac," Ianto told him. He was wearing the new suit he had told him about.
"I wash up good when there is an occasion and this is one hell of an occasion," he winked and put his hand on Ianto's shoulder. "Now up you go and take a shower. I'll come up shortly after I've double-checked everything with Gwen."

Ianto let out a huge breath. "Okay." He took a last look around and went up the stairs.

Seeing him disappear up the stairs Mac turned to speak to several ladies of the W.I who were finishing up the vacuuming and doing last minute adjustments.

"We're almost done," one of them called out as he approached.

Honor joined him from the kitchen. "Mac, you can call down to Sergeant McCredie and tell him they can start sending up guests."

"Aye will do then I had better get our young man ready."

"Aye, who'd have thought he would've come so far," Honor commented as she straightened herself up. "And you looking mighty fine yourself," she added with a wink and noted Mac's cheeks coloured. "Is that a new suit?"

"Aye it is."

"Well next time I see it I hope it will be over a shot of your finest."

"I did bring several bottles to toast the lads as it happens," he admitted.

"Your special blend?" Honor eyes widened.

"Better not let McCredie find out," one of the other ladies now passed with vacuum.

"Trust me...McCredie has a real affection for the tradition of toasting the happy couple," he winked.

"Does he? And how many bottles helped him gain a real affection?" she mocked.

"Enough that last raid they only found a single barrel and some piping," Mac admitted as he pulled out his mobile phone.

"Naughty," Ianto said as he pulled his hand back and held Billy firmly. "He's out of sorts because we didn't have our normal play time," Ianto told Tosh and the Doctor who had just exited the TARDIS which was seated in corner of the room and was in stealth mode.

Struggling as Billy writhed he finally managed to clip the specially made harness and the pouch that would hold both the rings around his middle. "I gave him a talking to and told him he has to behave but he never listens," he said as he now handed the lead to Tosh. "I'll go and have a shower and get dressed." He paused. "How is Jack doing? He hasn't got cold feet has he?"

"Cold feet?" Tosh asked trying to hold onto the lead as Billy twisted trying to remove the strange object encasing him.

"I read that sometimes just before the wedding one of the people getting married might get cold feet and stop the wedding so I got Jack a pair of socks just in case."

"And you?" the Doctor asked seriously as dictated by the moment.

"No my feet are lovely and warm and I wouldn't stop this wedding for anything," he entered the bathroom and closed the door.
The click of the door seemed to be a signal to Billy to double his efforts to escape; he now rolled on his back, and then tried to back out of the harness.

"This is not going to work," Tosh said turning to the Doctor who was pulling his lower lip.

"Billy is never going to walk down that aisle, is he?" Billy now began to use the bottom of the bed as leverage.

"Could you carry him?" the Doctor suggested.

"Carry him! I tell you he's not in a mood to do anything and I would like to get through today without losing a finger," she hissed at him.

Unsuccessful at removing the harness by using the bed Billy decided to climb up it. "What about you?" Tosh asked looked at Doctor as if this was the best idea ever.

The Doctor stepped back and shook his head.

"He has his heart set on this. But with all the practice Billy has not yet made it one foot without it being more of a drag than an walk," Tosh added almost begging.

The Doctor snapped his fingers and pulled out his sonic screwdriver and used it to scan Billy, who was now on the bedside table knocking things off and looking at the effect as they dropped.

"What are you doing?" Tosh said as they heard the shower stop.

"Nothing harmful and I promise he will walk down that aisle like the most obedient well-behaved ferret in existence."

"I hope you know what you are doing, because Billy and well-behaved are not something you hear in the same sentence."

Pointing his sonic screwdriver it beamed light into Billy. He became immediately still and looked towards the Doctor who adjusted the device and it gave a ten second burst.

They heard a soft knock on the door. "Guests are arriving," Mac told them as he entered and took in the scene and the flushed look on Tosh's face that went with the rose colour of her bridesmaid's dress.

"Is Billy misbehaving? Look I'll take him now and Tosh all you have to do is walk down the aisle."

"Excellent," the Doctor said as Tosh looked at him, trying to figure out exactly what he had done but couldn't deny that Billy had become as gentle as a lamb and was lying on his tummy in the middle of the bed. She smoothed down her dress and tided herself up and handed the lead to Mac.

She moved to leave just as Ianto immerged from the bathroom. Ianto was wearing dress pants, a white shirt and a black waistcoat covered in embroidered butterflies. The butterflies were blue and green, with hints of other colours with some inter-woven metallic thread in a collection of perfect tones that took your breath away.

"Oh Ianto you look so handsome." She took both his hands and gave them a squeeze. "I'll see you downstairs." She kissed his cheek and the Doctor followed behind her.

Mac handed the lead to Ianto.

"I'm a bit worried he's been naughty boy. He's been out of sorts with all the people," Ianto stroked
Billy down double-checking the harness. "He just wants to play but he can't so he's all cranky." To his relief Billy was calm. He was about to say more as they heard a knock on the door and Rhys popped his head around.

"All the guests are here, Jack and I are heading down," he said.

"Is Jack okay?" Ianto asked quietly.

"No cold feet, he's nervous because he wants everything to run smoothly."

"Me too." Ianto let out a long breath.

"See you down there," Rhys said as he gave a thumps up and the door closed.

Mac took Ianto's hands. "Ianto, before we go down there's something I want to say to you. As you know I'm a grumpy old bugger set in my ways, keeping myself to myself. I'm seventy six years old," He took a breath. "The last three years have been the best I've had in a many a long year since my father died if I was to be honest. I can't tell you what a privilege it's been having you as my friend. It was something I never looked for or expected. I'm proud to be here with you."

"You're my best friend," Ianto said warmly. "You talk to me and never make me feel stupid and you let me see a real live motorbike for the first time. I love coming and working with you."

Mac pulled out something from his pocket. It was a pocket watch with a fob chain. "This belonged to my grandfather. It's passed on to the eldest son. My father passed it on to me. As you know I have no children. Would you do the honour of wearing this today as my son?"

Ianto pulled him into a hug. "I don't remember my mum and dad. Jack's shown me loads of pictures but I don't remember anything about them. He explained what a mum and dad do." He took a soft breath. "I asked you to give me away because you've been like a dad to me and my best friend. So I would love to wear your watch and I will keep it special always," Ianto said and drew back. Mac placed the watch in the waist coat pocket and attached the fob chain.

There was a knock on the door. Honor popped her hear round. "Time," she said.

Placing Billy on the ground he checked Jack's ring was in the pocket then handed over the Billy's lead to Tosh. Ianto heard the music start. He had spent a long time deciding the music. It was called Cannon in D or something. Couldn't think why music would have something that could fire lumps of metal in it. But it was perfect for this moment. He looked at Billy who was to his amazement walking in perfect step by Tosh's side. He felt a glow inside maybe Billy had listened after all.

Mack lifted his elbow and Ianto took his arm. He saw a sea of faces turned his way, smiling. He felt Mac's comforting presence and he moved forward. As he got closer the room faded and all he could see was Jack. Jack was standing, waiting for him, holding a single white rose and dressed in matching waistcoat beneath the scented rose archway, his eyes locked on Ianto's. He felt his very being soar as if his soul was flying. How was it that this man loved him? What had he done in his life to have this man change his whole world to be with him? Everything around him, every person he knew, and every good thing was because Jack had found and saved him. Jack who had risked himself to come back for him, and kept him safe until the bad man was gone forever.

As Ianto made his slow way down between the rows of chairs Jack tried to fashion into words how he was feeling. This man; this wonderful, complex, passionate man who had captured his heart so profoundly... A man who had seen the blackness of his heart and judged him worthy of adoration and had forgiven every transgression. He felt his heart swell as he looked into Ianto's eyes. He loved
every inch of this man. He tried to think what he had done in his life to be so worthy of him. He was so grateful, so humbled he was worthy of such adulation. Love; it seemed such a simple word that covered so much. Maybe this was love, true love spoken about in pages and pages of mighty tomes. Here reflected in the face of the man who now stood by his side.

Holding out his hand Jack took Ianto's in his and found he was trembling as much as Jack was. Ianto looked so happy, his face radiant with peace and wonderment.

"We are here today to witness the union of these two souls, Jack Benedict Jano Harkness and Ianto James Jones. They are choosing to set aside themselves as individuals and become one. They will declare their love for each other so that none who hear it will doubt their commitment to and of each other."

Ianto handed over his rose to Mac and took out a small piece of paper. "I tried to remember the words but in case I forget." Jack leaned in and kissed him. When they drew back Ianto took a deep breath. "Jack, I love you. I want everyone here to know how much I love you. If I could I would write it in the stars so the whole world knows how huge my love is. You are the air I breathe, the sun that rises and sets. I will always need you because I cannot live without you. You are everything. I know am nothing without you."

He took the ring from Mac's hand and placed it on Jack's ring finger. "When I had this made it had a star with a diamond; now I have added another diamond. Each one is the both of us together forever. This ring I now return to you as my husband so that everyone here and anyone who sees it know you are mine and I am yours." Jack took both Ianto's hands and kissed them.

"Ianto my beloved, my cariad. I declare before everyone here, that I love you. I will carry your love with me for eternity. The stars in this universe may grow dark but my love for you will never fade. You are the single most important person in my life. You are my whole reason for being, my life, and the part of me I was missing that I have at last found." He took the ring from Rhys. It was a single gold band with a tiny engraving of a radiant sun on it.

He took Ianto's hand and slipped the ring onto Ianto's ring finger. "This ring represents my love for you. You say I am the sun, but it is you I orbit."

The celebrant now began to speak. "Jack and Ianto, you have made your declarations to those gathered here. Let all of you who have heard and seen the love Jack and Ianto hold for each other never doubt the commitment they hold in their journey forward. To seal that commitment the couple will now release a butterfly each. Jack has chosen butterflies because they represent a moment of transformation where something unformed becomes whole."

Ianto's eyes widened as he found a small box tied in a red ribbon being handed to him. He looked at Jack who had a huge smile on his face.

Holding his breath he waited for Jack to pull the bow on his box and together they opened up each box. As they did a fully immersed butterfly reacting to the light fluttered out from inside. Ianto let out the breath he was holding in as one landed on his hand. He watched fascinated as the other landed on Jack's hand.

"Let the wings of these butterflies allow your love to fly and the love you hold find its truest fulfilment in your life together," the celebrant announced. Mac and Tosh now moved forward to remove the butterflies and take them to the greenhouse where Jack had created a place for them so that when summer came they would be able to live in the garden.

"I now pronounce you husband and husband." As the final words left her lips Jack and Ianto reached
towards each other. As their lips met in a passionate kiss they heard the guests erupt in a roar of congratulations and approval.

Opening the door of the greenhouse Ianto moved inside and closed it quickly. He looked around and saw the butterflies were settled on the plants Jack had put in special just for them. He took a closer look and they were doing perfect. He heard the door open and saw Jack who put his arm around his waist and kissed his shoulder.

"How are they doing?"

"They are doing perfect," Ianto replied. "That was a big surprise...butterflies."

"I know how much you love them."

"They are very special, Jack and Ianto butterflies. They will eat all the leaves and make eggs then become caterpillars..." Jack stopped him with a kiss pulling in Ianto very close.

They felt a rush of cold air. "Starting the honeymoon early?" Owen said at the pair entwined around each other.

"I was checking the butterflies," Ianto replied as they pulled apart.

"Yes butterflies have that effect on people. I should get Tosh down here?"

"So have you and Tosh been on a date? You should now she finds you very handsome," Ianto added as Jack took Ianto's hand.

"Oh yes we have and there was kissing."

"Kissing?" Jack double-checked, raising his eyebrows.

Owen coughed. "Anyway I've been sent to find you because you're needed to open the dance." He opened the door.

"I've been practicing," Ianto added.

"His dancing," Jack added quickly.

"Has the Doctor told you anything about where your honeymoon is?" Owen asked as they made their way towards the marquee.

"It's a surprise but it will have crocodiles, elephants and dinosaurs followed by eight days of naked," Ianto replied.

"Eight days of naked." Owen raised his eyebrows.

"Yes that's where we wear no clothes for eight whole days."

"I hope it somewhere nice and warm."

"It will be all warm and nice." Ianto squeezed Jack's hand.

"Sound like a proper honeymoon."

"First it will be an adventure, where exciting things happen," Ianto added as they now arrived back inside and heard their arrival announced.
"Ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, Jack and Ianto will now take the floor for the first dance. Ianto took Jack's hand as the first notes were played. Taking him into his arms he held Jack close.

'For all the times you stood by me'

"I chose this song because it has all the words I wanted to say today but I didn't know how," Ianto whispered.

'For all the truth you made me see'

"Because you saved me Jack, you found me, came back for me, you kept me safe. Everything I am is because you love me."

Breath caught in Jack's throat as he listened to the words. He found it impossible to speak.

'You were my strength when I was weak
You were my voice when I couldn't speak
You were my eyes when I couldn't see
You saw the best there was in me
Lifted me up when I couldn't reach
You gave me faith 'coz you believed
I'm everything I am
Because you loved me'

"Oh Ianto," Jack said finally as the song came to an end and he now found his voice. "Your love is the light that shone into my life. You saved me."

"We saved each other," Ianto agreed.

"Yes we did," Jack said pulling him into a kiss and everyone applauded.

Ianto laid his body half out of the warm water of the lagoon drawing a design with his finger into the wet sand.

"I like it here," Ianto said as Jack came and lay down beside him. "There are no people or buildings no matter how far you look. The sea's all warm, like a bath. I like trying to swim, it's splashy fun and the fish are all naughty. I was feeding them earlier and they kept giving me little nibbles. I had to keep telling them I wasn't food. And we have our own special sort of beach house that goes over the water and we can watch the tide come in and out from the middle of the room. And the sky has two moons." Jack pulled Ianto into a kiss.

"That looks interesting," Jack said looking at the drawing as he turned over onto his stomach, leaned over to take a closer look.

"I finally know how to get a clock into a crocodile."

"Really?"

"Yes," Ianto declared proudly. "When I saw that crocodile leap out of the water, I was amazed. It came all the way out and ate that chicken, feathers and all."

"He was very impressive," Jack agreed.

"Even though he had one foot missing it didn't matter because he just needed his tail. Even in my
imagination I never thought crocodiles got that big. So I was thinking he was so sneaky hiding in the water you didn't even know he was there and whoosh there he was right by me. He could have had me as a snack. So people need to know he's coming and I know how to do it."

"Ah ha," Jack encouraged

Ianto pointed to the drawing in the sand. "See inside the chicken is a clock." He turned slightly to face Jack. "The crocodile leaps out the water and wham! He eats the chicken with the clock inside."

"Wouldn't the clock get all smashed up?" Jack pointed out.

"That's the best part," Ianto said laughing. "It would be a little clock with a big tick. That way it wouldn't get all smashed and you would always know when a crocodile was coming."

"I think that's brilliant." Jack kissed him.

"They would no longer be able to be sneaky because you could hear them coming." Ianto pushed himself back into the water so the waves lapped up his legs.

"So we need to put clocks in crocodiles and not dinosaurs?"

"That's cause they're extinct which means there are no more. And when you think about it that's good because can you imagine having a T. Rex hanging about? They were huge. The Doctor told me that T. Rex didn't chase things like lions; they scavenged. I like that word it means eating rubbish. So if they were alive today they would just eat out of people's dustbins. And that would be very scary."

"What about some of the smaller ones? Some were the size of a duck." Jack pushed himself into the water.

"They were very bitey and snappy. One of them stole the hot dog out of my bun and scoffed it right there in front of me," Ianto added indignantly. "Stole it right out of the bun when I wasn't looking." Jack laughed.

"Then they kept trying to bite my fingers because they smelt hot dog on them. Billy is as bitey as I want anything to get and at least if he steals your hot dog he hides it." Ianto looked thoughtful. "I hope he's okay. Do you think the Doctor will be able to look after him okay?"

Jack tried to keep a straight face knowing that the Doctor had Billy well and truly under control. "I'm sure he's having a great time."

"I hope so. I like the way the TARDIS made him a special room and everything so he can dig and dig and never get lost."

"And you gave the Doctor a very good list and run down of everything he needed to do." Jack made his way out of the water and offered his hand.

"I like being naked all day," Ianto said his eyes glowing.

"So what would you like to do this afternoon?"

"Well first I would like to order another dessert off the menu because I haven't tried them all yet," Ianto told him.

"Yes, I love you all sweet and salty," Jack admitted as they made their way down the beach of their
Island towards their chalet. It was such an inadequate word for the luxury it represented. He knew such places existed in the Universe but had never had the privilege of visiting. A water world devoted to privacy, relaxation, and fun. From the huge selection of activities you could spend every moment doing something. Or you could as they had just hidden themselves, enjoying the peace and solitude. He looked at Ianto who was just ahead of him, and noted the scars on his back had faded a little. It would take many years for them to fade completely and with their disappearance would be the undoing of the terrible legacy left by the Master.

An involuntary shudder ran down his back as he recalled the conversation he had had with the Doctor as he had told him about what the Master had planned.

"A living Cyberman," Jack had said, not believing what he was hearing.

"A monster who would obey without question. His emotions locked, leaving no ability to express them until they would build up and he exploded, destroying all and anything around him."

"How many exposures?" Jack asked.

"One."

"One exposure did that much damage?" Jack burst out.

The Doctor nodded. "It destroyed his ability with words, his eidetic memory, and began the process of creating a disconnection between what he felt and his ability to express it outright."

Jack closed his eyes. When he opened them again he knew by the look on the Time Lord's face there was more.

"The Master did two other things; one is a blessing the other a curse. I think he wanted to make Ianto immortal so that Ianto's existence would haunt you forever." He saw the look of horror on Jack's face. "He didn't succeed but he did extend Ianto's life."

"How long?"

"I wish I had an answer. The TARDIS advised me he bled off some of her heart energy. It was only a few particles but it has a strong potency. He could live a thousand years and beyond."

The Doctor paused to allow Jack to absorb what he saying.

"But he is not cursed with immortality?" The Doctor shook his head. "Will he age?"

"No, but his decline when it comes it will happen very quickly. He will age rapidly, and then die over a matter of weeks as the energy fades."

"That's one, what the other?"

The Doctor put his hand on Jack's shoulder. "Part of the plan was to use Ianto as a prototype. His DNA has been encoded with the same damage inflicted on him."

Jack paled as he realised the implications. "It's good that I know," Jack recovered and the Doctor smiled.

"And now some good news." He handed Jack small vial.

Jack looked at it curiously.

"I tried long and hard to find a way to restore Ianto to himself. But I have found the mind is much
harder to heal than the body. Give him these and over the next few years, and his body will heal, returning him to full health in every respect."

"These?" The use of the word was not lost on Jack.

"These are a life form engineered to repair the human body. Once they have completed their function they will seal themselves off and become inert."

"That means the removal of the terrible scaring from his back?" Jack queried.

"And internal." He looked a little sad "In truth you both deserve a lot better. The whole of the Earth should know what you both sacrificed for their sake."

Jack looked at him as he wrapped his hands around the vial. "Ianto gets to live and heal. He won't have any more terrible aches and pulling from the scars on his back. I get to spend more time with him and him with me. I can't think of a greater gift. Time with Ianto."

"And if you need me you only have to call. I owe you a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. And when the time comes you will always be welcome here as my companion."

"Jack…Jack." He broke from his thoughts to see Ianto looking at him biting his lower lip.

"And then the kissing game."

"Kissing game? Who goes first?" Jack asked

"First we kiss each other loads," Ianto said taking Jack's hand. "Because I love kissing then I want to go first."

"You went first last time!"

Ianto laughed at the pout on Jack's face. "Alright you can go first. And then I get to go second." Ianto checked. "I am going to eat dessert off you. I was thinking chocolate moose. Which is very strange because I looked up what a moose is, and what I want to know is how they get something so delicious out of one of them big creatures…" Ianto skipped over a wave then stopped. "Is this like those trick gooseberries? I was so upset I was expecting little geese to grow instead we got green hairy fruit. Why not just call them green hair-fruit then I would have known not to expect geese?"

Jack listened as they walked and talked. Their feet splashed though the water as they approached their chalet. Jack took in a deep breath and let out a sigh of contentment, his eyes full of Ianto.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jason Gibson pulled on the hand break of his rental vehicle with a jerk and took a look around. He was in the hotel car park overlooking the harbour; it was as empty as the village he had just driven through.

Café, general store, garage hotel with pub, hall, middle of village with ubiquitous memorial of some kind; just what he had expected. From the amount of activity the place was dead. Worse than dead. It was like all places that survived on the summer tourist trade; it ceased to exist in winter.

He pushed open the door with the same force of frustration he was feeling and as it sprang back it hit his knee. Pain slammed into him with equal force and he put his head on the steering wheel.

"Perfect," he spat out has he rubbed his knee.

"What? Why?" he had argued with his editor. "The place is in the back of beyond. It's a four day round trip, including a ferry ride. There is nothing there, the fishing industry dried up years ago. It's nothing more than a summer holiday destination and its winter. It will be deader than Marley's Ghost. The locals," he did air quotes, "the 'supposed locals' are going to be long gone having scuttled back to the mainland. I can do research from my desk; draw some stock photographs taken by the tourist board." He placed both his hands on the desk and leaned forward.

A paper landed on the desk in front of him before he could continue his tirade.

"Where did you get this?" Jason picked up the paper not sure he was seeing what he was seeing.

"It's a newspaper," his editor pointed out as Jason read out the heading on the first page.

Island News.

Everything you need to keep you in touch with the local goings on.

Loads of exciting things to read about and attend.

Jason brought the paper to his nose. "Is this real newsprint and ink?"

"Yep."

"Where did you get this?"

"As you know Cathy went on holiday up there this year and brought this back as a souvenir because it's archaic. I mean who prints on paper? No one, it's all digital." His editor looked at him.

"Are you telling me this paper is still produced on paper?"

"It's the last newspaper in the United Kingdom to be printed on actual paper. Secondly the paper has been in print for two hundred years. I want you to go up there get some background."

"It doesn't need background. It's all part of the tourist trap. Only produced in the summer to fleece suckers like Cathy. How much was it, five pounds a copy?" He laughed at his own joke.
"It's free."

"What!"

"It's a free local paper. Produced fifty-two times a year and delivered by hand to points around the Island."

"You have got to be kidding me! By hand?"

"Look, we are always being accused of ignoring stories like this. We need a feel-good story for the Sunday edition. Community still keeping history alive and all that."

"Feel-good. There is nothing feel-good about this," Jason declared as the editor pointed towards the door.

"This is a job for a junior."

"You were complaining just last week you didn't get into the field enough."

"What I said was I missed my days as a member of the paparazzi pack: the chase, the thrill of the hunt."

The editor handed over a brochure. "You've been booked in at the local hotel. I hear the whiskey is pretty good."

Jason scowled at him, picked up the paper, muttering under his breath.

"See you in a week," the editor said as the door closed.

Jason pulled himself out the vehicle, his knee throbbing. As he opened the luggage compartment the cold wind snatched at him. Shivering he made his way to the hotel.

"Welcome," the heavyset woman said as he stood at the front desk.

"I have a reservation. Jason Gibson." Jason looked around what could only be considered the faux rustic interior, complete with objects reflecting the past glories of the rape of the sea. He sneered to himself.

"Oh you're the gentlemen from the mainland. Yes, your office called two days ago. I've got a nice room for you. It's on the second floor. Got a real nice view of the harbour," she rattled on.

Jason strained to understand her thick Island accent.

"Follow Maurice here and he will show the way." she indicated a young man to move forward and take his case. "We've closed the full restaurant, now the season's over but you can still order from the bar. The bar opens at six o' clock but if you need something in the meantime just call for room service."

"Where's he going Mum?" the young man asked as he picked up the small bag.

"Second floor room, overlooking the harbour," she replied handing over the key.

"Righty ho," the young man said and led the way.

Looking at the huge plate of food in front of him, Jason picked up his knife and fork. As a veteran of many hotel breakfasts he was used to the typical fare on offer. Nothing however had prepared him
what had been presented to him. This wasn't breakfast; this was a major feast complete with toast, coffee, fried bread, two eggs, hash-browns, black pudding (whatever that was) four rashers of bacon, sausages, grilled tomatoes and mushrooms. He couldn't recall the last time he has seen so much food on one plate for one person. He called the waiter over.

"Er...is this all for me?" he double-checked and looked up to see the young man from the afternoon before.

"Aye, farmers full breakfast. Do you need more coffee?"

Jason shook his head at the offer to refill his cup. "So you're the waiter as well as the luggage boy?"

"I'm just here between semesters. My mum owns the hotel so I help out whenever I can," he added.

"University? What you studying? Maurice, isn't it?"

Maurice nodded. "Hotel management and tourism."

"So hoping to take over from your mother? Not much of a life for a young man stuck here," Jason waved his knife indicating the room.

Maurice bristled. "My sister Maggie will take over the hotel. However it doesn't hurt to have two people with a business background. And anyway I have some ideas of my own."

"Good for you; find a way to escape. I expect you're looking forward to cutting lose," Jason said as Maurice attempted to leave.

"Actually I'll be glad to get back here full time."

Jason looked up at him in disbelief. "Trust me...a young person like you should be on the mainland not stuck in this dead hole of a place."

"But I wouldn't be here. This is my place," Maurice creased his forehead trying to explain.

"Well if the hotel had been in your family for a while I can see why you would want to keep it going..."

"I'm an Islander. This Island is my place," Maurice interrupted, correcting him. "I want to come back."

"It's great that you could get to University. The costs have become ridiculously prohibitive. This hotel must be doing very well to send both you and your sister." Jason took a drink of coffee disregarding Maurice's previous statement.

"Actually I was granted a scholarship."

"Really, that was very lucky."

"There's no luck about it. Any person here on the Island finishing senior school can get one on the condition that they have to study a discipline that will benefit the Island. That and pledge to return once they've completed their degree and put their ideas into action."

"That easy ha!"

"Not so easy. You have to make a case for exactly what you have to offer, "Maurice replied trying to keep the offence out of his voice."It took a lot of hard work. I had to make a formal presentation."
"And you chose Tourism," Jason said in disgust.

"We have this problem, see; lots of visitors in the summer. Come winter how do we attract people here in the cold short days? Not so many visitors like the summer but just enough to keep things turning over? It would help a lot."

"I see," Jason wiped the last slice of toast around the plate. "Now young man can you tell me where I can find the offices of the Island News?"

"Connie Williams."

Jason shook the extended hand. "I'm Jason Gibson of the National Gazette."

"An honour. We don't get the attention of the big papers up here. I'm afraid you will be very disappointed; no scandals to report up here. Just us little locals doing our local things," Connie said.

"Now Williams...that is not a Scottish name."

"Well, my family originally came from Wales."

"And you don't have a name that begins with 'M'," Jason pointed out.

Connie chuckled. "You've noticed in true journalist fashion."

"It's hard to miss. Have you any idea how many people's names here start with the letter 'M'? I thought it was an anomaly then I had a look in the phone book. Quaint how you have the first and last name of everyone listed."

Connie laughed, not taking offence; she had been well warned. The man before her had been noted for his disdain since he had disembarked from the ferry. Given Maurice a right interrogation over breakfast. "With so many people sharing similar initials it's more practical than quaint."

"Right," Jason replied. "But how did it get started? It must be a bloody nuisance at times."

"It's become a bit of a local tradition. I think it started out as a joke and got a bit out of hand. And before you ask my middle name is Matilda."

"How quaint," he said putting emphasis on the letter 't'. "Anyway I'm here to do a background piece. Your little newspaper is having its two hundredth anniversary and it's the very last paper to be produced on newsprint. So to start I thought I would like to take a look around your print shop."

"This way." She moved aside.

"As you can see the equipment is getting on," she pointed out.

"Getting on? It's ancient! This should be in a museum," Jason spluttered. "What happens if it breaks down? How do you find parts? What about the ink and the newsprint?"

"Luckily for us we have someone who is very good at fixing things. And despite the age of the equipment we have never missed an issue and there are ways and means of getting the supplies," she explained, not taking offence.

"Eventually you will have to modernise."

She stifled a smile. "Don't you let the owner hear you say that."
"Maybe that would be a good start. How do I meet him?"

Connie looked at her watch. "Around now he will be in his garage. It's three doors down from the General Store next to the butchers." She led him out of the print shop, through the main office to the front door and pointed down the street.

"I'm looking for Ianto Jones?" Jason asked the mechanic who looked up from the bonnet of the car she was working on.

"He's around the backyard with Jacob," the woman said, "just go through the back door."

Twisting his hip he slid between the vehicles. Reaching the door he pulled a tissue from his pocket and placed it over the handle. Turning the handle he stepped into an open space to find a shed to one side, surrounded by old engine parts stacked up neatly. He took a sniff and his nose filled with the odour of old oil.

Before him was a man in what looked like his late twenties and a young boy of about twelve.

"I'm looking for Ianto Jones?"

"That's me. I'm Ianto Jones," Ianto held out his hand. When he saw Jason did not return the gesture he looked at the offered hand.

"Silly me, I'm all covered in grease." He wiped his hand down his overalls and held it out again. Seeing he couldn't avoid shaking hands Jason placed the tissue on his palm making sure the tissue was between himself and the offered hand as he shook it.

"This is Jacob, we're working on our entry for the annual go-cart rally," Ianto introduced the boy. "It's going to be real good. Jacob has been helping me with the wheels. The rally is down the main street towards the harbour. The street goes off in a curve and if you're not careful you end up getting wet. This year I'm making sure we have good steering and real good brakes because last year we ended up in the harbour," Ianto laughed.

"Uncle Ianto had to come in after me," Jacob added.

"Sorry, I was looking for Ianto Jones who owns the local newspaper," Jason looked around disdainfully.

"That's me. I own the local paper," Ianto said proudly.

"Did you recently purchase it or did you inherit it?" Jason asked sceptically considering the man looked no older than twenty-six.

"I don't know that word?"

"Was it left to you by someone after they died?"

"You mean like this garage. Mac left it to me because he said I was like a son to him. And he was like a dad to me. He gave me a gold watch which I keep special. I don't wear it here because it might get damaged. I'm going out for dinner tonight so I'm going to wear it then. Jack's taking me on a date to the hotel. We still date even though we got married. We're eating at the hotel because the café closed now the season's…"

"So did you inherit the paper from someone like the garage or not?" Jason interrupted impatiently trying to remove some of the grease which had gotten onto his hand.
Ianto laughed. "No, I bought it with my own money."

"Recently?"

Ianto frowned as he thought. "Sometimes it's hard for me to remember so far back but Jack would know. I'll ask him."

"Right," Jason said feeling himself heat up. "Well, thank you for the great hilarity and for wasting my time today," Jason spat out and left, slamming the door behind him.

"Why was he so rude, Uncle Ianto?" Jacob asked as stood looking at the door in surprise at the outburst.

"I'm not sure. Maybe he's had a bad day. Sometimes I get rude when I'm having a bad day."

"I've never seen you have a bad day Uncle."

"Oh I do, sometimes when I have to go and pick up a ferret and find it's not been looked after proper I have a bad day. Last time was when I picked up 'Suede'. She was half-starved, covered in fleas, and had a burnt tail. I got in right mood."

"I like ferrets," Jacob said trying to screw the nut on the wheel.

"Me too," Ianto announced. "They are so naughty."

Jason stormed back into the newspaper office and slammed the door.

"Well you've had your little joke. I'm sure you all had a great laugh at my expense. Not sure what kind of person you people think you are dealing with. I'm here on a serious journalist exercise and you send me off to see the village idiot. I'm attempting a serious story on your laughable pathetic little paper…"

Connie felt her face heat up and she pulled herself up and launched herself forward before he could finish. "Well Mr. High-and-Mighty, turn your nose up with a sneer since you arrived on the Island, newspaper man. Maybe we're just country hicks, who have an out-dated newspaper still being printed on newsprint. But I'm proud to be part of a newspaper that is owned by someone who sees it as more than just a vehicle for reporting the latest sex scandal between morally bankrupt politicians or the pointless lives of the rich and vacant."

Jason backed up as she moved forward both of her fists clenched.

"I'm honoured to work for a paper that still reports the goings on of ordinary people. Maybe to someone like you, Mr. La-De-Da newspaper reporter, who won the local cake competition is just trivia, but it matters. Someone like you, full of your own sense of importance, couldn't possibly understand what it is to love something so much you would save it so it could continue reporting on the lives of those who live here." She thrust her face, twisted with fury, into his. He staggered back and hit the wall by the door and realised he was standing on tip-toe in an effort to escape.

"One last thing: you were right, my family is not from around here and you're lucky my great-grandmother isn't here because she was Welsh and if she had heard you call Ianto Jones the village idiot she would have knocked your teeth down your throat." She pointed to the door. "Get out!" she thundered.

Fumbling for the door handle he turned it and fell backwards out the door.
Swirling the dark amber liquid around the glass Jason took a deep sip. The smooth earthy smoky flavour invaded his senses. At least the whiskey was up to scratch; he needed this to recover from his encounter with Connie Williams. He was still shaking. She was wasted up here, with her passion she should be working on a major daily. He could see her now, microphone in hand, chasing down the latest celeb. He threw the liquid into the back of his throat and called for another. What a waste of his time. If nothing else he could report that the local bush telegraph was unsurpassed on the western hemisphere. From the sullen looks and the way the proprietor of the hotel had slammed his key down on the front desk his encounter with Ianto Jones and his altercation with the Connie Williams had made it that far.

He snorted. Petty small minded bunch of retards; they would be duelling banjos next. Thank Providence he was leaving tomorrow. He looked over his glass to see a couple pass by him. One was a very handsome individual with film star good looks, and holding his hand was Ianto Jones.

"Welcome. I have your favourite spot right by the window," the manager greeted them, a huge smile on her face.

"Thank you. Jack and I like looking out at the harbour," he heard the man say.

"I'll send the menus over." She scurried off and a few moments later was replaced with Maurice.

"Maurice," Ianto said standing and throwing his arms around him.

"Sir, it's good to see you," Maurice said when they pulled back.

"How's university?" he heard the handsome man ask to which the young smiled shyly.

"Oh it's grand, but I can't wait to get back here to the Island. I can't tell you what a wonderful opportunity you both have given me."

"Your ideas were wonderful and Ianto and I can't wait to see them in action," the handsome man said with a dazzling smile. "And I hear you and Mandy McDougall…" he winked.

Ianto looked excited. "Will there be a ribboning?" Jason noted the young man blushed.

"Not this year, need to get back first set up the project. Get settled; that sort of thing."

"Well if you need any help or seed money you just let us know," Jack winked.

"I will, Sir." He handed over the menus. "I'll leave these with you."

"Who are those people?" Jason asked the barman who refilled his glass.

"Which people?"

"The couple by the window."

"That's Jack Harkness and his partner Ianto Jones."

"They seem to very popular. Are they normally greeted like royalty?" Jason pointed out the subtle reaction of the others in the bar as the couple had entered then settled down at their table.

"They live up in Rose Cottage. Jack has the most fabulous garden. It's a pity you arrived so late it's only open three weeks every summer."

"And Jones?"
"Oh, he has his interests."

"Doesn't sound much...a garden and some hobbies."

He heard the barman give a quiet laugh. "Well, not all gardens and hobbies are created equal."

"Like..." Jason encouraged and the barman leaned forward and began to speak softly. Jason leaned forward thinking he was going to be told something in confidence.

"With you being a big newspaper reporter from over the mainland who does important serious stories I'm sure nothing we provincials do within our pathetic community will be much of interest to you." Jason flushed as he heard his own insult thrown back at him. "You just run off back to reporting all about those petty scandals and know nothings. I'm sure there are millions of people as shallow as you who can't wait to devour every word. Trust me there's nothing of interest here for the likes of you."

The barman smiled and leaned back and said more loudly. "Another drink sir?"

"Is that the man?" Jack asked as he saw Ianto glance across the bar.

"He was very rude, he didn't say good bye. Not good manners not to say good bye," Ianto pointed out as he looked down the menu, searching for his favourite: sausage, egg and chips.

"Don't worry I have it on good evidence he will be leaving tomorrow," Jack said taking Ianto's hand.

"I didn't like him. I don't think he believed I owned the newspaper. It's mine; I bought with my own money. I love the newspaper. I bought it because I wanted to make sure everyone could keep up with what was going on. And I would have nothing to look forward to Thursday afternoons if the paper closed. It wouldn't be right with no newspaper. And I saw Billy the first time in the newspaper."

"I know," Jack squeezed his hand in support.

"It's important everyone gets to hear about all the news on the Island and Connie does a great job. She even came to the Ferret Fun Day and we had loads of photos taken. And she visits regular to take pictures of the ferrets that are up for adoption so we can find good homes for them. And she's my friend."

"I know she does wonderful coverage...so what do you fancy?" Jack looked up from the menu as Ianto narrowed his eyes at Jack. "I meant for dinner." Ianto chuckled as Maurice appeared.

"Are you ready to order?"

"I'll have sausage, egg and chips; my favourite," Ianto said.

"Chef's special," he wrote down. "And you Sir?" He looked at Jack.

"Tell the chef I would like that man's head on a plate," Jack pointed to the man at the bar nursing a whiskey. "If not, I'll have the steak medium rare." Maurice took the menus stifling a smile.

Reaching the lounge area Jason saw a fire had been lit. He had taken a turn around the mostly deserted harbour to ease his overindulgence of the local whiskey the night before. As he had passed the front desk he saw the Island News had been delivered. Taking a copy he ordered a coffee to be delivered to the lounge.

Settling down near the roaring fire he scanned the front page.
"I wouldn't be bothering with that rubbish, full of nothing but pathetic drivel." He looked up to see it was the hotel manager who dumped his coffee on the table beside him causing the contents to spill into the saucer. "Is there anything else I can get you, like make up your bill?" she offered, her lips pursed.

Jason placed a fake smile on his face. "Everyone is making me feel so welcome. I thought I would stay a few more days. See what I could dig up." His smile dropped when he saw his barb had missed the mark.

"Och, you're so full of yourself. They way you've behaved you'll be lucky if the pebbles on the beach will pass the time of day with you," she laughed. "So if you want to do some digging? I suggest you get yourself a bloody great shovel." She turned on her heel and left.

Shaking out the paper he returned on the front page. Thirty minutes later he finished the back page. Drivel...the contents were complete and utter drivel. Reports from the various committees and clubs, of which there appeared to be a large number. Farming news and weather, ferry time tables, shop opening hours, interspersed with the comings and goings of every resident, followed by the usual births, deaths, and classified section. Why would anyone keep this paper going? What had Connie Williams said? It was reporting ordinary goings on of ordinary people. Very ordinary if this was what was on offer. Who cared to read the minutes of the local church hall council or if Mrs Mackie's sister was better?

He drained the now half-warm coffee. Enough of this nonsense, and time to get back to the mainland. He had enough information to write copy and put a good spin on it. With the 'community still preserving their heritage' angle he was sure he could make it the feel-good story of year. He smiled to himself; all he needed now was some archival information. He looked at his watch as a potential head line sprung to mind: 'Today and Yesterday, the Island News: A Retrospective'. He had the most recent copy all he needed was a copy of the first edition. Now where to find the archives...he saw Maurice heading towards him to collect the now empty cup. He grimaced; Connie Williams was his best source of information but after his altercation yesterday he doubted even he had the balls to go back there. So where to start? He pulled out his pocket laptop.

"Which year do you want?" the librarian asked.

"1919," Jason replied.

"Sorry we don't go back that far. The Island News only started being archived electronically when the paper was sold. All the copies previous to that are in the main office in Island Bay. Connie Williams is the current reporter, if you give her a call I'm sure she will be most helpful. Let you have full access. I'm sure she will be only too willing..." the librarian said trying to keep a straight face.

"Well, give me as far back as you go?" Jason interrupted and was handed a set of discs.

"Machine?" The man pointed to the small desk to the side.

Muttering about the local malicious effectiveness of the bush telegraph Jason turned on the machine and he took a look at the date 2049, seventy years ago.

Several hours later he leaned back to ease the tightness in his neck. Reading this newspaper was like being stoned to death by cotton balls. Why this paper was still being churned out? When all other small newspapers had long gone why was this one still going? If he could find out who really owned the paper at least he could get some insight into why they had kept to such an antiquated system. No one did anything for nothing these days; everyone had a motive and expected a payoff. 'Free' community newspaper...he didn't think so, there had to be something going on, someone was
profiting somehow. Change of ownership, something that big must be there somewhere. Once he had a name it would be a simple matter of tracking them down. Maybe there was a story here after all and he was just the man to expose it. He skipped back to the first edition on the disc.

There it was. The fears the newspaper would be closed down or bought by an outside interest were now over. It had been bought by a local man who remained anonymous! The new owner assured the readers he pledged to continue and keep it as a free community paper. He was about to move on to the next edition when a name caught his attention along with a photograph. It was a report on the local summer solstice festival. It was the typical list of those who had won in various competitions and the events of the day he had come to expect. Jack Harkness from Rose Cottage it was noted had shown his new hybrid rose called 'Perfect Heart' for the first time to much applause. He had never thought about it before but Harkness was not that common a name. He took a closer look of the man in the picture.

Laying back on his bed back at the hotel Jason's mind was whirling as he looked at the document in his hand. It was the culmination of five days' of hard work. It was the sales deed for the purchase of Rose Cottage. The cottage had been bought in 2011. The deed was in the name of both Jack Harkness and Ianto Jones. Jones it was noted hadn't signed the deed but had been signed and held in trust for him under the Ianto Jones Trust of which Jack Harkness was the sole trustee. He had been curious to how much of the Trust's money had gone to buy the cottage and was even more perplexed when he found all the funds had come entirely from Harkness.

That Jones, he was still coming to terms with the possible implications, had apparently been committed to the 'Sunnyside Institute', a refuge and treatment centre for the survivors of torture. Jones had been released into the care of Harkness. On leaving Jones had been brought here to the Island.

What that torture was or how it had come about, where Harkness and Jones had come from prior to this he had not been able to find out because all information was locked. He had only ever come across an X notice once in his career as a journalist. Every journalist knew what it meant, that it was government-sensitive and was unobtainable. No amount of bribery, coercion or other means could gain you access. He knew from bitter experience how pointless such a pursuit was. What he did understand was only those matters held most secret were covered by an X notice. He recalled the moment, when he knew he had hit pay dirt.

From a more careful scrutiny of other sources it would appear that Jones had inherited a quarter of the Island and immediately handed over the greater portion of it back via a newly created trust. The trust was in the name of the previous owner of the tatty garage and owner of the land. That trust was the Jessie (Mac) MacDonald Island Scholarship Trust. The sole trustees were...surprise, surprise, Ianto Jones and Jack Harkness.

Since its inception it had granted over 783 scholarships. Even doing simple calculations made it clear that not all the money could have come solely from the trust which had begged the question from where it was getting its funds. The records had given him the answer. A vast majority of the money were royalties from a book on engineering and spatial concepts still considered the single most important work on the subject that had led to the colonisation of Mars. The second was a patent for an ingenious device which had revolutionised transport. Curious to see who was the author he found a familiar name. Apparently the man he called the village idiot had two PhD's: one in engineering and the other pure mathematics. He had been puzzled briefly at the name of the inventor of the patent: John Jones. A search indicated that Ianto was the Welsh variation for John. The device was not all Jones work; it was also attributed to a T. Sato. And for once his investigative skills failed him because he had failed to find out who this was.

What the royalties did mean was the trust could literally grant scholarships into perpetuity. What was
so perplexing was that on the mainland these people would be seen as major celebrities courted at 
every turn. Jones in particular could make a killing as the writer of said book and inventor of the 
subtron matrix on the lecture circuit. Yet there were no plaques or memorials to Jones or Harkness 
yet the information was available to anyone who looked. So why hadn't they been exposed? They 
lived very simply, and despite being able to travel anywhere on Earth or join a space junket to visit 
First Light City on the Moon neither Jones nor Harkness had left the Island since their arrival.

Jack Harkness' only indulgence appeared the ever-increasing size of his garden which now covered 
four acres, and his obsession with hybrid roses. Roses which he noted were very much sought after. 
Every year or two he presented a new hybrid. The latest 'Purple Beauty' would be on sale this spring. Ianto spent his time running the local garage and the newspaper. He employed four people: Connie 
Williams, a print technician the mechanic he had seen, and a young lady who did the garage books. He also appeared to be heavily involved in his other passion: ferrets. A special facility had been built 
just for their care next to Rose Cottage, which included a substantial court (a secure outdoor pen). Aside from his own pets he ran a ferret rescue service. It was noted that he cared for the odd sick 
otter for which an outdoor pool was also constructed. This was run in conjunction and support of the 
local vet Meiko Harper, another passionate ferret owner. Thinking this was also not an Island name 
even though it began with the letter M he had found she was the great granddaughter of Doctor 
Owen Harper who came to live on the Island in 2020 along with his wife Toshiko Harper and their 
two children. Doctor Harper had served for many years as the local General Practitioner and 
specialist in emergency medicine who had been tireless in his support of the local volunteer 
ambulance service. That had led him to thinking about Connie Williams. Her great-grandfather had 
set up an inter-island haulage company called 'Island First' still being run by Connie's brother, Ifan. The only connection he could fathom was they had all at one time all resided in Cardiff. It was 
curious they had come here at all because so few outsiders settled on the Island. Considering how 
ferocious the locals were in protection of their own and if his own experience was anything to go by 
it was understandable.

Now he had to contemplate the incredible. Were the people who were the trustees of the trust the 
same Harkness and Jones who had bought Rose Cottage? From what he could tell neither had aged 
since their arrival and yet they lived here without comment as if this was an accepted part of Island 
life. It was incredible, this story would make him. He felt a rush of anticipation. It was time he paid a 
visit.

"I'm dead-heading," Jack said pulling off his gardening gloves.

"Jason Gibson, National Gazette." Jason looked down at the mound of spent rose blooms on the 
ground. He opened his mouth to ask a question to find it being asked for him.

"You are here to find out if Ianto and I are still the same people who arrived on the Island in 2011."

"How do you know?" Jason took an instinctive step backwards as the control of the conversation 
slipped from him.

"So far you've looked through several discs from the digital archives in the library over in the big 
village. Searched the Births and Deaths records from National Registry and gained copies of Ianto's 
birth certificate and our civil partnership certificate. Failed to find mine...birth certificate, that is. 
Called up the deeds and legal documents pertaining to the sale of this cottage; sourced and retained a 
copy of the last Will and Testament of Mac MacDonald. Its contents most probably came as a big of 
a shock to you as to us." Jack replaced his gloves "We had no idea he had brought huge swathes of 
the Island over the past few years. He was not a gambling man but he played the stock market like a 
pro. And he left the lot to Ianto." Jack moved to the closest unclipped rose bush and snipped off a 
sagging head. "Ianto found himself owner of one fourth of the Island, a bank account, stock portfolio
worth hundreds of thousands of Euros and a cellar full of the finest bootleg whiskey the Island has ever known." Jack threw the bloom at Jason's feet.

"Sorry I digress. Looked into my personal bank records and those of both Trusts. Requested our Tax records. Discovered how many scholarships have been awarded and to who they have been granted. You also tried but failed to secure Ianto's medical records from the 'Sunshine Institute'. At the same time found Ianto's educational records and about his achievements. Your efforts to go further back than 2011 were blocked invoking an X notice of which I was given notice of via a video call." Jack smiled grimly at the look of shock on Jason's face.

"On a more personal level, you insulted Connie Williams, the integrity of the entire Island community and called my partner the village idiot." Jack snipped a head. "And you're here now because you want to double-check if you've uncovered two immortals hiding away in some isolated community."

"So you're not denying that you are Ianto Jones are immortal then."

"I am, he's not. Ianto has extended life whereas I am cursed." Jack turned towards Jason.

"So you're not denying it then?" Jason repeated as he recovered slightly and he felt a rush of excitement that he was right.

"No to the contrary I going to tell you everything. That's why you're here or have I misunderstood what journalists do?" Jack saw him get out his recording device.

"We both belonged to an organisation called Torchwood. I was leader of Torchwood Three…"

"Why are you telling me all this?" Jason asked when Jack finished speaking. "You must know you've just given me the biggest story to hit the news in fifty years."

"I'll make a prediction. That you will never publish a word of what you've discovered here." Jacob looked stubborn and raised an eyebrow.

"Firstly, because I'm going to appeal to your better nature. Ianto loves it here. He and I have found a peace and happiness we never expected to find. Ianto despite what you might think is a kind and wonderful man who is in fact very smart. He bought the newspaper for only one reason: he wanted to see it continue because he loved it. It is part of the constancy he craves. We set up a trust for young people because they are the future of this place. He runs the garage because he loved Mac and he was the first true friend he made here. There is no other motivation for his or my actions. Aside from that you would expose a man, a hero who withstood months of torture to keep humanity safe to all sorts of outside attention he has neither looked for nor wants."

"And if I choose to publish?"

Jack looked serious. "When you get back to the hotel you will find a recall from your editor. He needs you for a major story that is about to break and it's only someone of your calibre who can be trusted to handle it. If after you return you try and submit any story containing the information you have uncovered in relation to myself or Ianto you will be re-assigned. I imagine that assignment will be considerably less prestigious and comfortable than your current position."

"So even after all your pretentions money still speaks!" Jason felt himself go cold at the intensity of anger he saw in the gaze that captured him as the words left his mouth.

"I can see how you would come to believe that but you need to weigh your cynicism with the nature of who we are. Leaving that aside you should know I will do everything in my power to protect
Ianto and our life here. I love him beyond words. I will also do anything to protect the people who live here because they are important to both of us. I know this will be difficult for you to understand considering the world you inhabit. The Islanders took Ianto and myself under their wings. They have done nothing but share themselves with us, opening their hearts. We in turn give back in equal measure."

"Even if I never publish someone, a local even, will eventually put two and two together."

"Some know, most suspect, others have no idea," Jack replied.

"So why hasn't someone spilled the beans?"

"What did you learn by reading the Island News?" Jack asked him.

Jack answered before he could formulate a reply. "Let me guess: trivia and mundane things, Mrs Mackay left for a holiday and she will be back in three weeks. Who's been elected chairperson of the war memorial committee? Which pig came in fourth at the local fair?" Jason nodded. "How much crime news was there?"

Jason couldn't reply then realised he couldn't recall any.

"You missed so much because your mind is locked into the shallow world you come from. That's what you're here doing today; you've uncovered a story but missed something far more important. This paper is reporting local people doing the local things. It's about community. That's what counts. Ianto and I are part of that community. An old friend told me that once you become an Islander you are an Islander for life. No one here will ever betray our trust for that very reason."

"That is one hell of a lot of trust."

"This is not about trust it's about people living together, finding ways to move forward. Celebrating the good times, helping each other out in times of bad. Laughing, crying, and celebrating together. There is so much about us, and I mean us as in Islanders, you don't know about. All you've seen is on the surface like a tourist because that's who you are, someone who comes then goes. It's who remains that counts and for those that do there is a richness of culture unsurpassed."

"I see."

"No you don't because you read that newspaper and missed it."

"Okay what I miss?" Jason replied instinctively.

"There is a fierce neighbourhood watch on this Island. If we know who is going their home will be watched. Their garden will be watered, mail picked up, animals fed. All those committees. They may have some fairly normal names but each one disguises an actual local event celebrated only by the locals. The Solstice festival for example has been celebrated every year for nearly two thousand years. On the surface it's a big farming event but afterwards a huge dance is held nearby to celebrate the highest point of the sun in the year. It gets a bit saucy which is helped along by the local whiskey I might add. There is another festival in midwinter, a ceremony of lights tempting the sun back with a massive bonfire in the centre of the Island next to the henge. Everyone brings torches which are lit and a huge circle formed. There's one being organised right now called 'Harvest Festival'. As well as meeting together to celebrate the harvest everyone brings a contribution small or large for the central food bank. That is used for all or any families who are in hardship. After the end of the fishing industry here due the collapse of the ocean, it was put to good use. I could go on but there's one very month in one form or another. It shows people here are involved with each other on a fundamental
level centred on the yearly cycle of life." Jack nudged the young man. "And you also missed how competitive everyone is. Everyone is trying to outdo each other. It's a matter of pride to get top cake, or longest runner bean, or best preserve."

Jason smiled for the first time. "So getting your name in the paper is kind of an honour?" he checked out.

"More than an honour. It's a form one up-man or woman-ship. And if you want scandal there is no lengths some people will go to gain an upper hand or sabotage. Every year the rules have to be dated to cover every possible cheat like adding 'Power-Grow' to your vegetables. I mean fights have broken out." Jason looked disbelieving. "Some of the women here can throw a damn good punch."

"That I can believe," Jason said thinking of his encounter with Connie.

"Now," Jack said. "Enough of this let me show you my garden."

"Is that rude man gone?" Ianto asked as he joined Jack in the greenhouse.

"Yes and tomorrow he really will be well on his way home."

"Good, he was very rude and upset Connie," Ianto said.

"I think Connie held her own very well. Mrs MacDonnell told me they heard her shouting from inside the General Store."

"She gave him a right telling off."

"Gwen would be very proud to see her great-granddaughter keeping her outspoken nature alive. Although personally I would have paid to see her deck him one," Jack added.

"I liked Gwen and Rhys. I'm glad they came and lived here. And Tosh and Owen. I miss them," Ianto said looking sad.

"Me too."

"That's the hardest bit about living on you have to say goodbye to people you love," Jack drew him into a hug.

"But just think because we live on, they live on with us in our memories. So they will never be forgotten," Ianto cheered.

"You're right; I will never forget Billy or Mac, Morag, Mr MacDonald or Marigold. They helped me so now I can help others."

"Exactly," Jack took his hand and kissed it.

"I was busy today helping out at the hall. Fred has made a huge bread shaped like a fish and one like a load of wheat all stacked up and he's going to make one in the shape of a cow. It's huge. Everyone is decorating with orange, gold, and red. We got all the drums out so we could make a big noise for when the sun goes down so it doesn't forget to come back next spring. Oh I almost forgot Megan who is in charge of doing the harvest festival decorations wanted to know if the ladies could come and take some flowers for the hall."

"Of course," Jack gave him a quick kiss on the lips. "How is the go-cart coming along?"

"We had a test run, we need better brakes," Ianto laughed as they now headed back to the house.
"Let me help you with that," Jason heard a voice say behind him and groaned when he saw it was the local police officer.

"Don't tell me you're here to ensure I leave the Island."

"Och no, you're well on your way. I was sent to give you this". The officer handed Jason a large bottle of golden liquid. "It was noted you had taken a liking to the local whiskey."

"And to what honour do I owe this to?"

"Well today is the harvest festival and while we were all doing the preparations some of us got to talking. You sort of upset a few people shouting your mouth off and in turn those you met acted in kind. We're a proud people and to insult one of us is to insult all. Ianto and Jack have given everything they have to live here. We keep them safe from whatever it was they needed to escape from and we get a bit overprotective. And I think some of us were a bit put out you didn't ask us how important our little newspaper is to us. With all the technology out there, digital this and that, the paper acts like a sort of glue holding us all together. But the reason I'm here is because we wanted to give you something to say that your apology to Ianto and Connie in person didn't go unnoticed."

Jason accepted the bottle and saw the hand-written label.

"It's not as good as Mac's finest which I have on good account a few bottles lay deep in the cellar at Rose Cottage."

"Mac MacDonald?"

"Aye and just so you know, not everyone believes that rubbish about him making his money on the stock market. He was a well-known scallywag and maker of the finest bootleg whisky on the Isle and it's clear he made him a pretty penny."

"Thank you." Bemused, Jason shook the man's hand.

"Now let's make sure you don't miss that ferry," the constable said with a wink taking Jason's bag and escorted him to the walkway.

Chapter End Notes

This story is dedicated to my fabulous beta Milady_dragon. Who weekly turns my terrible punctuation into readable English.

A big thank you to all of you who wrote comments or contacted me personally. You helped me gain insights and made this story a lot better than it would other wise have been. You have no idea what a privilege it is to write for such an appreciative audience.

And finally a thank you, to all you wonderful people who have followed this story to the last word.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!