The Road Not Taken

by lantoJJackh

Summary

Post-Exit Wounds. Ianto needed a break from Torchwood to help himself heal before he could help others. He did not expect the break to become permanent. What happens when he is reminded that there is no escaping Torchwood? Will Ianto choose his old life or keep on the road he's been living? Written for tw_classic_bb.
Prologue

"I, Ianto David Jones, take you Lucinda Judith Harkins, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part."

The vows were simple and traditional, yet heartfelt and tender. The location was breathtaking on the grounds of a vineyard owned by the bride's family. A large yet intimate gathering of close friends and family to mark the start of a new union...a fresh start on life to put behind the years of insanity.

However, the past always has a way of catching up when you least expect it. There is no such thing as ever leaving Torchwood.

To be continued...
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Author: Characters/Pairings: Ianto, Jack, few OCs, Jack/Ianto (past) Ianto/OFC
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Disclaimer: I don't make any money off of this, sadly. All things Torchwood belong to those who own them and the poem The Road Not Taken belongs to Robert Frost. OC's and the plot are mine.
Beta: and Artists: - Art found here & - Art found here. Combined art post is here.
Word Count: ~24k

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

"Bore da, Nos da. Good morning, good night. What a name for a place," Jack's voice boomed as he and Gwen stood in front of the coffee shop/cafe. "How quaint to use Welsh. Isn't that right, Ava?" he ticked the stomach of the almost three-year-old girl, in his arms.

"Yes, Daddy," Ava giggled and squirmed in her father's arms.

"A touch of Wales. How charming." Gwen clearly was not amused by Jack's enthusiasm over visiting the Californian Cardiff as a side trip after the UNIT conference ended in San Diego. "The weather is a lot better," She allowed Jack the tiniest of smiles as they entered the cafe.

They placed their orders with the young red-head behind the counter and she told them to sit and their order would be brought to them.
"She's hot," Jack not so subtly whispered to Gwen, trying to make sure Ava could not hear. "I've never slept with a red-head before. I hear they are wild between the sheets. I could have her like this if I want." He deftly snapped his fingers.

“But you won’t.” Gwen gave Jack a pitying glance. He was still the same flirty captain he had always been but he never acted on his words anymore. “You’re still waiting for your prince to return.” It was clear as day that Jack was still madly in love with Ianto, even after he vanished without a trace three years ago. They had tried repeatedly to search for him, but always came up empty handed. Gwen suspected that he must have had help disappearing. Or feared that he was dead. She never voiced that fear to Jack. She didn’t think Jack would be able to handle that possibility.

A month after Ianto disappeared, Jack discovered he was pregnant. Despite previous declarations that he would never do that again, the fact that it was a life that he and Ianto had created together gave him something to live for and brought light to the darkness. Seven months later Ava was born and she became Jack’s whole world.

"I think my husband might have something to say about you trying to put the moves on me." The young red-head from behind counter now stood behind Jack with two cups of coffee in her hand and a ‘say one more thing and I’ll smack you’ face.

Jack blushed and covered his face when he saw the woman was pregnant. For some reason it made Jack even more horny, "I guess...never mind." He stopped himself from suggesting a threesome with the hot pregnant chick and her husband, having a feeling the suggestion would not go over well and he might get hit.

"You are an odd thing." She placed the cups on the table and looked at the child who was sitting on the overly flirty man's lap. There was something hauntingly familiar about the girl.

"I've been told that and worse before. I'm sorry I didn't mean to offend you." Jack was also new to apologising for his flirty behaviour.

"A married man should not make suggestions like that in front of his wife," the red-head tried to remain neutral, but her voice still showed her displeasure. Her green eyes pierced through Jack, like a teacher admonishing a naughty student.

"I'm not married." Jack made a face. "You thought we?" He grinned at Gwen.

"No...no. We aren't married. I have my own husband and daughter at home," Gwen explained, blushing slightly.

"It's just me and Ava," Jack said sadly. Making it clear he wished that was not the case.

"I have two daddies," Ava chimed in.

"Do you know what you are having?" Jack asked, making small talk to show he was not some creepy guy hitting on random strangers.

"A boy and a girl," she answered. "In about four months they will be here." The obvious excitement was contagious.

"I take it they are your first." Gwen smiled as she remembered her pregnancy.
"They will be. Is there anything else I can get you? Laverbread is the house specialty." the waitress asked.

"Do you put bits of chopped bacon in the laverbread?" Jack winked, not letting up on the flirting. Some things could not be helped.

"Yes, we do. It's my husband's recipe."

"Hmm. Excellent. I'll have an order then. My ex...well sort of ex, Ava's other father, he used to make them for us that way when we had lay ins, until he disappeared...erm left," Jack sighed with fond remembrance. "Your husband, he's Welsh then? We're from Wales."

The woman nodded. "Yes."

Jack's eyes glazed over. "Yummy sexy Welsh vowels."

"Oi!" Gwen slapped Jack's arm. "Down lover boy. Sorry Jack has a one track mind. Forgive him."

"It's okay." The woman laughed. "My husband has a voice to die for so I know what you mean."

"Lucinda! It's your dad." The young man behind the counter held up a cordless phone. "He sounds panicked."

"Excuse me. I'll put that order in for you," Lucinda apologised for the interruption and wondered what emergency her father had this time.

"What's up, Dad?" She said, trying not to sound too annoyed.

"Hey, Sweetie. Will you be at the cafe for a couple minutes?" John Harkins had no idea how he was going to break this news to his daughter. This was not the type of news a parent should ever have to give their child, especially their pregnant daughter.

"I'll be here for a while. Is everything okay?" Lucinda heard the hesitation in her father's voice.

"I'll be there in a few minutes. I love you, Luce. Don't go anywhere." John pleaded with his daughter.

"Love you too, Dad." The pregnant woman knew what ever news her father had was not good, but she had no idea how bad. Her mind was swirling with all the possibilities and she did everything to keep her mind busy for what seemed like an eternity.

"Enjoy." Lucinda placed the plate of laverbread in front of Jack. "Just yell if you need anything else," her voice wavered slightly and Lucinda's hand rubbed the small bump that was her stomach.

The pregnant woman's face fell and paled when her father walked in. Intuition kicked in and John did not need to say what happen. She knew her father was here to tell her he was gone and never coming back.

"No. It can't be. No! No! No!" Lucinda shook her head as tears fell freely and she sunk to the floor, expelling grief's lament from her lungs.

"Dad, how? Why him? Why now?" Lucinda looked for answers as to why two hours ago her husband kissed her goodbye, saying he'd be back in a few hours and now her father was here to tell her he was gone and never coming back.
"I'm not sure someone thinks he got too close to the rocks while he was surfing. I'm sorry." John helped his daughter up and led her to the office. His heart was in pieces knowing there were going to be two children that would never know their father and his daughter was now a widow, not even making it through her first year of marriage.

Jack and Gwen watched as John led Lucinda to the back of the cafe and quietly closed the door behind them.


"What? Why?" Jack replied, his mouth full. "Not done yet." He pointed to his plate and cup of coffee. "I haven't had it this good since Ianto." There was no way that Jack was not going to finish his laverbread.

"That woman just lost her husband," Gwen stared and shook her head at Jack's insensitivity.

"We aren't the only people here. Why should we leave?" Jack nursed his coffee as Ava squirmed in his lap, trying to get down. "Where do you think you are going?"

"Mine." Ava tried to reach for Jack's coffee, but he pulled her tiny hand away.

"No, mine," Jack retorted. "You're too young for coffee."

"But Daddyyyyyyyyyy," she whined and pouted, balling her hands.

"Okay just a little sip." Jack knew that was the Jones charm at work. He was enjoying himself too much to leave. The coffee had not been this good in three years and he was going to drink until he was ready to burst.

"She will be the boss of you one day, Jack," Gwen commented as Jack's face suddenly went blank and pale. "What's wrong?"

"I just had a bad feeling. What if I can't find Ianto because he isn't around to be found?" Jack shuddered at the thought. It was not an idea he had consciously thought about until witnessing Lucinda being told her husband was dead. Death is funny that way.

Jack knew the day would eventually come when Ianto would pass on from this world and now he found it very unsettling not knowing how or where his former lover was.

To be continued...
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Post-Exit Wounds. Ianto needed a break from Torchwood to help himself heal before he could help others. He did not expect the break to become permanent. What happens when he is reminded that there is no escaping Torchwood? Will Ianto choose his old life or keep on the road he's been living? Written for tw_classic_bb.

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Beta: timelordshines and czarina_kitty
Artists: the_silver_sun- Art found here & iantojjackh- Art found here. Combined art post is here.
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Ianto felt a large knot in the bottom of his stomach as his hand stilled on the doorknob to his office. He had entered through the back door to avoid any customers that could distract him from reaching his goal. He could hear Lucinda's sobs through the door and Ianto was at a loss for coming up with a believable story of what had happened. The chill of drowning still lingered in every corner of his body and it seemed like he'd never be warm again.

Slowly, the office door creaked open and the stunned faces of Lucinda and John looked up at him. The dim lights of the room masked just how shocked they really were.
"Hey," Ianto said softly, not sure of the protocol for telling your wife you are not really dead. lol That you can't die and will look exactly like you do today when you are ninety.

"Is it really you?" Lucinda stood before Ianto, her hands reaching up to cup his face, unsure if what she was seeing was real.

"Yeah, Luce. I'm here," Ianto whispered as he pressed his lips to his wife's forehead whilst his arms pulled her toward him.

"Dad said you died. What's going on?" Lucinda asked uncertainly. She tightened her grip on Ianto, fearing if she let go that he would be gone for real.

"Someone made a mistake. I don't know what happened. I woke up on the beach with a bunch of people around me. I came here as fast as I could," Ianto offered as the only explanation. He was still trying to process what happened and it was overwhelming. The feel of Lucinda's tears on his neck caused Ianto to choke up. "I could never leave you," he whispered as he soothingly rubbed his wife's back never wanting to let go.

"I saw when they pulled you out of the water. You were not breathing, Ianto. The paramedics, they couldn't find a pulse." John stared in disbelief, but he knew it wise not to question the miracle before him. The important fact remained that his grandchildren did not lose their father today. "Shouldn't you be in the hospital?" John asked. With Ianto nearly drowning he should have been checked out by medical professionals to be sure there was no lasting damage.

"They think there might have been something faulty with the machinery. I feel fine. There's no need for a hospital." Ianto knew it was a piss poor excuse, but it was better than the truth. They would not be able to handle the truth, Ianto wasn't sure he would be able to handle it himself. When he began his life with Lucinda, Ianto thought he could put Torchwood behind him and that he could have a normal life but today showed that was not possible. Was this little gift from Jack his way of making sure Ianto came back to him had he ever strayed? The thought of that made Ianto's blood boil, but what made it boil more was deep down he knew his feelings had not changed in the last three years. Love isn't always enough, as the saying goes.

"Are you okay? Are you hurt anywhere?" Lucinda asked as she pulled back to examine Ianto for herself. Her arms slid into the pocket of his hoodie, wanting to keep Ianto close just in case.

"Never better." Ianto tried pushed back the stray thoughts of Jack as far back as they could go. "I'm sorry for scaring you. Is everyone okay?" His hand rubbed small circles over the swell of Lucinda's belly.

"We're fine now that you are okay. Did you have someone check you out? That is a nasty bump you have there." Lucinda reached out and ran her fingers over the nodule, causing Ianto to wince. "Sorry."

"It's fine." Ianto shook his head. "I've been through worse." He tried to belie any worries his pregnant wife might have.

"Worse than almost drowning?" She asked snaking her arms around Ianto's neck. Lucinda had seen the scars on his back, arms and legs. There was one on his shoulder that looked like a gunshot wound. Whenever she brought up where the scars came from Ianto clammed up and changed the subject. Lucinda always thought the wounds were self-inflicted, as a result of the horrid childhood Ianto alluded to.

"Well, there was being shot by a blowfish wired on cocaine or being tenderized by a group of cannibals wanting me as their next meal," Ianto shuddered. It might sound like a joke but those
events were very real and still affected Ianto badly to this day. If his Torchwood past was catching up with him, Ianto thought he might start telling the truth about the years he tried to forget.

"Ianto! Can't you be serious? That's not even funny and it's really morbid." Lucinda wished he would be truthful about the scars. She wouldn't think any less of her husband. Everyone had low points in their life and did things they were not proud of, but Ianto telling the outlandish stories to cover the truth was growing tiresome and had been the only source of friction in their relationship so far and it really annoyed Lucinda that her husband was joking at a time like this.

"The scar on my hip is from kinky sex with my ex-boyfriend." Ianto was sure he would have left a few scars on Jack if it wasn't for his immorality. A light went off in Ianto's head and he pulled up the leg of his track suit bottoms and frowned to see the scar from when his car went off the cliff still on the back of his calf. Maybe all scars before becoming immortal stayed where they were. "Car accident." He pointed to the scar on his leg. It was the one scar Lucinda believed the truth on, not that Ianto explained in detail the accident that caused it. Somehow he thought she would not believe that a deranged person drove him off the road.

That was John's cue to exit. "I'll see you later at dinner." Whether Ianto was joking or not, talking about sex in the presence of his daughter and son-in-law was uncomfortable and out of place with him in the room. "Glad you are okay, Ianto," John said for the benefit of his daughter. It was a regular misstep the young man made in his presence, saying things that were out of place. Was it the dry British humour he had heard about? Or was it because he never warmed up to his son-in-law and didn't really trust the young Welshman.

"Okay, Dad," Lucinda replied before turning back to Ianto. She crossed her arms over her chest and sucked on her lower lip. "Enough with the joking around. The stories were amusing at first. Why can't you tell me the truth for once? How can a blowfish even fire a gun? I'm not going to think any less of you if you did this to yourself." The game of ridiculous stories was growing tiresome. It made Lucinda feel stupid because she felt Ianto did not trust her with the truth.

"It was a humanoid blowfish who liked drugs and fast sports cars," Ianto explained. He knew Lucinda would never understand or believe the truth about his past. This Cardiff was far removed from the insanity of its namesake and getting its residents to believe the truth was an arduous task. He was at a point that he was playing off the truth as a joke because no matter how many times he told the truth no normal person would believe the craziness that was uniquely Torchwood.

"Yeah right. Next you are going to tell me that hoax six years ago with those large robots was real and they really to upgrade us all." Lucinda laughed and leaned up to place a kiss on her husband's lips, which he did not reciprocate.

To be continued...
Ianto felt like he had been kicked in the gut after hearing the worst day of his life trivialised as a joke. "Just forget it." His voice filled with subdued anger. "You always think I'm joking. Believe what you want. I know what I went through. That so-called hoax you are referring to was very real and it was the worst day of my life. I was in the middle of where it all started. The building I worked in was destroyed that day. Eight hundred and twenty three people worked there and only twenty seven of us survived. You cannot begin to imagine the things I witnessed that day. I saw so many friends die that day. So it wasn't some big fucking hoax!" Ianto shouted. "That is how I got most of my scars." Ianto knew he had gone too far with his outburst and yet he had no desire
to take his words back. Canary Wharf would always be a sensitive subject.

"I had no idea. I was only joking. You don't need to take it so seriously. I'm sorry, Ianto." Lucinda reached out for Ianto's arm, but he slipped out of her grasp.

"It's not a joke to me. You've had such a sheltered life. The perfect childhood. Never have you been touched by tragedy," Ianto paused before heading to the safe under the desk. He knew he was acting like a spoiled child but Ianto did not care at the moment. If the spoken word did not work, perhaps the written word would succeed.

"Hey!" Lucinda snapped. "I get it...you've had a rough day, but that's not an excuse to act like a jerk."

Ianto sighed and ran a hand through his hair. "You made a joke of the most terrible event I've ever gone through. How do you expect me to react?" Once the safe was open, Ianto pulled out three of the two dozen books he had stored there and handed them over to Lucinda.

"What are these?" she asked, looking at the leather bound books.

"My diaries. A record of my life."

"You keep your diaries locked in the safe...isn't that a bit overboard?"

Ianto's scowl grew. "Not when most of what is written is covered under the Official Secrets Act." There was the doubt in her voice that hurt like hot metal against the skin. It was the Torchwood curse, no one on the outside could ever understand it. "You wanted the truth and there it is in your hands."

"Why show me these now?"

"When I left home three years ago I had every intention of going back. I needed a break from all the craziness to give myself time to heal. Everyone had been looking to me to hold everything together. No one stopped to ask me how I was doing after we lost Owen and Tosh. I was practically a full time nanny to my boss making sure he made it through the day. I was getting ready to return to Wales when I met you and decided I wanted a normal life. If I went back I knew I would be living on borrowed time. I didn't want to die young like Owen and Tosh, but what happened to me today showed that I never really escaped." Ianto worked himself into such a state he was almost hyperventilating.

"What do you mean?" Lucinda felt guilty for causing Ianto the distress he was in. If he truly believed his stories then she was going to support him. "Come here." She put the books on the desk and enveloped Ianto into a tight, comforting embrace and rubbed his back.

"My boss...hh...he...he did something to me before I left. I don't know how to explain it."

"What did he do?" Lucinda thought she heard fear in her husband's voice.

Ianto did not have a chance to respond as his mobile started to ring. He pulled the phone out of his pocket and saw it was Martha calling him back, he had left a message for his friend, hoping she might have some insight into Jack's immortality. "It's Martha. I've got to take this. Can I have some privacy?"

"Are you going to be okay?" Lucinda asked, the worry etched on her face. She wondered what Ianto was going to say about what his old boss did to him.

"I'll be fine. I just really need to ask Martha some things, that's all. I'll be out in a few minutes,"
Ianto tried to reassure Lucinda. "You should read these. You might find them entertaining." He handed the diaries back. "I wrote them after all." Ianto acted as if nothing was wrong and even flashed one of his flirty smiles.

"I'll be out front then." Lucinda smiled and quickly pecked Ianto's lips and this time he responded. "We'll finish this later then?"

"I promise," Ianto assured and quickly answered his phone. "Martha. Thanks for calling back."

Lucinda put the journals on the counter as her eyes swept over the patrons of the cafe, noting the odd couple with the little girl were still enjoying their food and drink. She gave a brief smile in their direction. Before sitting behind the register, the pregnant woman made herself a cup of green tea to drink while she read the diaries.

It did not take long for Lucinda to become engrossed in her husband's words. It read like something out of an epic science fiction novel and she did not even see someone approach.

"Reading anything good?" The voice finally drew Lucinda back to reality.

"Something like that." Lucinda closed the diary and looked up. "Sorry is there anything else I can get you? More coffee? Another order of laverbread? Do you need something for your daughter?"

"Yes to all. I haven't had laverbread that good in a long time," Jack replied. The red-head did not look like someone who had just lost her husband. If he didn't know better it seemed like nothing had happened. The denial stage of grief, Jack surmised. It was a feeling Jack knew all too well.

"What does your daughter want?"

"Steamed milk with a hint of caramel," Jack answered as he reached out for one of the leather bound books. "Are they any good? What's the title? I've got a long flight home in a few days and I wanted something to read." The cover reminded Jack of the diaries Ianto wrote in.

"Excuse me!" Lucinda pulled the book away from the grabby stranger. "They belong to my husband. They're his diaries."

"I'm sorry. I had no idea. I'm sorry to hear about your husband," Jack offered his condolences.

Lucinda looked confused for a moment until she remembered that she was at Jack's table when her father came to break the news about Ianto's supposed death. "Thank you, but my husband is fine. It was all a misunderstanding."

"That's good news. I bet you are so relieved."

"I am. Next month is our first anniversary and with the twins coming soon...I don't know how I would have done this myself," Lucinda said as she tried not to cry.

Ethan, a lanky man with a messy mop of blonde curly hair and the only other employee of the cafe came up behind her and whispered something to her. "I'm sorry, but we are out of prepared laverbread mixture. I can ask my husband to make a new batch if you don't mind waiting."

"No. Don't. It's okay. I don't want to be an imposition. You've both been through a lot today. It's just that's it's been a long time since I've had laverbread this good. Brings back some fond memories. I might just have to make a special trip back here for it." Jack started to reminisce about days gone by. "What I wouldn't mind is meeting the talent responsible for such great food." Jack
figured the man could use a compile t after a trying day.

"I'll see if he's off the phone." Lucinda offered a kind smile as she turned and headed to the office. She quietly opened the door and saw Ianto was still on the phone with Martha. She was the only non-family member from Ianto's past Lucinda knew. "Sorry sweetheart, but someone wants to meet you after you are done with your call." She winced, feeling a sharp pain in her stomach. "Ow," Lucinda cried when another pain hit a few seconds later and stumbled back a couple of steps.

"What is it?" Ianto asked as worry set in immediately, until a smile spread across his wife's face. "What's so funny?"

"Come here and give me your hand." Lucinda took a firm grip on Ianto wrist and placed it on her stomach. "Feel that?" She rubbed her hand gently over Ianto's, the love for her husband and children evident to anyone who looked.

"Wow!" Ianto's eyes went wide with amazement and a billion other warm emotions. "Is that?" He could not take his eyes of his wife as he started to tear up. It hit him that if it wasn't for his being immortal, he would have missed out on this amazing moment that there were no words for.

"I think so." Lucinda started to tear up when she saw Ianto do the same. "Don't you start that." She quickly wiped away the shed and unshed tears.

"Oh, shit," Ianto cursed when he realised he had Martha on the phone still. "Sorry, Martha. Everything is fine. We felt one of the twins kick. Yes, for the first time. Thank you. What's he doing in San Diego? I still know his number. I know Jack will be able to answer my question best, but...I guess I should finally talk to him. Thanks. I'll talk to you soon." Ianto hung up the phone. The joy of feeling one of his children move for the first time was counteracted by the realisation that he'd finally have to face Jack after all this time.

"Talk to whom?" Lucinda noticed the darker mood that invaded her husband. "Jack? He's your old boss?"

"Yup." Ianto fidgeted nervously. "I really don't want to talk to him." Which really meant Ianto was scared and had no idea how to explain why he left without saying goodbye or where he was going to.

"Left on bad terms?" Lucinda asked. This was the most Ianto had talked about the people he was closest to before he left Wales.

"Complicated terms," Ianto replied. Complicated did not begin to describe it. Ianto could never admit to his wife that there was be a part of him that would always love Jack and he wondered if he would have ever left Wales had either admitted the way they felt about each other.

The office was far enough from the counter that Jack could not hear the whole conversation but he heard bits and pieces and at first he could not see through the slightly ajar office door. Once Jack saw Lucinda stumble back, that is when he was stunned into utter shock for the first time in his life.
When the red-head had left to get her husband, it had never occurred to him that it might be Ianto. Jack watched as the couple felt their children move for the first time and he choked down the hurt and unexpected jealousy that this tender moment provoked. He was suddenly acutely aware of all the milestones in Ava’s short life that Ianto had already missed. The first time he felt her move, the first time he saw her on a scan, her birth, her first steps, her first words. So many momentous occasions that Ianto was going to go through with this stranger in a café on the other side of the world, but which Jack had to experience alone. His jealousy began to turn into anger when he realised the woman with the voice of a nightingale was in contact with Ianto and never saw fit to mention that to him. It then made sense why he or Gwen could never find the missing Welshman; UNIT had to have helped Ianto vanish. But why? Did Ianto really never want to talk to him? With the way he left it certainly made it seem like that, but Jack knew Ianto better than that. Sometimes better than Ianto knew himself. Ianto had forced himself to believe that he wanted nothing to do with him anymore. Well, Jack was about to take that choice away from him.

"I wouldn't exactly call it complicated. Confusing, yes. I was confused why you would just disappear in the middle of the night with no goodbye, with no warning." Jack tried to show no emotion, but the edge of his lips quivered. He wanted to take Ianto into his arms and kiss him all over knowing that he was alright and then smack the shit out of him for scaring him, making Jack think the worst had happened.

To be continued...
Ianto practically had a heart attack when he heard Jack's voice, so cool and detached. It sounded like he didn’t care but Ianto knew him too well to believe that. Ianto knew he was the bad guy in this situation and fully deserved Jack’s anger. "Fuck," Ianto muttered under his breath, rolling his eyes into the back of his head.

Lucinda looked between the men figuring the other man had to be Jack, the ex-boss Ianto never wanted to talk about. It shocked her to hear that Ianto left his old job without telling anyone. "He’s your old boss?" Jack tried not to think about how much that hurt. He raised an eyebrow, "Is that what you told your wife I was?" part of him, the vindictive part wanted Ianto to squirm.

"You were the boss." Ianto could not make eye contact with his ex, knowing Jack would always
be a major weakness. "What else is there to say? What else was there? What were we exactly. Two people who just shagged constantly?" Ianto asked, biting his lip to stop it quivering. They had never put a label to the true nature of their relationship despite the unspoken words and actions of love.

"Why don't you tell me what there was?" Jack challenged.


Part of Jack wanted to out the Welshman in petty revenge for the hurt Ianto had caused him, but he knew that would just push him further away, and now that Jack had found Ianto he couldn’t stand the thought of losing him again.

Even a blind man could see the tension between the two men and it was obviously rooted with deep hurt feelings. Lucinda raised both hands and put them on Ianto's chest, lightly pushing. "Please tell me you were joking about an ex-boyfriend." The few mentions of an ex-boyfriend were always mixed in with the wild stories about his past and Lucinda passed it off as Ianto’s reluctance to be serious.

Ianto closed his eyes and shook his head, "It wasn't a joke." Even though you thought it was. "And before you ask, yes Jack and I were...I don't know what quite we were. Whatever we were it was sexual in nature."

"How long?" Lucinda did not know what to think.

"About two, two and a half years. I'm sorry I didn't do more to convince you." Ianto felt like everything was caving in, the two people he loved most meeting and both their eyes on him, both waiting for an explanation of everything. The crazy life was crashing into the normal one and nothing would ever be the same once the dust settled.

"You left because of the girl, didn't you? You didn't want her." Lucinda remembered the little girl saying she had two daddies when she was waiting on their table earlier. She didn't think much of it at the time but now she realised there was a good chance the girl could be Ianto's. "Do you even want our children?" It was a weak moment in which Lucinda was embarrassed to have let her hormones get the better of her and rule her tongue.

"What?" To say Ianto was confused was an understatement. He had no idea what girl his wife was talking about and was hurt that she would even ask a question like that. "Jack?" Ianto looked to him for some kind of answer.

"Ianto knew nothing about Ava before he disappeared. I didn't find out about her until a month after he left." Jack hoped Ianto would understand what he was hinting at. It was obvious the missus knew next to nothing about her husband's secret life.

"Who the hell is Ava?" Ianto let his temper slip as he looked between Jack and Lucinda for answers.

"Contraceptives in the rain don't work if you don't go outside." Jack winced as he watched Ianto's face pale as the realisation hit the young man. oops

Ianto swallowed hard as he looked at Jack properly for the first time in over three years. "How come you didn't say anything?" He made the logical assumption that Ava was a little girl who would probably turn three in a few months. Had he had any idea that Jack had been pregnant he would never have left Wales.
"I didn't know until after you left. Finding you proved impossible." Jack smiled.

"I traveled for almost a year and when I decided not to come back UNIT helped me stay hidden." It was almost as if a weight began to lift from Ianto's chest to reveal that little secret.

Hearing that Ianto had planned on coming back made Jack's heart skip a beat. "What changed?" As his eyes darted between the blushing Welshman and his not so blushing bride who looked like she might murder him or Ianto, the answer to his question was obvious. "You wanted a normal life. Something I couldn't give you." Jack could understand why Ianto wanted a normal life; he never had one and knew as long as Ianto stayed with Torchwood normal was not in the vocabulary. Jack wasn't beyond trying to give normalcy to the young man, but Ianto never even let him try. Jack's emotions got jumbled: understanding, hurt, relief, grief, anger and resentment. Each vied for dominance, but Jack could not make sense of his feelings which just gave way to frustration.

Ianto chewed his lip, carefully thinking of a good answer that would not upset either person who had a hold on his heart. "A normal life away from the death and craziness. If I stayed I would probably be dead by now." Ianto silently added that he did not want to put Jack through that, having to watch him die.

Lucinda knew there was an unspoken conversation under the one Ianto was having with his former flame. "Can we stop with all the death talk? There has been enough of it today." Her arm snaked possessively around Ianto as if to tell Jack to back off from her husband but something told her that Jack was not the kind of man to be deterred easily.

"Can you blame me after today?" Ianto said quietly as his gaze shifted toward Jack. "Speaking of which...There is something I need to ask you."

"What is it?" Jack asked.

"I think we need to go somewhere to talk. It has nothing to do with the state of human evolution in three thousand years," Ianto replied, knowing Lucinda would be confused by his last comment. He turned slowly, pulling out of his wife's embrace. "There are a few things I need to discuss with Jack."

Lucinda trusted Ianto...somewhat. Being married meant that you should trust your spouse, but there was something about this situation that seemed off, and then there was the way the men looked at each other. It was the look of longing and desire of two people connected to each other. "You already have a daughter? How could you not have known?" She was not going to let Ianto go without a fight.

"It's complicated. There are some things I need to clear up." This truth was another thing Ianto had to keep from Lucinda. She would never understand that men from Jack's time could get pregnant from another man.

"Are you gay?" Lucinda tried to wrap her head around all the new information she had learned about Ianto today. It was as if he was a different man than the one she married. Some friends had warned that getting engaged after six months of dating and then getting married six months later was too soon and not enough time to get to know someone before exchanging vows. There was a small part of Lucinda's mind that sometimes wondered if they were right, but she always pushed those thoughts away, knowing that she had married an amazing man.

"No." Ianto's heart broke at the doubt he saw in his wife's eyes. He had been foolish to think he could escape the hold Torchwood had on him. Never in a million years did he think that Jack
Harkness would ever walk into his coffee shop over six thousand miles from where they once had their life together.

"Then what is going on? What were you involved in that you ran so far away? I'm tired of these outlandish tales. You know secret government organisations are just a movie plot devices. Did you believe his stories?"

"Actually, we have nothing to do with the government. We are funded by the crown. I'm not sure what stories Ianto told you, but you shouldn't talk down to your husband like you are," Jack chastised Lucinda for her attitude, not caring if he was overstepping his boundaries.

"Is there such a thing as a humanoid blowfish?" It was the most recent story told and the freshest in Lucinda's mind.

"The blowfish, really?" lol Jack looked at Ianto in surprise. "Of all the things you mentioned that? Why not talk about me?"

Ianto rolled his eyes, making Jack smile. "It was the easiest. Trying to explain you..." A deep blush coloured Ianto's cheeks. "First, your ego doesn't need that boost and second, no one could understand or begin to explain you."

"You understood me...at least I thought you did," Jack let his vulnerability surface for a brief second before pushing it back down. "As for the blowfish, they have a preference for cocaine and fast sports cars. One shot him right here about four years ago." Jack put his hand over the spot where Ianto had been shot, leaving his hand to linger a few more seconds than it should have.

Lucinda's brow furrowed when she saw Jack's hand land exactly where Ianto's scar was. That kind of remembrance only comes with knowing the person intimately. There was no doubt left that the men had been lovers at one point. The questions that remained where: How did Ava come about? And what went so wrong that Ianto walked out on his old life without warning?

"That doesn't really matter now does it? Whether or not I understand you." Ianto said softly as he tried not to show how much the simple touch affected him. It baffled him how after all this time, Jack still got to him and Ianto found he had to remind himself that he was a happily married man, for the most part. "About that talk?" He was the picture of perfect non-emotion once Ianto got his emotions in check Ianto did not want either to see his inner turmoil, torn between two people whom he loved greatly. Never did Ianto think he would be in this situation, his old life clashing with his new life. Ianto knew he was in a no win situation. Anything he did or said would hurt both Jack and Lucinda. The only option available was to put on the face of the stoic butler he'd got used to in his early Torchwood Cardiff days. While in truth, underneath, he was a sea of raging emotions.

Jack knew the Welshman too well and knew exactly what he was trying to do and it broke his heart that Ianto just couldn't say what he wanted. He wondered if had Lucinda not been pregnant Ianto would be in his arms, but he remembered the look the couple gave each other when they thought no one was looking. It was one of two people very much in love with each other. Perhaps Jack did not know Ianto as well as he thought, or was there room in his heart for both of them?

To be continued...
"What do you have to ask him that cannot be said in front of me?" Lucinda was obviously scared. The dull throb between her eyes became more like a hammer strike. It was like the rug had pulled out from under her world. The pregnant woman never imagined that her husband's secrets included an ex-boyfriend, a child with said ex and that his crazy stories had some kind of root in reality. "You said he did something to you." She looked from Ianto to his former lover, accusation in her eyes. "What did you do to Ianto?"

If Ianto had learned anything the last five months, it was not to make an already angry pregnant woman angrier. "Come here, Luce." He drew the upset woman into a hug. "I can wait to ask. It's not that important." It was easy to lie if it was for the benefit of his unborn children. "I really had
no idea about Ava. I’m sorry.” The apology was directed at both of them. Ianto placed a tender kiss on the top of his wife's head, letting his lips linger for a few moments while his eyes stayed focused on Jack to have a wordless conversation with him. The idea that he was already a father felt like a kick in the gut and left Ianto conflicted. He was desperate to meet his daughter, but he knew seeming too eager in front of his wife would upset her more.

Jack winced slightly at the affection Ianto showed his wife. He did not do jealousy well. “What did….” Jack slowly realised what was going on, putting together the pieces. "Surfing accident?" Surfing was one of the last activities Jack ever expected Ianto to take up, but living in a place like this, one could suppose there isn't much else to do. "Too close to the rocks and you barely have a scratch on you.” For someone to be mistaken for dead and to only have a small bump after hitting a rock meant that there was no mistake when they declared Ianto dead. Jack was now positive that Ianto did die and the something he did to Ianto had somehow made the Welshman immortal like him. The Captain reached out to touch Ianto as if touching the man would imbue him with the answers to his questions. The reaction from Ianto was not what he expected. Ianto flinched, looking almost scared to be touched. It brought only more grief to Jack as it was a look of disdain he had not seen since he told Ianto to execute Lisa.

"Did you know?" Ianto asked, sensing Jack knew what became of him. He did not want to sound like he was accusing Jack of passing on his immortality on purpose, especially knowing how much Jack saw it as a curse and would not wish it upon his worst enemy and Ianto was the furthest thing from an enemy.

"I had no idea, I didn't even know it was possible," Jack answered truthfully. There was so much he wanted to ask Ianto, but it looked like there was no chance that his wife would give them time alone together. "Are you sure that's what happened?"

"I've seen it enough times to know what it feels like," Ianto answered and then braced himself for the inevitable barrage of questions from Lucinda. "Don't worry about it, sweetheart. It's nothing to worry about. I'm fine," he whispered, holding onto his wife as tight as he could.

"You promise?" Lucinda looked up into the captivating blue eyes, her own eyes glistening with the threat of unshed tears. The ups and downs of the day had really played havoc with her emotions, making her hormones bounce all over the place. There was much being said that was going over her head, but Lucinda had to remind herself that she had to trust Ianto to tell her what was going on when he was ready.

"I promise," Ianto replied with a small smile and placed a chaste kiss on Lucinda's lips.

Jack closed his eyes, unable to watch Ianto with his wife. He could clearly see that they loved each other and his chance to have that life with the Welshman had long passed.

Meanwhile back in front of the cafe, Gwen wondered what had been keeping Jack so long and turned to see if he was still at the counter, but there was only a blonde man working. She swore she would kill Jack if he was bothering the recent widow. Gwen could picture Jack putting the moves on her with no sense of propriety. Ava was also getting fussy, wanting her father. "Where Daddy?" Ava whined balling her tiny hands into fists and banged them on the table. "Want Daddy." A full melt down was imminent and the girl took off before Gwen could stop her.

There were some days Gwen swore the girl was a miniature version of Jack minus all the flirting. "Ava, come back here." Gwen gave chase and watched as the girl disappeared around a corner.

"Daddy!" Ava latched onto Jack's leg and held on tightly.
Jack looked at Ianto and Lucinda before lifting Ava into his arms. For Ianto it was a look of shock and Lucinda a look of horror. It came from the realisation that there was no doubt that Ava was part Ianto. She had his nose, his eyes and his smile. "Pumpkin, there is someone I'd like you to meet." Jack's face lit up entirely in the presence of Ava.

Gwen was about to scold Jack until she saw who Jack was talking to and her mouth hung open in shock. She would have rushed to hug the man, but it seemed like someone else had a monopoly over Ianto's body.

"It's good to see you too, Gwen," Ianto said to the latest arrival.

"You're alive and you are okay." Gwen smiled and bounced over to Ianto and kissed his cheek.

Ianto shook his head. Some people never change. "Alive and well despite earlier reports," he said with an uneasy smile. Of course, where there was Jack Gwen could never be too far behind. Ianto should have known that Jack would have defaulted to Gwen once he was gone. "Luce, this is Gwen Cooper. Someone I used to work with too. Gwen, my wife Lucinda." Introductions seemed like the next logical step.

Gwen and Lucinda exchanged pleasantries and Gwen could not stop staring. She got stuck on the fact that Ianto was married with children on the way. This was not one of the directions she had pictured his life taking. It was not difficult to see the pain on Jack's face. "I'm just going to head back to the table. Seems like you boys have a few things to discuss." Gwen hoped that Lucinda would give Jack some time alone with Ianto, knowing there had to be things they could only say with no one else around.

"Who they, Daddy?" Ava questioned, wondering if new man and woman knew her Daddy.

"I'll tell you real soon. Go back with Gwen and I'll come get you in a little bit. Okay, princess?" Jack whispered and kissed his daughter's cheek. Ianto and Lucinda's eyes were locked on Ava with the woman no doubt questioning how Ava came about. "You go with Gwen and the nice lady here will get you your steamed milk. You be good okay." Jack thought it would be best to wait to introduce Ianto to his daughter when there was not an audience around, meaning the very pissed off looking red head.

"Okay." Ava did as she was told. She kissed Jack on the cheek, "Love you, Daddy." The bouncing toddler turned to Lucinda and smiled, "Can I have milk, please?"

"Um, okay. Sure thing." Lucinda put on the best smile she could muster, realising this child was technically her step daughter. The jealous side of her thought for a moment that if Jack had no biological claim to Ava, there was no reason she and Ianto couldn’t raise her. It would get Jack out of their lives quicker before he had a chance to get his hooks back into her husband. But then her maternal side kicked in and she knew it was wrong to take a child from the only parent she had known. There was no choice but to follow Ava and Gwen to the front of the cafe.

Just before Lucinda got out of reach, Ianto pulled her in for a hug and whispered how much he loved her and promised to explain everything when they got home. The couple’s hands remain linked until the last possible moment when Ianto mouthed the words 'Thank you' before disappearing into his office with Jack.

Jealousy surfaced again as he watched Ianto with his wife. With every passing second it seemed that his chance with Ianto slipped further and further away. Jack wanted to know where things had gone so wrong between them.
As soon as the door to Ianto's office closed Jack pulled his former lover in for the biggest hug ever. At first Ianto tried to pull away, but Jack's hold was too tight. Eventually he stopped struggling, but did not return the gesture. The repeated whisper of the word “why” in Ianto’s ear finally broke him and he held onto Jack just as tight, burying his face into the crook of Jack's neck. All of Jack’s negative feelings toward Ianto evaporated the second Ianto's arms went around him. It felt like coming home again after a long absence.

To be continued...
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Post-Exit Wounds. Ianto needed a break from Torchwood to help himself heal before he could help others. He did not expect the break to become permanent. What happens when he is reminded that there is no escaping Torchwood? Will Ianto choose his old life or keep on the road he been living? Written for *tw_classic_bb*.

Title: The Road Not Taken- Chapter 6/12
Author: ⚖iantojjackh
Characters/Pairings: Ianto, Jack, few OCs, Jack/Ianto (past) Ianto/OFC
Rating: PG
Warnings/contains: not applicable
Summary: Post-Exit Wounds. Ianto needed a break from Torchwood to help himself heal before he could help others. He did not expect the break to become permanent. What happens when he is reminded that there is no escaping Torchwood? Will Ianto choose his old life or keep on the road he been living? Written for *tw_classic_bb*.
Disclaimer: I don't make any money off of this, sadly. All things Torchwood belong to those who own them and the poem The Road Not Taken belongs to Robert Frost. OC's and the plot are mine.
Beta: ⚖timelordshines and ⚖czarina_kitty
Artists: ⚖the_silver_sun - Art found here & ⚖iantojjackh - Art found here. Combined art post is here.
Word Count: ~24k

After several minutes of holding on for dear life, Ianto let out a strangled sob followed by, "I'm sorry."

Jack pulled away just enough to be able to look Ianto in the eyes. He carefully framed his hands around the young man's face and saw the heavy burden Ianto carried. "It's okay. I've missed you so much." He began to lean in to kiss Ianto's forehead until the Welshman took a step back and kept Jack at arm's length.

"Don't. I can't," Ianto said despite his obvious want to feel those delicate lips again.

"Didn't you miss me too?" Jack never looked more vulnerable. It was as if Ianto's answer would
shape the future. At least it would shape Jack's future. It would make or break his heart.

Ianto did not even dignify that with a response. The answer was clear as day; a resounding yes but he did not want to travel that dangerous path. "I'm married."

"I've noticed. Did you know your wife is pregnant?" Jack thought they were playing the state the obvious game. It was too easy to slip into their old bantering ways. It was easier to hide behind the jokes than to face Ianto's possible rejection.

"I might have noticed that and I'm pretty sure I'm the one responsible for getting her that way." Ianto was relived the conversation had gone in the direction it did. The light hearted banter was all he could take right now.

"Kids put a big crimp in your sex life. Never mind." Jack winced knowing he was heading into painful territory. "I'm guessing now's not a good time to tell you I hit on your wife before I realised she was your wife and that she was pregnant. It's kind ironic now that I think about it. I was this close to asking her if she'd be interested in a threesome, but I stopped because of her husband, you."

"Lucinda would have smacked you had you asked. I might smack you for telling me that." Ianto had to laugh and roll his eyes. "Only you, Jack. Only you." He said fondly.

Jack felt his stomach flutter as Ianto sighed, seeing the man relaxed and happy for the first time in a long time. "Are you happy here, Ianto?"

The Welshman thought on his answer for several moments, not wanting to hurt Jack's feelings and not wanting to lie either. "I'm happy. I like my life here. It's calm. It's normal. Well, was normal until today. I don't think the whole immortal and never aging is going to go over well."

"I'm sorry about that. This curse is not something I'd wish upon my worst enemy, let alone someone I care for deeply. I was telling the truth when I said I had no idea how or when I passed my immortality to you."

"I believe you. I know you wouldn't do this on purpose. A couple of years ago I might have wished for something like this to happen so you wouldn't be alone after I died." Ianto regretted letting the last part slip as he bit down hard on his lip and squeezed his eyes shut.

"But I'm alone now. You left instead of trying to fix what was broken." It was time to put away the flirty bantering and get to the answers Jack had waited three years to hear.

Ianto took a deep breath and looked all over the office except at Jack. He finally settled and sat on the edge of his desk. "That was the problem, we were all broken. After everything that happened with Owen, Tosh, Hart and your brother we were all shattered. I had to forget all my pain and hold it together for you and Gwen. I was losing myself. Becoming a zombie. Everything I tried to help you wasn't working. You were slipping further and further away and I had no idea how to pull you back. Some days I doubt you even knew I was there."

"I knew. I always knew you were there. If it wasn't for you I would have fallen into some oblivion and never returned." Jack was now in front of Ianto, his hands on the other man's knees, trying to get Ianto to look at him.

"It didn't feel that way. There were times you would lie in your bunker for days, staring at nothing. You wouldn't even shower and some days I wondered if you even got up to use the loo. Some days you'd push me away and others it was as if nothing was wrong. I was scared to run to the shops and not know what I'd come back to." Ianto sighed as he leaned forward until his head
came to a rest on Jack's chest.

Jack took a deep but shaky breath. "You have no idea how much it meant to me that you never left my side during those darkest days." The immortal captain tried to ignore how right it felt to have Ianto this close to him again. Jack could not resist kissing the top of Ianto's head then resting his head on top of Ianto's, feeling his heart breaking knowing this was as close he could get to the man he loved.

"That day I found you trying to cut yourself open in the kitchen I thought I couldn't take much more of it. I didn't know how to help you anymore. Maybe it was my turn to break finally. Some part of me thought that going away would help all of us. And it worked for a while. As I travelled I never felt more alive. I was finding myself again, healing so I could come home and help you heal." Ianto did not realize he had been crying until Jack started to rub his back and Ianto lifted his head to tell him to stop, but instead buried his face back into Jack's chest. Ianto hated how easy it was to be drawn back in by Jack. Why couldn't Jack be mad or scream at him for leaving? This was making it so much harder.

"One day I got hit in the head with a frisbee on the beach and got knocked out. When I came to there was Lucinda, standing over me. We got talking. We spoke for hours. It was nice. And normal and I started to think that maybe coming home would be a mistake, that things were better without me. That staying here meant you wouldn't have the pain of watching me die one day. I convinced myself that you hated me for leaving." The floodgate of emotion was now open and Ianto let everything out. "It just got easier the longer I was gone. It was easier to stay away, to pretend my old life didn't exist. It helped that I genuinely fell in love with Lucinda," Ianto finished quietly.

"I could never hate you. Not in a million years, Ianto." Jack was crying too now. It hurt to hear from Ianto’s own mouth that he loved his wife. He had seen them together, but there was something different, more gut wrenching to hear the words when Lucinda was not around to hear them. "You gave me the best gift I could ever ask for; our daughter. Ava made life worth living again. There is nothing like the unconditional love of a child. For what it's worth I still love you. That is probably something I should have said to you a long time ago."

The words hit Ianto like a sledgehammer. The words, had they been uttered years ago would have changed everything. It was his fault too, never having said the words either. "Love isn't always enough." The words sounded weak, like Ianto did not believe them. "This is the wrong time to bring this up. What do you want from me?"

For a moment their eyes locked and it was as if they were transported back in time. Back to a time where nothing else mattered but waking in each other’s arms. The trip back to the present ended with a jarring shove and a slap to the face for Ianto. It took a couple of seconds to realise what had happened; Jack's lips had lightly begun to graze his when Lucinda returned to the office to get her prenatal vitamins.

"Lucinda, wait!" Ianto took off after his wife. He felt as if he was being torn in two: a part that wanted to continue the kiss and see where the moment took them and a part that wanted to run after his wife and tell her she was the one he wanted to be with.

To be continued...
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Post-Exit Wounds. Ianto needed a break from Torchwood to help himself heal before he could help others. He did not expect the break to become permanent. What happens when he is reminded that there is no escaping Torchwood? Will Ianto choose his old life or keep on the road he been living? Written for tw_classic_bb.

Title: The Road Not Taken- Chapter 7/12
Author: iantojjackh
Characters/Pairings: Ianto, Jack, few OCs, Jack/Ianto (past) Ianto/OFC
Rating: PG
Warnings/contains: not applicable
Summary: Post-Exit Wounds. Ianto needed a break from Torchwood to help himself heal before he could help others. He did not expect the break to become permanent. What happens when he is reminded that there is no escaping Torchwood? Will Ianto choose his old life or keep on the road he been living? Written for tw_classic_bb.
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Beta: timelordshines and czarina_kitty
Artists: the_silver_sun - Art found here & iantojjackh - Art found here. Combined art post is here.
Word Count: ~24k

For a pregnant woman, Lucinda moved quickly and Ianto caught up with her just outside the cafe. "Wait, I can explain. It's not what it looks like." His head was spinning so fast that Ianto thought he might pass out. The confused man felt like such a fool for being pulled into Jack's web so easily. The spirit might be strong, but the flesh was weak and, Ianto was afraid, where Jack was concerned his spirit might be just as weak.

"Not what it looks like?" Lucinda fumed. "Did I or did I not just walk in on you kissing your ex?" That was an image that she would never get out of her head.

"Maybe it is what it looked like, but Jack kissed me." Ianto knew that was about the weakest argument he could give. He was not going to get away with it that easily, and if he was ever going
to earn Lucinda’s forgiveness he would need to do a lot of groveling.

"You never tried to stop him. I saw how you were looking at each other when I walked in. Neither of you noticed I had come in and don't you dare say you weren't expecting it. Your faces were less than an inch apart for almost a minute, just begging each other to initiate the kiss. Oops This day is rolling into one big horrific nightmare and I don't know when it's going to stop."

Lucinda rebuffed all attempts made by Ianto to reach out.

"Then let me explain everything. I'll tell you everything about me. No hiding anything anymore. I'll give you full disclosure into my past." The only problem Ianto knew he would have was Lucinda believing the truth. Blasted Torchwood and its knack for destroying its agents.

"As your wife I should already have that. I'm not sure what the truth is anymore or if you are capable of telling it. Has any of this been real? Or were you so desperate to get away from whatever you were hiding from that you took the first thing that came along?" Lucinda was clearly upset and Ianto doubted anything he would say at this point would be believed.

"That's not fair. I stayed here because of you. Because I want to be with you."

"You wanted a normal boring life." She tried to blink the stinging tears away as a million 'I told you so's echoed in her head.

"Normal and quiet is a good thing. I didn't want to keeping living a life where I was scared that I wouldn't live to see another day." Ianto knew he was fighting a losing battle, but he did not want to give up.

"If your life was so dangerous then why would you and your ex think that having a child together would be a smart idea?" That was the one question that weighed heaviest on the pregnant woman's mind. Lucinda did not buy that Ianto did not know about Ava before he left.

"Jack and I never discussed having kids. I didn't know he was pregnant when I left." Ianto simply told the ridiculous truth in its complete, insane glory.

"I'm going to stop you right there, Ianto. Jack pregnant? Do I have idiot stamped on my forehead?" Lucinda felt like the world's biggest fool for being taken in by a charming and handsome man. "You know what? I'm going to stay with my parents for a few days. That should give you enough time to figure out a way to grow a pair and tell the truth."

"That's just great. Give your parents more reasons to hate me." Ianto winced imagining what his in-laws would say about him, but that shouldn't matter now. "I'll get the proof that what I'm saying is the truth."

"My parents don't hate you. Stop bringing that up." Lucinda took several deep breaths and doubled over as a sharp pain shot through her abdomen. "Ow." tears pricked at the corners of her eyes.

"What's wrong, Luce?" Ianto tried to get his wife to stand up straight and figure out where the pain was coming from. "Say something, please," he begged as Lucinda fingers dug into his arms, leaving marks behind. Panic flooded every part of Ianto and he prayed that everything would be fine.

It was a full minute before the pain vanished as quickly as it came. "I'm okay," Lucinda assured him as she leaned on Ianto until her breathing returned to normal. "Just a little pain. Everything is fine now."

Ianto was not convinced, knowing pain that serious was not normal any time. "We should call Dr.
Schwartz, just in case."

Lucinda vehemently shook her head, "She said there could be pain from everything stretching to make room for Harper and Gia. Stop worrying." His concern was touching and adorable, but it did not lessen the anger she had. She offered a small smile and a quick kiss on the cheek. "I'll be fine as long as these two calm down." Lucinda knew that meant she had to calm down as well, but she needed time by herself to make that happen.

"What can I do to help?" Ianto offered, resting a hand over the swell of Lucinda's belly. He had to smile at the movement under his hand that seemed to follow wherever it moved. Ianto took this as a good sign, that even though Lucinda was mad at him that she did not push him away from the moment he was having with his children.

"Nothing," she answered truthfully. "I need time to sort everything out. I'll come home when I'm ready." It was not a matter of if Lucinda would come back, but a matter of when she would.

"Whatever you need, Luce. I'm not going anywhere. Take your time and don't forget I love you." Ianto knew not to push his luck as his wife had every reason to leave him permanently with everything that came to light today.

"I love you too." Lucinda could only offer half a smile before she walked away and pulled her mobile from her pocket to call the one person a girl always turned to in a time of need; her mother.

A stoic Ianto walked back to the cafe, hoping Jack had left by the time he returned. He really did not want to deal with him or Gwen. And how could he forget Ava, his daughter? A child he had yet to be introduced to. A child he did not know existed until today. Should he be part of the child's life or not disrupt and upheave everything Ava knew. Ianto knew Jack had the financial means to raise a child. And from what little he had seen of the pair’s interaction he seemed to be making a wonderful job of being a parent. But did Jack tell Ava anything about him? Would she even want to know him? How would Lucinda feel about getting to know her step-daughter?

Gwen nudged Jack when she saw Ianto return, looking worse than when he left. "What happened in his office?" Jack had not said a word since he returned to the table after watching Lucinda run out with Ianto not too far behind.

"Nothing," Jack clearly did not want to tell Gwen about the kiss and the obvious spark there was still between them. "Love isn't always enough," he echoed Ianto’s words, sighing melancholically. Jack knew Ianto had made his choice when his first instinct was to run after his wife.

"Oh, Jack." Gwen laid a comforting arm on him. "If he's still in love with you then fight for him. Jack, I know how long you've waited for this moment. Go take what you need."

"I can't." Jack sighed and leaned back in his chair and watched as Ianto looked at him from behind the counter. On the surface there was anger, but just below the surface there was that tension and longing for something that could never be. "Ianto would never leave his wife and I won't ask him to." He knew if he did, eventually both men would end up hating themselves and then each other. Maybe one day they would eventually find their way back together. They both had an eternity to wait and see if they would be drawn back together.

For now there was only one thing left to do; say goodbye and hope it was only temporary. "I'll be right back." He kissed the top of Ava's head. The little girl was oblivious that the man watching them was her other father. The one she knew only through stories.

"Okay Daddy. More milk please." Ava batted her eyes, knowing it would work and frowning
when it didn’t.

"I think you’ve had enough. I’ve just got talk to the nice man over there and then we’ll go back to the hotel. It's coming up on someone’s nap time." Jack loved playing the doting father.

"No nap," Ava challenged her father. "No tired."

"Yes, you will have a nap." Jack left no room for argument, but tickled Ava's belly, causing the girl to giggle loudly. He then left to approach Ianto, uncertainty etched on his face.

"What is it Jack?" Ianto tried desperately not to smile, knowing that if he gave in and lost the anger that he felt over the temptation of the kiss he would never get through this conversation.

"I came to say goodbye. We're going home tomorrow and it wouldn't be right to leave without saying goodbye." Jack's hand hovered just above Ianto's. At the last second he opted not to make contact, instead resting his hand on the counter next to Ianto’s.

Jack felt his stomach twist into knots as he looked into Ianto’s intense stare. "I spent a lot of time wondering what I would say to you when I finally found you. Things didn’t go quite as I expected but all that matters is your happiness. I know Torchwood took a lot from you and you deserve to have the kind of life you want. You are too good of a person to abandon a pregnant wife. I would never dream of asking you to choose between us. I know you need some time to work through everything that happened today, but I want you to know if and when you want to be a part of Ava's life I'm not going to keep you from her. Also, if you want me in your life again you can call anytime. I really miss having you as a friend."

Ianto’s jaw dropped as Jack spoke and he realised how much Jack had grown and changed since he left. "Me too." He allowed a small sincere smile to spread across his face. He was not sure when he would be ready to know his daughter, but knew today was not the day for introductions. Everyone was too emotional and some dust needed to settle first.

"Good bye, Jones Ianto Jones." Jack offered his hand for a shake.

Ianto shook his head and came around the counter and embraced Jack instead. "Goodbye, Jack. Thank you for everything." The hug lasted longer than it should have both men drawing comfort from the other’s closeness and knowing this was the last time they would see each other for a long time. Ianto finally broke the connection and retreated to his office as fast as he could. He did not want Jack to see the tears in his eyes nor did he think he was strong enough to watch Jack and Ava walk out of his life. Ianto had done what needed to be done and he could not let himself second guess his choice. Lucinda and the twins were his choice and there was no turning back now.

To be continued...
"What did that jerk do now?" Vivian Harkins asked as soon as her daughter got into the car.

"Mom, don't start." Lucinda rubbed her throbbing temples. She might be mad and confused at Ianto, but that did not mean she would stand for others criticising him. He was her jerk and no one else could call him that. aww

"You called me to get you, all upset sweetie. What do you expect me to say?" Vivian squeezed her daughter's knee. "Why don't we get some Rocky Road and you can tell me what happened." Vivian saw this as the perfect opportunity to reiterate her opinion of Ianto as Lucinda had seemed
to ignore all of her previous warnings.

"Sounds good," Lucida said dejectedly, only half listening as she stared out the car window as her mother drove. She was done talking for now and needed some time to gather her thoughts and make sense of the insane events of the day.

Vivian tried to get her daughter to open up about her problems, but Lucinda refused to take the bait and frustrated her mother by answering with one word replies.

After an hour of watching her daughter mope around the house and have a conversation that could only be called bizarre with Fiona, the family cat, on the deck, "I miss you, my fluffy one...", Vivian had had enough of avoiding talking about the reason Lucinda was back home. "Run along, Fi." The elder woman picked the cat of the table and placed her on the ground and shooed her away. "What happened?" Vivian said sternly.

"Did I tell you we felt the babies kick today?" Lucinda did not know if she should tell her mother about the kiss. Everything else that had happened was bad enough. She could not stop imagining what might have happened had she not walked into the office when she did. Lucinda forced herself to believe that Ianto would not have let it get very far.

"That's great, but you are stalling." Vivian wanted to be happy for her daughter, but Lucinda's overall well-being was more important. "What did the foreigner do to you?"

"MOM!" Lucinda glared at her mother and she began to think that there might be something to Ianto’s claims that her parents did not like him. “Don’t talk about my husband that way,” she snapped as she rubbed her stomach instinctively to calm the babies, who were responding to her increasingly agitated state.

"Lucinda, I think it’s time you stopped playing house and moved back home." Vivian reached out and squeezed her daughter's hand, trying to convince her that mother's way was best.

"Playing house? Is that what you think we are doing? Ianto was right when he said you hate him. What did he ever do to you?" Lucinda's face morphed into an ugly picture of anger. She started to wonder if she was better just talking to Ianto about the secrets he had been keeping instead of mulling them over, trying to figure out why he kept the bombshells hidden.

"Sweetie, we don't hate Ianto. I'm sure he's a really nice person but I think you should've got to know him a little longer before starting a life together. You've only known him for two years. What can you really know about him?"

Lucinda paused for a moment before answering, knowing that was part of the problem, but refusing to admit it to her mother. Ianto had been so tight lipped about his life between graduating university and meeting her, what did she really know about him? "I know I plan on spending the rest of my life with Ianto. Just because you and Dad dated for eight years before getting married, doesn't mean I rushed into things. It's just been a really hard day and I need time to process it all."

Lucinda stared into space as she twirled her hair around her finger, watching the way the sunlight caught it. After a couple of seconds it was as if a damn broke and tears just spilled forth. "I just want to hit rewind on this entire day," she cried. No matter how much Lucinda dried her tears more quickly replaced them.

It was obvious that her father had not told Vivian about the accident. "I almost lost Ianto today. For a bit I thought I had. There was an accident when he was surfing this morning and Dad came
to tell me he was gone, but then a few minutes later he came in like nothing had happened. He said the paramedics made a mistake, that something was faulty with the machinery. Ianto said that his old boss did something to him before he left and then all a sudden said boss shows up. Turns out he was dating his boss for a long time and apparently they have a daughter together that Ianto says he knew nothing about. I mean how could he not know about her? It doesn't make sense. Says he didn't know how his boss was pregnant when he walked out. How is that possible?"

Lucinda had worked herself into such a state that the pregnant woman was hyperventilating and the two lives within her reacted to their mother's stress.

John had returned home midway through Lucinda's rambling monologue and exchanged a knowing look with his wife, like they knew it was only a matter of time before their daughter's heart was broken by the rogue she had married.

"Lucinda, sweetie, of course it's possible. This happens when you don't really know someone." Vivian was at a loss how to comfort the hysterical woman. She was torn between wanting to help her only child and wanting to show she was right all along about the devious Welshman.

Lucinda shook her head and blew her nose. "No. You don't understand. Ianto's ex is a man. Does he think I'm stupid? Why couldn't he just tell the truth? The girl even looks like him. Ianto did look genuinely shocked when he found out about her. I'm starting to think his ex might have stolen his sperm and impregnated someone." She realized she sounded just as crazy as one of Ianto's tales. "What if Jack wants Ianto back and Ianto goes with him?" It had always been of Lucinda's fears that her husband's mysterious past would rear its head one day and he would run willingly back to whatever he had left. Finding out that past included a child only increased her fears, worrying that history would repeat and he would leave their children. Lucinda had to pray those fears were unfounded and irrational.

John rubbed Lucinda's shoulders and kissed the top of her head, "Would that be such a bad thing?" The words were harsh, but John felt they were needed to get his daughter back from the man that he believed was going to going to ruin his daughter's life.

Lucinda looked at her father like she no longer knew the man. "Yes, it would be. What did Ianto ever do to you? I should never have come here. I just wanted a place to think, not for you to bad mouth my husband. I love him. Why can't you two accept that? In four months I'll have his children. I'm not a kid anymore."

"Baby, it's not like that," Vivian tried to calm her daughter. "We just want to make sure you know what you are getting yourself into. He's not like us." She clenched her jaw, accentuating the wrinkles on her face. "No decent man has his pregnant wife work. You shouldn't be working in your delicate condition."

"Get out of the Stone Ages, Mom! I help out at the cafe because I want to. Ianto always said I didn't need to help out if I don't want to. I'm not going to sit home all day like you did. It's not me and it never will be. So what if Ianto did not come from money? At least he works hard and runs a successful business." Lucinda did not expect that she would have to stick up for her husband like this when she was still angry with him. "If you would stop being such a pretentious stuck up bitch and stopped to get to know Ianto you would see the man I know and love."

Vivian saw red at being talked to in such a disrespectful way by her own daughter and before she knew it she had slapped the disrespectful child, at least in Vivian's twisted world that's how she saw her, hard across the face. "I'm so sorry, Luce. I didn't mean it," Vivian pleaded as she tried to reach out to her daughter who was already on her feet, holding her red swollen cheek.

Lucinda bit back the tears that pricked the corner of her eyes from the hard slap. "Yes, you did. You meant it. The truth hurts."
"Lucinda, don't you talk to your mother like that," John said in a warning tone. "You came here because Ianto was keeping secrets and you get mad when we show you what's right in front your face. You can't fault us for that. Now apologize to your mother."

"No!" Lucinda yelled. "My husband is not the monster you make him to be. It was dumb of me to come here. I just needed someone to talk to, help me understand what happened today. Someone to comfort me and say it was going to be okay. I thought that was what parents were for." Tears freely flowed down her blotchy face "But I was wrong. You used this to tell me that getting married was a mistake. What kind of people say that to their only child? Let alone one that is pregnant."

"You need to calm down. This stress isn't good for the babies," Vivian tried to placate her daughter.

"Calm down?" Lucinda saw red and clenched her fists. "That's original coming from the woman who just slapped me!"

"You're hormonal. It's making you irrational," John slowly approached Lucinda who was starting to shake with rage. He did not see the right hook that flattened him to the ground. No one had told him that calling a pregnant woman hormonal and irrational was the wrong thing to say.

Lucinda shook her hand after it connected with her father's face. It hurt, but felt so good at the same time. "I should never have called. I should be talking through this with Ianto. He was blindsided with this news too."

She stormed off, unable to look at her parents as for the first time in her life she had finally seen them for the vile people they really were. She slammed the door on her way out, causing the door frame to rattle. Lucinda's heart broke more when she heard through the closed door the conversation between her parents.

"Enough is enough, Viv. We've let her play house long enough. This is going too far. She is not ready to become a parent to a child, never mind two. Look at how she flew off the handle."

"And I don't think Ianto is all there. What kind of person has a kid with another man and claims to know nothing? What if he knew all along and that's why he left. Now it's only a matter of time before history repeats itself. We should not have let her get married in the first place. I think it's best if we take those kids and raise them properly. She is far too inexperienced."

"We thought it would let Luce get some life experience. I didn't think she'd get pregnant right away. How can you claim to fall in love so quickly? It doesn't work like that."

Lucinda took several deep breaths. It hurt to hear her parents talk like she was some naive little girl who had no idea how the real world worked. It was ironic because they were the ones who were clueless and who were the real monsters. It was like they belonged in another time and Lucinda was pretty sure that if given the right opportunity her parents would have arranged a marriage with some pedigree from the country club. Lucinda wondered if her parents remembered what it was like to be in love.

Hearing that her own parents did not think she would be a capable parent was the final stab in the back. Weren't they just as inexperienced as she and Ianto would be when they had her?

Lucinda needed to get away from her poisonous parents, but she was not ready to go home yet either. So she walked until her back and feet hurt and then she sat on the sand and watched as the waves crashed on the shore. Surfing was usually the perfect way to clear her mind, but Lucinda had given up her favourite activity when she got pregnant. Now she could only watch.
Lucinda sat for a long time, lost in her own thoughts. She knew her parents were right – she had rushed into her marriage, but only because she was trying to escape their smothering. She knew she would never break away from her parents completely, after all family was still family. But Ianto was her family now. She knew she didn’t know everything about him, but she sensed a kind of kindred spirit in him. She could tell he was trying to escape from something too, and although she didn’t know what, she always assumed he would share that part of his past in the fullness of time. This shared need to escape was one of the reasons they had got on so well from the start and there was no doubt that there was a genuine bond of true love between them. Marriage was not easy and it took a lot of effort to make it work and Lucinda was not going to give up on it.

It was only after the sun set that Lucinda stood up, brushed the sand from herself and headed to the place where her heart was.

*To be continued*...
Once Ianto returned to his office, he forced himself to push all thoughts of Jack Harkness as far from the front of his mind as he could. He had chosen the quiet and safe path of life and Ianto did not regret it. The Welshman wanted to tell Lucinda the truth, but getting her to believe it would be
a battle in itself.

Ianto put a few hours in at the cafe trying to keep himself busy so he did not have to deal with the impending fallout of the day's revelation. When it came time to close for the day, Ianto sent Ethan home and finished cleaning up himself. He knew he had an empty and quiet home to go to.

The house was too quiet when Ianto returned after the long day and he was too wired to sleep. He needed something to keep his mind occupied and stop himself from trying to second guess his decision. He chose to work on the nursery, which the couple had decided to make a prince and princess theme. Ianto thought it would be easier to paint first and then put the furniture together. To help with the dull task of painting Ianto put on his favourite Welsh metal band as loud as he could before the neighbours would complain.

Lucinda was still in a bit of a daze when she arrived home. Her mind was all over the place as she tried to come to terms with the fact that her parents would always see her as a small child incapable of taking care of herself. One thing was for certain, she was not going to tell Ianto that her parents thought they were unfit to raise children.

She was relieved to see the lights on as she approached the house. It meant that Ianto had chosen her over his ex. At least that's what Lucinda hoped, but she started to think otherwise when no one answered the door even after she rang the bell several times. She regretted leaving the cafe without her purse. Irrationally, she started to imagine the two men in their bed and she had to remind herself that that was not the kind of man Ianto was. But then she didn’t think he was the kind to have a male ex, her subconscious taunted her.

Lucinda went to the attached garage and punched in the code to open the garage door, knowing she could get into the house that way. It immediately became clear why Ianto did not hear the bell as music so loud that she wondered if he would hear the house coming down around him assailed her ear drums. Lucinda followed the music to its source and what she saw brought a smile to her face.

This was the man her parents refused to see, the one who came home after a day from hell and chose to work on his children's nursery. Lucinda watched with pride for several minutes before turning off the music. "Hey, I wanted...needed to come home. Going to my parents was a mistake."

Ianto was shocked that Lucinda had returned home so soon. He had expected her to be gone for at least a couple days and almost excepted that she would come back brainwashed against him. "What happened?" He gasped seeing the bruise on his wife's cheek.

"My mother," Lucinda quickly covered the distance between them and threw her arms around Ianto's neck, burrowing her face into his shirt and letting the tears fall. The salty liquid quickly soaked the cotton material.

"What happened, Luce?" Ianto did what he could to comfort his wife. "Did she hit you?"

"Yes."

"What the fuck is wrong with her?" Ianto asked through gritted teeth.

Lucinda sighed and shook her head, still trying to comprehend what happened at her parent's house. Did they really see her as some naive little girl they thought they could still control? "They live in ancient times. They think a woman's place is in the home and they think I'm too young to
be married. They think I should be on the same timetable as they were. Married at thirty-one and pregnant by thirty-three, not both by twenty-four."

"And things always have to go their way too." Ianto added, knowing that it took a long time for Lucinda to convince them to let her get married and he was sure there had to be an ultimatum thrown in by his wife to her parents, to let her get married or to run the risk of never seeing their only child again.

"I punched my father too. Didn't they know how today was the wrong day to get on my bad side? He had the nerve to say my hormones were making me irrational!"

"That's high on the list of things you never say to a pregnant woman." Ianto laughed. He wanted to applaud Lucinda for doing something he could only dream of. "A lot happened today and I'm sorry for any stress I caused you. I really had no idea about Ava until today and I really never expected to ever see Jack again."

"I believe you," Lucinda replied softly. And she did believe Ianto, but it did not change that she was still angry. "I saw the look on your face when you found out about the girl. There was no way you knew. I'm still mad and there's a lot we need to talk about, but no one said marriage was easy. When you are ready to talk, I'm ready to listen." She was not going to deny that she was scared of the truth and more than a little worried that there was a chance the wild stories were true. If they were it would alter her whole perception of the world.

"I'm ready. I'll tell you whatever you want to know, but first how about some dinner and I take care of this?" He motioned to the mark on her face. "I know a remedy to help with it." Ianto offered his hand as a peace offering of sorts.

Lucinda took her husband's hand and gave it a tight squeeze. It was accompanied by a small smile, knowing she had made the right choice by coming home. As she looked around the nursery, it dawned on Lucinda that the babies would be here before she knew it. It was a mix of elation and fear.

"I should have the painting done before the furniture comes next week," Ianto said as they walked to the kitchen. He was already planning how to explain Torchwood to her without coming off as total loon.

"Can you get my laptop while I whip up something for you cheek?"

Lucinda nodded and stopped in the office to get the computer. When she entered the kitchen, Lucinda put the lap top on the table.

"Here put this on your cheek." Ianto handed the wet dish towel to his wife. "It's just apple cider vinegar and water," he responded to the questioning look given to him.

Ianto guided Lucinda to the kitchen table and she sat down whilst he began to prepare dinner; grilled garlic steak tacos. As he worked, Ianto began to talk. "After finishing Uni I moved to London and got a job working for an organisation called Torchwood. Queen Victoria founded Torchwood back in 1879 as a way of protecting the earth and its peoples from extra-terrestrial threats. Torchwood One where I worked in Canary Wharf was the headquarters, until it was destroyed in 2006." Ianto paused, putting down his knife. He moved into the centre of the room, leaning over to open the laptop that lay on the table in front of his wife. He brought up a web page with an article about the terrorist attacks in Canary Wharf.

Lucinda gasped as she read the headline: ‘800 DEAD’, and in smaller print just below: ‘Only 27 survivors’. She turned to look up at her partner with wide eyes, "You were there?"
Ianto nodded and swallowed hard. “That’s where I got all the scars on my back. It wasn’t a terrorist attack. We were caught up in battle between two alien races, the Cybermen and the Daleks.” Ianto clenched his fists, and Lucinda could see how much it pained him to continue. "The Daleks are killing machines. They look kind of like giant pepper pots with plungers for arms. He laughed mirthlessly. The Cybermen are what they called ‘humans upgraded’. Human brains stripped of their emotions, transplanted into metal bodies."

Lucinda reached out to touch Ianto’s arm, feeling his tension. His story was unbelievable, but one look at his face told her he was telling the truth.

“Towards the end of the battle, the Cybermen were getting desperate for more troops. They started converting whole bodies. Merging people and cybernetics. Stripping them of their humanity, making them into monsters.” Tears rolled unchecked down Ianto’s face as he relived the horror of that fateful day. “I still have nightmares. The screams, the smoke, the smell of burning flesh. I had to climb over bodies of the dead and dying to get to my girlfriend Lisa and pull her from the conversion unit. She was in so much pain, but I managed to drag her out.”

Ianto sank down onto the chair next to Lucinda and buried his face in his hands.

Lucinda reached out and ran her hand through her husband’s hair “I’m so sorry.”

Ianto raised his head and offered her a weak smile. He took her hand and squeezed it gently, before taking a deep shuddering breath which he let out slowly.

“Torchwood Two was in Scotland. Glasgow. A one man operation run by a very odd bloke with a penchant for kilts and wet sheep. I only met Archie twice and that was more than enough. He makes the freaks on the Santa Monica Pier look normal. Torchwood Four was located near Stonehenge. It disappeared during the Spring Equinox in 1956. No one could explain where they went or what happened to them.”

Ianto looked up into Lucinda’s eyes. “Torchwood Three was Cardiff.” He swallowed, anticipating Lucinda’s disapproval, “Jack runs Torchwood Three. After Canary Wharf I had nowhere else to go. I went back to Cardiff and begged Jack to give me a job.” Ianto considered telling Lucinda about Lisa, but thought she already had a lot to take in. He would tell her, but not now. “Three was much smaller than One. There were only five of us. We were a very close-knit group. I think it’s just Jack and Gwen looking after things now.” Another tear escaped Ianto’s eye and rolled down his cheek. Lucinda gently wiped it away with her thumb.

“What happened to the others?” she asked gently, knowing that their son's name came from one of Ianto’s friends.

“Owen and Toshiko. They died, about six months before I left. They saved Cardiff. I don’t know if you saw it on the news? All those explosions that knocked out the city’s infrastructure, including the hospital and the nuclear power plant?”

Lucinda thought for a moment, then nodded slowly as she remembered, “My God, Ianto!” she breathed.

Ianto fell silent, lost in his memories.

Lucinda squeezed his knee. "Tell me more about Jack. After what happened in London why did you stay with Torchwood? I would have run as far as I could."
"I needed Torchwood to help Lisa. I couldn't see it at the time, but she was already gone and things ended very badly." Ianto wiped his tears away and was grateful when Lucinda didn’t ask him to elaborate.

"I don't know why I stayed after Lisa died. I guess I felt like I had no place else to go. Jack was originally supposed to be the means to an end so I could get help for Lisa, but something...I guess something changed along the way." Ianto's voice faltered slightly, as he tried not to dwell on what he had given up. “After Owen and Tosh died, Jack fell apart. He blamed himself. I tried to help but he wouldn’t let me. I stayed for as long as I could, but it hurt too much. I needed a break. I had to help myself before I could help him and Gwen. I was only going to travel for a few months, but then I met you. I decided this is the life I wanted, not the death and destruction that goes along with Torchwood and Jack. I honestly didn’t know about Ava when I left."

"What are you going to do about Ava?" Lucinda was scared to hear the answer. There was still the lingering irrational fear that he was going walk out on her. "There is no denying that she looks like you. Did Jack say where she came from?"

Ianto knew this might be the only time his wife would believe the truth. "Not all aliens look different from us. Some of them are really just humans from the future who lived on an Earth colony on another planet and by circumstances they ended up in this time and place. That's what Jack is and somewhere in the next three thousand years some men develop the ability to get pregnant without having a woman involved." Ianto drew a shaky breath as he explained. "Biologically Ava is mine and Jack's together."

"But?" Lucinda knew there was an unspoken but. Again it was the serious expression on Ianto's face that said he wasn't lying.

"That's it. It wouldn't be fair to any of us for me to get involved in her life. I know that makes me sound like a big jerk, especially with the twins coming. I thought a lot about this today. Perhaps, if we lived closer it would be different. It’s an eleven hour flight from here to there. Jack's been doing a great job with Ava and I don't want to disturb her life. Now isn't the right time." Ianto did not have to like his choice, he just had to live with it.

"It's up to you. I'll support you whatever you choose," Lucinda spoke from her heart. "If and when you want to be in Ava's life, I'll be here for both of you." Her emerald eyes locked onto Ianto's crystal blue ones.

Ianto smiled gratefully but wearily. The insanity of the day had taken its toll. "Thank you. You have no idea how much this means to me. How did I ever get so lucky to find you?"

"By choosing not to run after I knocked you out with that frisbee. The rest is history as they say and this is the start of a long history together." Lucinda leaned forward and rested her forehead against Ianto's.

"I love you," Ianto whispered, knowing that life was only about to get better. Their problems were not gone, but a new solid and unshakable foundation had been built for their relationship. From here it could only get stronger. The immortality talk would have to wait.

A tender kiss became the cement to hold the foundation together and the lives growing inside Lucinda were the bond that would hold the couple together forever.
After that evening life was at should be. A young couple, happy and awaiting the birth of their babies. It was easier for Ianto to not talk about his old life, as much as Lucinda tried to understand what life was like being a Torchwood agent, she still had a hard time wrapping her head around the strangeness that was common place for Torchwood. Some nights Ianto was kept up by his decision not to be a part of Ava's life, but he knew it was best for all involved. Most importantly, Ianto was truly happy and eagerly awaited the birth of his children.

This was the kind of life Ianto had longed for his whole life, one he never had growing up and the kind of life he looked forward to giving his own offspring.

Then one evening, two months before Lucinda's due date, she clutched the counter and said the words that made Ianto go extremely pale, "Shit! My water broke!" It was too soon for this.

To be continued...
Lucinda was woken from her first decent sleep since the twins were born by the insistent ringing of the doorbell and banging on the door. "Can you get the door?" She sleepily reached over and found the other half of the bed empty.

She quickly put on a silk robe and ran to the door. Lucinda was about to tear whomever thought it was smart to pay a middle of the night visit a new one, when she saw two California Highway Patrol officers on the other side of the door.

There was no good reason the police would visit in the middle of the night and the warm summer evening suddenly became very chilly.
"Are you Lucinda Jones?" The younger cop asked, his voice shaking.

"I am." Her knuckles turned white as her fingers dug into the oak door.

"I'm sorry, ma'am there's been an accident. Your husband didn't survive," the second officer spoke.

The feral wail was enough to tear out the hearts of anyone who heard the display of unyielding grief.

Ianto woke with a gasp and tried to sit up but his body was restrained and he could not wriggle free. He could hardly see as his vision was clouded with something and the warm sticky feeling made him think it was probably blood. Memories of the last few hours were fuzzy and panic quickly took over as the worst came to mind.

It was when an unfamiliar voice spoke that Ianto really began to fight the binds that held him. "Please take it easy, Mr. Jones. You were in an accident."

That is when it all came rushing back. The crash. The sickening sound of metal being crushed all around him. They had been racing to the hospital with Lucinda in labour. "My wife she's in labour. You've got to help her. It's too early. You've got to help them. Save them." Ianto realised it was a neck brace tethering him to a stretcher. He did not have time to ponder the bizarre dream he had while unconscious and/or dead. Why would he dream of the police informing Lucinda he had died?

"Your wife is already on the way to the hospital. It took a while to get you out of the car. How far along is your wife?" the paramedic asked, her voice soft trying to calm the agitated man. The car was a mangled wreck as was the car that hit Ianto's. It was a miracle they all survived the impact.

"Almost thirty-two weeks with twins. How are they? I want to see them." It felt as if the more Ianto struggled, the tighter the straps that held him down became. The tension of the scene was palpable and grew thicker as Ianto was able to hear snippets of conversations from other first responders. Phrases like 'she was drunk', 'foetus in distress' and 'airlifted to UCSD Medical Center' worsened Ianto's anxiety.

"They didn't tell me anything before they took her. I'm sorry."

"Then let me go to them. I'm fine. I need to be with my wife." Ianto felt another set of strong hands try to keep him from moving and it only angered him more. "She needs me. My children need me." Ianto's agitation grew by the second.

"You need to keep still. You can hurt yourself more," the EMT that was holding Ianto down spoke.

"I'm uninjured," Ianto insisted despite his bloodied clothes.

"That can be the shock talking. You are covered in blood."

"I'm not in shock. I've been in shock before and I'm definitely not in shock. Now take me to see my wife." Ianto hated feeling so helpless and no one could tell him how Lucinda was or was the answer too horrible that they wouldn't tell him. He did not feel the needle in his arm until it was too late. The liquid burned for a second before everything went black.

The paramedics knew it was a risky move to sedate someone with a possible closed head injury,
but as they saw it Ianto was more of a danger to himself and others while he was conscious and extremely agitated.

It seemed like an eternity had passed before Ianto was released from the hospital. The doctors and nurses had been amazed that Ianto had no serious injuries. The too clean smell of the hospital tickled his nostrils as Ianto made his way to the exit. None of the staff could tell him if Lucinda and the babies were okay as she was not a patient in the same hospital. The hospital had supplied a pair of scrubs since his clothes had been cut off him.

As Ianto looked down at his hand he saw the remnants of dried blood. He wondered whose blood it was as flashes from the accident came back to him. The drunk driver had hit on his side and pushed his car into a light pole. He could hear Lucinda crying out to him. There was so much blood that covered both of them. Ianto feared that it would only be a matter of time before someone told him that his wife and children were dead. It was not until this moment that Ianto truly understood why Jack called his immortality a curse. How could his family have survived something that should have...something that did… kill him?

Ianto never felt more alone than in this moment. There was no one to pick him up from the hospital. No one to give him information of Lucinda and the babies. His phone and wallet had been in the car, leaving Ianto without any way to get to the other hospital. There was a small part of him that worried that this was part of Harkins, particularly John's, way of sticking it to him. Ever since the older man found out about Jack and Ava, John treated Ianto like he was diseased. He was not sure if it was that he had a child with someone else or if it was because Ianto had an ex-boyfriend. Not that he ever really liked Ianto in the first place, but he had played nicely for his daughter's sake. At least that's the way Ianto perceived things. Then again it was their daughter seriously injured and Lucinda's parents minds could have been elsewhere, but he was her husband and those were his kids and he deserved to know what was going on with them. It was in these moments of chaotic panic that Ianto's mind thought of things such as this.

Ianto was about to ask a nurse for help when he heard someone shouting, “Boss, hey Boss”.

Ianto looked around him. "Ethan," he sighed with relief at seeing a familiar face.

"My sister is a police officer. She was called to the accident and as soon as she realized who you were she called me. Thought you could use this," Ethan handed over a bag with a change of clothes that Ianto always kept in his office.

"Thank you. Have you heard anything about Lucinda? My mobile was in the car." Ianto was desperate for any information. There was a knot in his stomach that was only there when he knew something bad was about to happen.

"They wouldn't give me any information because I'm not family. Here you can use my phone." Ethan offered his phone. "It should be the last number I called."

"You are a life saver." Ianto quickly took the offered phone and called the other hospital. His heart beat rapidly as Ianto waited for someone to answer the phone. It seemed like an eternity before he navigated the endless maze of automated prompts. The men had walked all the way to Ethan’s car before Ianto managed to speak to an actual person and he was beginning to wonder if they would complete the twenty minute drive to the other hospital before he got to talk to anyone who could help. The constant bouncing between people and automated questions grew irksome and Ianto lost his temper.

"Why can't someone just tell me how my wife is?" Ianto raged at the next person to answer the
"Name please," a droll voice asked from the other end.

"Lucinda Jones. She was brought in after a car wreck, in labour with twins." Ianto gave more information than necessary.

Ianto could hear fingernails tapping a keyboard at the other end of the phone. "Your relationship to the patient?"

"She's my wife, pregnant with my children. How are they? What are their conditions?" More cracks appeared in his façade as he struggled to remain calm.

"I'm sorry, I can't give that information over the phone. I'm only a receptionist."

Ianto screamed in frustration, "You've got to be kidding me? Can you page someone for me then? Page Vivian Harkins, my mother-in-law."

"Please hold." Then Ianto was met with the almost operatic hold music.

The minutes ticked by slowly and it felt like an eternity had passed before someone picked up. "Hello?" The voice that answered was soft, full of sadness and obviously had been crying.

Ianto froze hearing Vivian's voice. He did not even need to ask how Lucinda was. He just knew it was too late and she was gone. It was as if part of him always knew and he was denying himself the truth. It was a good thing Ianto was sitting in the car or his knees would have given out, to have the confirmation that his wife was dead felt like someone was pulling his heart out of his chest. The dream he had before waking up came flooding back, was it his mind's way of preparing him for this moment? Ianto ended the call, too numb to speak and too scared to find out if his children had met the same fate. It was easier to detach himself from reality which was too painful to be a part of. Ianto was of the belief that no news was good news and as long as he was not told any news of his children he could pretend to himself that they were going to be fine.

Ianto stared blankly for several moments before turning to Ethan. "Is it okay if I make an international call. I'll pay you any extra charges." He tried not to let his voice crack, Ianto was not going to let himself show that he was ready to break.

Ethan could tell whatever the news Ianto got it was not good, even if Ianto did not say a word. "Sure. Don't worry about the call."

Ianto offered the tiniest of smiles before he dialed the number of the only person he wanted to talk to right now. The only one Ianto knew could help him understand this situation. The only one who knew what this kind of soul crushing pain was like. Ianto felt a small pang of guilt when he realised he had not taken the time difference in Wales into consideration when a groggy voice answered the phone. It was then that the fine threads holding Ianto's façade together broke. "I'm sorry… I know I haven't spoken to you since you were here… but I need you. I didn't know who else to call… No, there was an accident… She didn't make it… I don't know. I was too scared to ask… Please come… Thank you." Ianto wiped his tears away, but more quickly replaced them.

To be continued…
Ethan did not know what to do for his boss. How anyone could cope with such a trauma was beyond the man's comprehension, but from what he had heard Ethan knew Ianto was no stranger to losing loved ones.

The rest of the trip passed in silence and Ianto barely managed a goodbye and thank you as he ran out of the car into the hospital. That is when he was given the first bit of good news: Harper and Gia Jones were alive and in the hospital's NICU.

Ianto raced toward the NICU to meet his children for the first time, but stopped just before he turned the last corner when he heard a hate speech by John directed at him and Ianto stood back and listened to what his father-in-law really thought of him.
"I never liked him. Never trusted him. Someone that quiet is always up to no good. I only put up with him for Lucinda. How can a man have a child with another man and claim not know about it? Did he know or didn’t he? Is the girl the real reason Ianto left home in the first place? Whenever I tried to ask I got told it was none of my business. What did she ever see in him? I knew getting married within a year of knowing him was a big mistake. That is not enough time to get to know someone. Twenty-three is too young to get married anyway. Look where it got her. Our daughter is dead at twenty four years old and there are two children that will never know their mother. Children need a proper family. This is all that asshole's fault. What kind of idiot speeds with their pregnant wife in the car? It would only be fair if he died too."

Ianto did not hear what, if anything, Vivian said in response, but he did hear a smack, presumably John getting smacked in the face. For a brief second Ianto thought that just maybe Vivian might actually be standing up for him. He knew some of the harshness of John’s words were out of grief, but they all had a place in his real feelings.

It was Vivian's next words that felt like a kick to gut and at that moment Ianto made a snap decision on his and his children's future. "You never wish death upon someone even if we don't like them. When Ianto gets out of the hospital, that's even if he survives, I'll talk to him and convince him that it would be best if we raised the twins so they can have a stable home. I doubt he was ever stable to begin with. Lucinda once told me she thought the scars on his back and arms were self-inflicted. Not the type of person who should be raising children by himself. He won't raise our grandchildren. Let's go home to get some rest. Maybe when we get back they’ll let us in to see them."

Ianto did not know what he had done to cause the Harkins to have this level of hatred for him. Apparently their daughter's happiness when she was alive meant nothing to them. She had only been dead seven hours and they were already plotting against Ianto. He had half a mind to confront them, but this was not the time nor the place. He was too emotional and his retort to his in laws would make their hurtful words seem like a pep talk.

Ianto slid to the floor and buried his head in his knees. "It's not my fault. It's not my fault," he repeated over and over to try and make himself believe it. Because some stupid woman decided to drive home after one too many and now he had lost his wife and was waiting for news on how his children were doing. "They are not going to take my kids away from me," he promised himself. "Do they think I'm so daft that I will let them raise them without me?" Ianto paused and looked up, his eyes brimming with unshed tears. "Luce, why did you have to leave me? I'm sorry I wasn't there for you, but they wouldn't believe that I wasn't hurt. I came here as soon as they released me. It wasn't supposed to end this way. We should be watching Gia and Harper grow up together and now I'm too scared to go see them. I don't want the news to be bad and then I'll have to say goodbye to them too. No matter what anyone else said or thought about me I love you and if our babies pull through this they will never not know who you are. Please don't hate me for what I'm about to do. No one, not even your parents are going to take them away from me." Ianto retreated into his own world as he raised his hand and his eyes fixed on his wedding ring. Images of his life since moving to California played through Ianto's head.

The first time meeting Lucinda on the beach after she knocked him out with a frisbee.

Their awkward first date that ended with Ianto never expecting a second date.

Lucinda teaching him how to surf and he teaching her to speak Welsh.

Proposing on the beach after a sunset picnic.

Their wedding at a local vineyard. The large yet somehow intimate ceremony and reception. It
was the happiest day of Ianto's life.

How could he forget the honeymoon in Hawaii where they spent the whole time surfing or shagging.

The day Lucinda came to him with the positive pregnancy test.

Then when they found out they were having twins. A big shock, but a very pleasant one.

Their first anniversary. A quiet day at home, taking turns pampering each other.

Lucinda calling out to him to hold on as he drifted in and out of consciousness. Then the moment before everything went black: holding onto each other's hand exchanging what would be their final ‘I love you’s.

Ianto was yanked back to reality by a hand on his shoulder. "Dr. Schwartz." He quickly swiped the tears away, not wanting to show his weakness to the two woman now standing in front of him. "What are you doing here?" he asked the doctor that been Lucinda's OBGYN, but he didn't recognise the other woman.

"I heard about the accident. I'm so sorry to hear about Lucinda. I'm glad to see you aren't hurt," she offered her sympathies. "This is Dr. Helena Walcott, she will be in charge of team taking care of Harper and Gia while they are here. Helena, this is Ianto Jones, Harper and Gia's father."

"Are they okay? Are my children going to be okay?" Ianto slowly stood up, his legs a bit unsteady.

"Have you been in to see them yet?" Helena asked.

Ianto shook his head. "I just arrived a few minutes ago. Can I see them?"

"You can. Let's go inside and I can update you on their progress."

A sense of dread settled into the pit of Ianto’s stomach as he followed the doctor into the NICU, fearing the worst.

As Ianto was prepped to enter the sterile part of NICU, Helena gave him the details on each of the babies’ condition.

Gia weighed 4 pounds, 6 ounces and measured 15 inches long. She had a shock of bright red hair, just like her mother and had already won over the hearts of most of the nurses on the unit. She was the stronger of the twins and so far had very little difficulty breathing and was keeping her body temperature steady.

Harper weighed 3 pounds, 14 ounces and measured 16 inches long. He was jaundiced and was having difficulty breathing on his own. The boy was completely bald and had quickly earned the reputation of being a grump.

Ianto knew he had to be prepared for the worst especially where Harper was concerned. But all the preparation in the world could not prepare Ianto for what he saw when he laid eyes upon his children for the first time. Gia was laid in a small incubator, hooked up to a number of machines to monitor her vitals and a nasal canella and an IV for nutritional purposes. She looked so tiny and perfect. His baby daughter. Ianto stepped forward to allow him to look into the second incubator. Harper was hooked up to so many more tubes and wires.
Harper looked more machine than human and that brought up more memories that Ianto would have rather kept buried deep. Memories so raw that when unearthed for the first time in years they felt new again. For a brief moment, Ianto was back in the days where he cared for the half-converted Lisa. There was so much pain and screaming and Ianto could only wonder if Harper was in that kind of pain, but too small to be able to cry out. Ianto winced as Lisa’s screams filled his head along with the screams of the other tortured half-converted Cybermen. "He's not in pain is he?" Ianto’s hand went up and pressed against the top of the plastic incubator that was keeping the tiny boy safe from the entire world. Lisa's pained cries echoed on Ianto's mind. No person should ever have to live through that kind of suffering.

"No. Harper isn't in pain. He's made some progress in the last few hours. Hopefully we will able to get him off the CPAP soon. I know it's scary to see them hooked up to so many things, but babies born at this stage usually do really well with little or no long term problems," Helena explained, but wondered how much Ianto had heard as he seemed to be transfixed, almost traumatised, by the machines his son was hooked up to.

"Why is Gia doing so much better than Harper?" Ianto could not take his eyes off his son, but in his mind he saw the bodies of all the half converted bodies he saw while trying to escape Canary Wharf.

"It happens sometimes with twins, but he'll eventually catch up."

"Can I hold him?" Ianto asked, feeling that this was the only way to know for sure that Harper was really human and not machine.

Helena shook her head. "I'm sorry. He's not stable enough to be out of the isolette yet." Telling a new parent that they could not hold their child was one of the hardest parts of the job. "But you can touch him. Hold his hand. A simple touch can go a long way with a premie."

Ianto nodded wordlessly and slid his hand into the incubator and stroked the back of the tiny hand with one of his fingers. What happened next brought tears to the man's eyes; the tiny hand made a grab for the finger. "Hey there, Harper. You're giving us quite the scare. You got to get stronger, you hear me young man. You're going to be okay. You just have to be. Please don't leave me too. How about we make this deal, you make it through this and I'll make sure you are the happiest boy ever. Do we have a deal?" Ianto spent the next couple of hours sitting with Harper with his tiny hand grasping onto his Daddy's finger trying to draw on his strength. It seemed to be working as the newborn's vitals started to stabilise and improve with each passing hour. Ianto was not sure if it was because of him that Harper started to improve, all that mattered was that he did.

As father and son bonded, various staff members came to speak with Ianto about what he was to expect for both babies. He also discussed hospital protocols about visiting and was relieved that he could spend as much time as he wanted by his children's side except for shift changes. Ianto planned on never leaving them alone until they were out of the hospital.

Ianto must have fallen asleep because he was jolted awake by a shrill cry. It took several seconds for him to realise it was Gia crying. A nurse appeared instantly to see what was wrong.


"Everything is fine," the nurse said after checking some vitals and making sure nothing else was wrong. "If I were to guess I think she wants some attention. Would you like to hold Gia?"

"Can I?" The new father had assumed that the restrictions on holding were the same for both newborns.
"You can hold her for a little bit," she said as she carefully put Gia into Ianto's arm.

Ianto was awestruck when Gia was given to him, holding her against his chest, her head resting close to his heart. It hit him that this was all real and he was really a father now. Two lives that he was completely responsible for and that he was totally on his own to raise his children. It took about a minute to find a position that was comfortable for both him and Gia, what with all the wires. It was then she calmed down and enjoyed the human contact.

"Is that all you wanted? To say hello. Well hello my beautiful baby girl," Ianto whispered and kissed the top of the girl's head. "This was quite an entrance you made into the world. You two were in such a hurry to get here you wanted to arrive two months early. I wish you could have waited a little longer, but I'm glad you are here. Your mum and I were really looking forward to this, but she's not here. I shouldn't be here either, but something happened to me a while ago that made sure that I will always be here. You and your brother will never have to worry about me leaving." Ianto silently added, albeit sadly, that he would long out live them and any future generations of Joneses to come.

To be continued...
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Post-Exit Wounds. Ianto needed a break from Torchwood to help himself heal before he could help others. He did not expect the break to become permanent. What happens when he is reminded that there is no escaping Torchwood? Will Ianto choose his old life or keep on the road he been living? Written for tw_classic_bb.

Title: The Road Not Taken- Chapter 12/12
Author: iantojjackh
Characters/Pairings: Ianto, Jack, few OCs, Jack/Ianto (past) Ianto/OFC
Rating: PG
Warnings/contains: not applicable
Summary: Post-Exit Wounds. Ianto needed a break from Torchwood to help himself heal before he could help others. He did not expect the break to become permanent. What happens when he is reminded that there is no escaping Torchwood? Will Ianto choose his old life or keep on the road he been living? Written for tw_classic_bb.
Disclaimer: I don't make any money off of this, sadly. All things Torchwood belong to those who own them and the poem The Road Not Taken belongs to Robert Frost. OC's and the plot are mine.
Beta: timelordshines and czarina_kitty
Artists: the_silver_sun - Art found here & iantojjackh - Art found here. Combined art post is here.
Word Count: ~24k

John and Vivian walked back into the hospital eleven hours after they left, getting none of the rest they had planned on when they had left. How could they? Their only child was dead and they could not get any information on their grandchildren. The only thing they could do was begin to plan Lucinda's funeral. An impossible task that they could not fathom doing, but a task they had no choice but to do. They had not even bothered to check on their son-in-law to see how injured he had been in the accident or even if he had been told about Lucinda's passing. In their mind Ianto was not worthy and the longer he stayed away the better things would be.

"I still don't understand why they need a password so we can check on how they are doing? They
are our grandchildren." Vivian was fed up with the lack of information being given to her and John. The woman was used to everything being done her way and never being told no. "They need someone to be there for them. These are important days for those babies. How can they not let anyone in to see them? This is just wrong."

“Hopefully things have changed and we will be allowed in.” John tried to calm down his agitated wife, knowing nothing would calm her down other than seeing her grandchildren.

The scene at the entrance to the NICU quickly become volatile when the nurse told the Harkin’s they were not on the approved visitor’s list.

“What do you mean we are not on the list? How is that possible? We are their grandparents. We are allowed to see them. It’s not like we are strangers.” Vivian clenched her fists, looking like she wanted to lunge at the nurse.

“Ma’am, it’s up to the children’s parents to decide who shall be allowed into the NICU.” the young nurse was growing fearful of the couple in front of her and had a hand on the phone ready to call security if need be.

“Our daughter is dead. Who set up these rules?” Vivian said condescendingly.

“Ianto!” Vivian put on the sugary fake smile she had used with Ianto in the past. “I thought you were still in the hospital.” Or dead, Vivian added silently. She was shocked to see that he had not a scratch on him and wondered how this was possible.

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“I did!” A terse voice made John and Vivian jump. “And I have every reason not to let you in to see them.” Ianto was ready to give his in-laws the confrontation that had been brewing ever since he proposed to Lucinda.

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Ianto was still shaking when he returned to the twin's bedside. It was like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders, to finally put the Harkins in their place. It was a less than ideal timing, but it
needed to be done. He was not going to be pushed around and bullied by them anymore and they needed to see their treatment of people had consequences. Ianto was also fearful that the minute he turned his back, they would swoop in and take his children away. Part of Ianto wanted to Retcon the couple so they would forget ever knowing him, but that way they would never learn.

"Sorry I was gone for so long. I had to make sure no one was going to take you away from me." Ianto was glad that the incubators were set up in such a way that he could touch both babies at the same time. Both hands offered a comforting touch to each of the small lives fighting so hard to live and thrive. And in turn he took comfort from them. The position was uncomfortable, but Ianto pushed it out of his mind because he knew he had to do this for Harper and Gia. He wanted to make sure both children knew that he was there for them.

"Now both of you listen to me. You can't tell anyone our plans. It's going to be between the three of us, okay? Once both of you get strong enough to get out of here I'm going to take you both far away from here. There's no place for me here anymore. I know I can't take care of you both by myself and I'm going to need help. Rhi would kick my ass if I didn't come to her for help. Johnny would help too and your cousins David and Mica. There is only one place I can go for help and not worry about mean people who want to steal you. You two are never going to want for anything. You are going to know how much your mum loved you. How much she was looking forward to meeting you." Ianto's voice cracked and his vision clouded with tears. "I won't be the perfect father and I will probably make mistakes along the way, but as long as the three of us stick together I think we will be okay. But it is on both of you now to fight and grow strong so you get to see the world outside this hospital. I love you both so much my little angels."

Vivian returned to the NICU shortly after the shift change for the nurses, hoping she could play on the emotions of whoever was manning the reception area to get her in to see her grandchildren. If that did not work, she had John consulting a lawyer, to see what their options were about being able to see the babies.

"Excuse me." Vivian sauntered up to the desk. "I was wondering if I could go in and see my grandbabies. I haven't had a chance to see their precious little faces yet." She played up the sweet grandma act, who could say no to such a pleading face.

"Sure, just let me check you in. What are your grandkids names?" The nurse asked.

"Gia and Harper Jones."

The nurse typed in the names and pursed her lips as she read the file notes that said that the grandparents were not allowed to visit as per the father's orders. "Are you Vivian Harkins?" When Vivian nodded the young woman reached for the phone.

"What are you doing?" Vivian reached over the desk and hung up the phone. "I just need to see and hold my grandbabies. Why is that so hard?"

"Is there a problem? Do you need some help ma'am?" A smooth voice tried to diffuse the tense situation.

"Everything is fine, sir." The nurse looked a little uneasy, but relaxed that someone else had arrived. "Can I help you?"

"You sure can." The man offered a big smile with a hint of flirting. "I'm here to see a friend and his children. The name is Jones, Ianto Jones."

"And your name is?" The nurse asked, ignoring the fierce glare from Vivian.
"Jack Harkness," Jack showed the woman a piece of identification, knowing he was going to be asked to show it.

"Thank you. You may go in. The nurse inside will show you how to scrub up before you can visit."

Vivian could not believe what she was hearing and seeing, a stranger was being allowed in to see Harper and Gia before her. It took a moment before the name registered. "Jack! You're the ex-boyfriend. The one who he had a kid with already."

Jack turned and looked at the other woman with a raised eyebrow and shrugged. "I could be considered that. You must be the mother-in-law." He made the assumption based on the woman's age and appearance. He sensed the woman was about to unleash some kind of venomous words, but he put a stop to it. "Don't even think of saying anything bad about Ianto. If he's not letting you in to see the twins, then I'm sure Ianto has a good reason for it. I'm here to support him. Ianto needs a friend more than anything right now, not someone who is going to yell and put him down. There was only one other time that I've seen Ianto this destroyed over losing someone and last time I helped him through it and this time it's not going to be any different. Now, if you'd excuse me I have a friend to comfort." Jack slipped by the woman, not giving her a chance to say anything. When he was here last time, Jack had a sense that Ianto was not on good terms with his in-laws. And even though he and Ianto had left things hanging in limbo between them, there was no way Jack could turn his back on Ianto in his time of need.

After Jack scrubbed up and put a sterile gown on, he was finally allowed into the nursery. His heart dropped when he laid eyes upon the devastated Welshman who was slumped over in a chair, asleep while keeping a bedside vigil over his children.

"Oh, my poor Ianto," Jack whispered as he approached the sleeping man and cupped Ianto’s cheek against his left hand.

"You came?" Ianto asked sleepily as his eyes slowly opened. He hadn’t been sure Jack would come.

"Of course I did. You needed me so here I am. I'm sorry to hear about Lucinda," Jack offered his sympathies. He knew from experience that this was a pain that never fully went away. It might eventually fade into the background, but it could always jump to the forefront at any time.

"I didn't think it would end like this. She never got to see or hold them. What am I going to do?" Slowly the strong wall Ianto had put up to hold himself together since he woke up at the site of the accident started to crumble. Jack was always the one that Ianto never had to be pretend to be strong for.

"Come here," Jack offered open arms to the grieving man. It was time to put aside whatever difference there were between. When the one you love his hurting all you want to do is make it better for them.

Ianto stood up and collapsed into Jack's arms, sobs quickly overcoming him.

"Shhh," Jack whispered as he rubbed the crying man's back. "I'm here now and I'm not going anywhere. As long as you need me I'll be here. I know it hurts, but you have two very beautiful little babies who need you."

"I'm sorry, Jack. So, so sorry." Ianto looked up, his eyes red from crying and there were still many more tears to be shed. The fact that Jack dropped everything and traveled over six thousand miles in an instant made Ianto feel guilty.
"There is nothing to be sorry for, Ianto," Jack assured the other man. "You helped me through when I needed it and gave me one of the best gifts ever. It's only fair that we help you." For the first time Jack realised had Ianto never left when he did there was a good chance he would not have gone through with his pregnancy. So Ianto's leaving was really a blessing in disguise.

Ianto cried for another half hour with Jack holding on tight, soaking Jack's shirt while the older man whispered words of encouragement. That he was here for as long as Ianto needed him.

Another hour passed where Ianto just held onto Jack as tight as he could, completely spent of all energy. Jack was like an anchor to the real world and if Ianto let go, he felt that he would spiral into a pit of oblivion where escape was not possible. There was no need for words to be exchanged between the men. Some connections are never broken. Though they may be stretched to the point where the strands cannot be seen with the naked eye, they will always be there.

Both men refused to let go of each other until one of the staff doctors came around and asked if Ianto wanted to hold Harper. He was finally stable enough to be held for a while. Ianto's grief was temporarily forgotten the second the tiny baby was placed in his arms. He just knew his tiny little miracles were going to be okay. Tears of joy rolled down Ianto's face as Harper's hand clutched the edge of his shirt.

In the rocking chair across of him, Jack held Gia close, smiling as her crying stopped as he began to sing an unfamiliar lullaby and she curled her tiny fingers around his finger.

Ianto knew at that moment he had found home again. It did not matter what would eventually become of their relationship. All that mattered was they were a constant presence in each other's life again.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

The End?

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