



BBC
BOOKS

TORCHWOOD



FOR CAPTAIN AND CARDIFF
BLACKHEMLOCK

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For Captain and Cardiff

by *blackhemlock* (frzn.coffee@gmail.com)

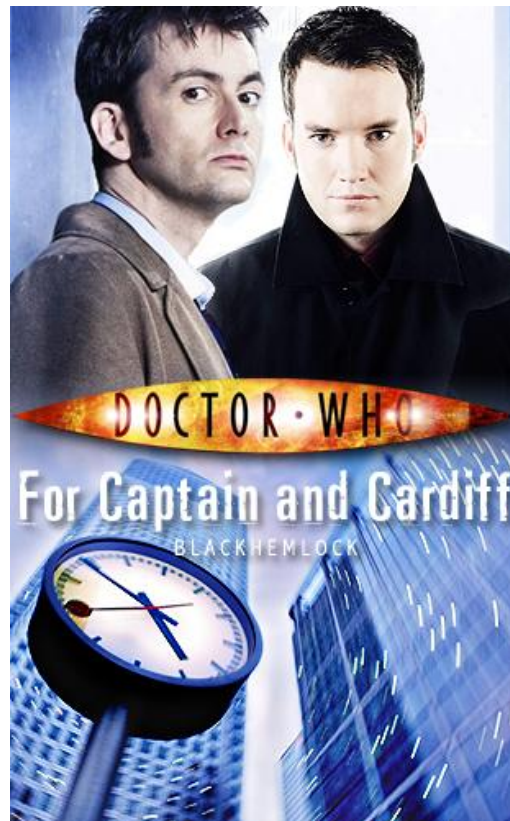
Torchwood, New Who | PG-13 (swearing, allusions to M/M relationship) | gen | 43,000 words

"At midnight, a nationwide security alert was sent out... Torchwood London, demands all agencies' cooperation in issuing an arrest warrant for Ianto Merric Jones, 24, of Cardiff." Torchwood Three's Archivist has gone rogue. But, he does have a very good reason, and he looks stunning in his new suit.

All Latitude and Longitude positions have been taken from this website:
<http://www.satsig.net/maps/lat-long-finder.htm> so feel free to check them out.

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Saturday, Day 194, 00.00GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

The Hub was dark, quiet and still.

Actually, it wasn't, because the Hub was never dark: there was always a screen on, its dull neon glow flickering as something was processed or recorded or monitored. Likewise the Hub was never still or silent. Myfanwy ruled the roost when its human occupants were elsewhere; wheeling about the lofty expanses, occasionally breaking her glide with a great leathery flap of wings or a hoarse piercing shriek. There was the occasional trickle of water running down the Rift tower from the fountain on the Plass, dripping into one of the pools at the foot of the tower. Light reflected off the water, bouncing and casting shadows around the Hub, turning all the weird technology into shaded monsters.

Yet, despite all of this, the Hub was comparatively dark, quiet and still.

In one of the many shaded corners, a computer screen flickered to life and a red flashing icon appeared.

But other than that brief flare of life...the Hub was abandoned.

Saturday, Day 194, 01.26GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

"Ianto!" Jack's voice rang out through the Hub, clearly audible over the rumbling of the cog door and blare of alarms.

"I reek, I'm wet and I am going to have to burn this jacket. Have I mentioned that I *hate* the bloody countryside?" Owen's grumblings were undermined by the squelch of his trainers and jeans and he pushed past Jack and headed to the showers. "And when the sodding Tea-boy shows his face I want a coffee!"

"You could always make it yourself you know?" Gwen called as she followed after him, her tone hinting at just how much hearing Owen whine about being wet and cold for the past two hours had eaten at her normally cheerful spirit.

Scowling over his shoulder Owen offered Gwen a two fingered salute. "I could, but then I'd be doing him out of a job wouldn't I?"

"Ah yes, Owen, philanthropist extraordinaire. How could we forget?" muttered Tosh, moving to her work station.

From the door she had already seen that her computer was on – which wasn't strange given that she never turned it off – numerous pop-ups cluttering up the screen and yammering for attention. Rift activity, Hub monitoring, diagnostics: all little screens of information calling to her like a Siren's song; begging her to come and check that their information was correct and their jobs had been done right. And despite her lethargy and the desperate need to be clean, she felt herself being tugged in their direction; her feet already moving before she had consciously decided what she wanted to do. All she had to do was go over, check that the world wasn't about to end and then she could follow her colleagues into the blissful warm waters of the decontamination showers.

Tosh wasn't the only one forced to follow a call other than that of the showers, Jack Harkness also refused to wait for personal hygiene when he had an errant team member to find; especially when the team member looked positively edible in a suit and served the best cup of coffee in the known Universe. And wasn't answering Jack's summons with his usually promptness. Ever since the Cyber-woman incident (and Jack refused to call her Lisa. As far as he was concerned Lisa Hallet died at Canary Wharf and that thing in his basement was just another alien threat) the hairs on the back of his neck rose and butterflies whipped up tsunamis in his stomach if Ianto's routine changed. Even if it just deviated slightly, veering off course for but a moment, it was a moment too long for Jack and it made him uneasy. Dispassionately speaking it was perhaps an understandable reaction: Ianto Jones had proven himself to be a dangerous individual. But Jack Harkness was nothing but passion and Ianto had shown nothing but true unwavering loyalty and dedication to Torchwood Three, and Jack in particular, since that night and doubting him now felt like a betrayal.

Jack hated that he couldn't help betraying Ianto yet again.

And it had nothing to do with his own unresolved and much more personal issues with the Archivist. Or, at least, that was what he kept telling himself.

So as Gwen trailed after Owen, wet footsteps marking their path to the lockers and decontamination showers, and Tosh hurried to her computers and their welcoming technological embrace, Jack strode to his office, damp coat clinging to his ankles, tapping his comms as he went. "Ianto? We're back. Where are you?"

Static. Nothing.

Clamping down on the tightening in his gut, Jack hit his comms again, pressing the tiny button so hard that the unit dug into his scalp. The pain, like the butterflies, was ignored. A fake smile etched itself into the muscles of his face. "Ianto? I'm sure we've been through this before. Me needing to hear that voice and those Welsh vowels that are oh so naughty and you ignoring me, and whilst I enjoy games as much as the next man, I could really do with your help up here."

His smile faltered, wavered but refused to fall, as only static met his request.

Ever the optimist, or simply unwilling to concede defeat and acknowledge that either Ianto was ignoring him or was unable to respond, Jack gave it another go. "Really, I'm wet, soaked to the skin, dripping onto the floor and could do with someone to peel my clothes off. Shirt, trousers, boxers – all wet, all need to come off. How about it? You, me, shower, loofah?" He paused, and then added, "I'll even bring water-resistant lube so we can get those hard to reach places."

Jack waited, almost desperate to hear an exasperated voice tell him that such comments were inappropriate for the work place, but nothing came. There was no reprimand; no snidely sarcastic comment that caused Jack's stomach squirm deliciously...there was nothing...and Jack felt his throat go dry. His relationship with Ianto wasn't in the best of places and admittedly that was his fault, but he had hoped for some response to such a provocative comment on open comms. Since his return, Ianto had frowned upon Jack flirting with him, claiming that they weren't there. That he didn't quite trust Jack in that way yet. Each time Jack responded the same way, when the Rift was calm they would have their date. That he would win back Ianto's trust.

But, Jack had never been good at keeping his promises and the date, the idea he had clung to so desperately whilst hanging from rusted chains, was still as elusive as a dream.

Shuddering, Jack took a breath. It was well past one in the morning and as attached to the Hub as Ianto was, he could very well just have gone home for the night. There had been no instruction for him to stay twenty-four/seven when the team had left earlier in the week, just for Ianto to make sure that he was there to receive the conference call with UNIT and the PM's office whilst Jack and the others tracked down the strange pulse that was being broadcast from the middle of the Cambrian Mountains; which in Wales' 'Green Desert' was like searching for a single star in the Universe.

He hung his greatcoat on its hook, raising his hand to smooth out the wrinkles like Ianto usually did, before stopping and hoping Ianto would know how to get rainwater and alien viscera out of it in the morning. The man had worked greater miracles with the coat before he thought, snapping his braces off and heading to the manhole. All he wanted now was to have a long, luxurious soak in the shower after three days of traipsing around Wales and maybe curl his hand around his cock and let images of Ianto snuggled up under his duvet – just his dark mop of hair and cute toes visible as he curled up in sleep – slide him towards release. Because, after the week Jack had had, that sounded like a bliss he was quite certain that he deserved.

In the morning, after a full night's sleep, he would book a table for two somewhere; maybe at Le Gallois. He'd heard that it was one of the best places for dinners in Cardiff: reliant on hearsay as he'd never actually taken someone out on a date. It wasn't done where he was from, an archaic formality required only on main planets, and he'd met Estelle in the war and dates hadn't been a priority then. Dances had. He had a *lot* of experience with sex and relationships and lust and flirting and innuendo and seduction. He'd had almost a century and a half of it and yet Ianto Jones was the first person he had ever had to ask on a date.

And in asking out the young Welshman, the naturally gregarious immortal had, for the first time, understood the crippling fear that came with nerves. Bearing his heart to Ianto in that way had blinded him with terror.

Truthfully, he was still scared because dating Ianto made him vulnerable in ways he didn't like, but he wasn't going to let nerves that any fifteen year old boy could get over ruin his chance to repair his relationship with Ianto. It hadn't exactly been a relationship before Jack had left, but a year of dying and torture and chains had given him a chance to think. To admit that perhaps he wanted more out of his life than simply existing, moving through time unaffected. Ironic, living a year of death had forced him to admit that he wanted to live. Moreover, he was desperate for Ianto to be a part of that life.

He'd find the number for the restaurant in the morning. He'd even find a-

"Jack!"

Tosh's yell echoed round the cavernous Hub, startling Myfanwy out of her nest, her screaming cries reverberating around the Hub chasing after Tosh's call.

He took the stairs from his office as fast as he could; contemplating that there had to be quicker ways to get down the levels in an emergency. A fireman's pole certainly had possibilities. After all there were a number of uses Jack Harkness could think of for a fireman's pole.

"What, what is it?"

"What the bleeding hell is all the noise? You scared the dinosaur woman!" Owen was freshly washed, hair still wet and dripping into the towel slung round his neck. Jeans and t-shirt were usual for the

medic, but the decontamination flip-flops were new. “And when it’s scared it shits all over the autopsy bay!”

“Language!” Gwen came up behind him, cuffing him on the back of the head as she passed. “Perhaps you should have cleaned your mouth out with soap whilst you were in there.” Her thumb hiked back over her shoulder, towards the showers.

“I’ll just point out that no one else has to deal with dinosaur crap when something spooks the featherless chicken. I swear Tea-boy taught her that trick. Probably gives her extra anchovies every time she manages to hit my desk!” Rubbing at his head Owen followed Gwen to Tosh’s desk grumbling all the way, studiously ignoring the way she laughed at him.

Jack had beaten them to Tosh’s work station and was already reading over the tech’s shoulder, his face paling rapidly.

“What is it?” Gwen asked, concern creeping in and blurring onto the edge of her words. “What’s happened? Tosh?”

Tosh turned to look at Gwen and Owen, seemingly startled that they were both there when she’d only yelled for Jack. Her big eyes blinked behind her glasses and she turned back to her screen.

“At midnight, a nationwide security alert was sent out.”

Rubbing at his hair, Owen drew closer, trying to read the screen. Jack was blocking his view, his broad shoulders tense. “So? What’s that got to do with us? Last I checked we were Torchwood, not the Home Guard.”

Tosh glanced at Jack whose eyes were still firmly fixed on the screen before him. “Umm... well... no, no we aren’t the Home Guard but the alert was sent to all law enforcement, government agencies, armed forces and even hospitals, fire stations and the coast guard.”

“So? I repeat, what the hell does that have to do with us?” Now warm, clean and dry, Owen was feeling decidedly sleepy and possibly hungry (and not necessarily in that order) and it was making him snappish. Well, more snappish than usual at any rate.

Of all the team, the doctor was the one that was most affected by the physical. Gwen was always hit hardest by the emotion of the job, but like the other three, she could function well on little sleep and food. Owen on the other hand became an absolute harridan to work with when he didn’t get his required five hours of sleep or snack every hour.

Trying not to stumble over her words Tosh summarised the alert. “Basically, its well... it’s the top level security alert in the country. Like a terrorist alert, but higher...and...well...”

She glanced at Jack. There was a tick in the muscle of his jaw which after five years she knew meant Jack was angry. Beyond dramatics and posturing, beyond announcing that he was Torchwood and he would have his way. Jack’s temper had accelerated past mere anger and was approaching rage.

He was not the only one who was angry.

Annoyed at Tosh's stammering and desperate for sleep, Owen felt the tenuous hold he had on the one remaining thread of temper begin to fray. "And. What. Does. It. Say?" he bit out, exaggerated sarcasm turning each word into its own little sentence.

"It's an arrest warrant." It wasn't Tosh that answered Owen, it was Jack. His voice was cold, almost unrecognisable as that of the affable and charismatic Captain. This voice belonged to a dangerous creature; one made purely of nightmare and anger. It was a black and vacant voice that wished death upon anyone who heard it.

Gwen and Owen looked away from Tosh, who immediately turned back to her computers and began hammering away at the keys. She didn't need to hear what Jack had to say. She had already read it. Hearing it spoken out loud, in *that* voice, would only make matters worse.

"Jack?" Gwen lay a gently hand on the team leader, and almost pulled away again when she felt the muscles move under her palm. He was positively vibrating with anger. "What's Torchwood doin' receiving arrest warrants? I thought we were above all that."

Jack smiled. It wasn't friendly. "Oh, we are. Unless, of course, the warrant is issued by Torchwood London."

"What?"

Without looking at the screen, Jack recited what he had read, certain that the words had been burned into his memory for the rest of his existence. "Torchwood London, demands all agencies' cooperation in issuing an arrest warrant for Ianto Merric Jones, 24, of Cardiff."

"Ianto?" The hand she had over her mouth muffled the volume of her voice, but did nothing to hide Gwen's shock.

"Bloody bugging fuck!" Owen pushed Tosh to one side in order to read the statement for himself. He felt Gwen shift to his side, reading with him.

His eyes flew over the words, cold impersonal, black on the neon white screen, and they just didn't seem real. They seemed, well they seemed wrong. And for a man of science, who relied on information from computers and other technology, it was a disconcerting feeling. He knew Ianto, knew that whilst the young man had secrets, and was most definitely good at keeping them (better than Jack in that respect) there was no way he would do anything that could have Torchwood One defaming him as a traitor and a threat to the country, if not the world.

But, there was a whispering, insidious little voice that was constantly murmuring in his head, and it reminded him of just *what* type of secrets Ianto was able to keep. They had been gone for three days, and Ianto hadn't seemed all that unhappy to be left stuck in the Hub alone.

"What the hell has the twat done this time?" he grumbled as he backed away from the monitor.

The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end and he turned to see Tosh and Gwen eying him viciously.

"Oi! I'm just saying – bloke's got a nasty habit of doing things he shouldn't. Cyber-girlfriend in the basement? Anyone else remember her wanting to start her little cyber-empire from here?"

"Now really isn't the time Owen," said Tosh, with a glance in Jack's direction.

The man was pale and there was a distinctive, angry, clench to his jaw. His blue eyes were reading the screen, over and over, and Tosh knew she had never seen him so angry. In fact the only time that came close was the Lisa incident. Owen bringing it up wouldn't be helping.

"I think now is the perfect time! He brought a cyber-chick into Torchwood for fuck's sake! Who knows what else he had hidden. He was here for three days on his own, with all our tech! For all we know—"

Whatever he had been going to say was cut off as Jack slammed him head first into Tosh's desktop. Papers were pinned under his head as Jack leant his full weight onto Owen's wiry back. His tanned hand gripped the scruff of the pale neck and Jack leant forward.

"Do not," he hissed, breath warm and threatening in Owen's ear, like poisoned honey, "say anything else about Ianto. He has proved himself as much a part of this team as anyone."

Jack moved closer and Owen squirmed, desperate to alleviate the pressure on his neck. He could feel something hard digging into the small of his back and at any other time, with Jack pressing him into a table, his arse in the air, there would have been no doubt as to what it was. And this time was no different. Owen knew it was the butt of Jack's ever present Webley Service Revolver, and he knew that it wouldn't take much for Jack to turn it round and press the muzzle into the soft skin of his neck.

"And, if you want to start throwing stones Owen, why don't we start with you opening the Rift and shooting me in the head? Comparatively speaking, starting Armageddon rates a little above trying to save a loved one don'tcha think?"

Owen didn't have to be able to see Jack to know he was smiling: smiling that ugly vicious smile that made him look shark-like. All teeth and dead eyes. It was the smile he gave the enemy right before he put a bullet through their skull.

"Jack," Gwen tugged at his arm. She'd never noticed how strong the man was until she needed to pull him back from the brink.

Tosh helped.

Between them they pulled their irate boss off of Owen, who lay panting over Tosh's desk. Jack snarled at Gwen, who promptly released his arm and hurriedly backed away, her hands raised in the universal sign of surrender. He turned away, growling low in his throat, his cold eyes already flicking back to the computer screen. Ignoring Tosh as she moved to help Owen roll onto his back and begin checking him over, asking if he was alright.

Owen wasn't in the mood to be coddled by Tosh's soft hands and kind words and he pushed her away. None too gently.

"Fuck you Harkness!"

His pride and neck hurt, crushed into a desk, Owen wasn't rational enough to be sensible. Striding up to Jack, he jabbed his finger into the older man's chest, ignoring the 'smush' noise the sodden fabric made as it shifted. "Just 'cos your sex toy has run off and gotten himself into trouble does not mean you can push me around. They," his finger jabbed in Gwen's direction, "might take your shit and bow and scrap at your bloody feet. *They* might be willin' to fall back into line and let you push 'em around. But not me Harkness! So. Fuck. You."

There was a beat, an eternity of cold heavy silence, and then Jack lunged at Owen, his worry and fear for Ianto, churning into a primal need to lash out. Humans may well have evolved over the thirty centuries that separated Jack and his team, but they had devolved too. They were more primal – savage and strong – but just as easily manipulated by their emotions. Sometimes more so: lust and violence at the very bedrock of their societies. But, twenty-first century man wasn't that far removed from the Neanderthal himself, and Owen met Jack halfway.

It was a fight that had been brewing for months. Since Diane. Since Abbadon. Hell, there had been tension between them since Owen had met him outside of the operating theatre and Jack had barged in and revealed Owen's dead fiancé. No one could meet under such circumstances and get along. There was always resentment, always a feeling that Jack or Owen or both of them could have done more. Could have saved her...and it had never gone away.

And now, tension high, both were cracking at the time they should have held together. They were tired and stressed and something just had to give.

Jack landed a solid right hook to Owen's jaw, whilst he went low: slamming his fist into Jack's kidneys. Brawling like boys, they punched and swore and snarled, forcing Gwen out of the way and ignoring her yells for them to stop.

It was what they needed. They were both alpha males who were forced into a confined space. Ianto could survive it, he had a natural, graceful sense of submission, but Owen and Jack had none of that. Both leaders, both intelligent and it was only the difference in specialities and abilities that allowed them to function at all. If Jack had been a doctor, or Owen a soldier, then they would have killed one another within the first week. The fight was needed.

The fight was *wanted*.

Jack managed to hook his leg around Owen's, jerking and pulling the other man down to the floor. They hit the metal deck with a solid thud, Jack crying out as his elbow slammed into the steel, jarring viciously. Owen, slightly dazed from cracking his head on Tosh's chair as he went down couldn't capitalise on it and barely moved out of the way of Jack's lashing arm.

And then they froze.

Face devoid of colour and absolute rage in her eyes, Tosh stood a few feet from them, gun in the air and she emptied another shot just to make her point.

"Are you quite finished?"

Neither man could look her in the eye. Instead, they flopped back on to the hard cold floor, panting for breath. Jack had slung his arm over his chest and was putting a fair amount of pressure on his ribs. Owen could deliver a mean punch; it was sneaky and spiteful: rather like the man that dealt it. Owen gingerly prodded at his nose. There was every possibility that it was broken; which meant a week of puffy black eyes and breathing through his mouth.

"We don't have time for this. Ianto is in trouble. I don't care what your problems are and I don't want to know either." Tosh pulled herself up to her full diminutive height and fixed Jack with a look, "Now, you go and shower and get changed."

Jack sat up. "But-"

"I do not want to hear it Jack. Go and get cleaned up. And then come back and be our Captain." As she looked at him Jack could see the disappointment in her eyes. And lurking, just behind it, fear.

She was scared for Ianto. And he wasn't making things easier.

Jack pulled himself off of the floor, stifling a groan. He didn't dare so much as whimper, knowing that he had brought all his physical pain on himself. Carefully, he walked off to his office. Tosh, he had to admit, was somewhat scary. Outwardly she seemed nothing more than a shy, somewhat geeky, woman with a kind heart and soft eyes. Inside, she had hunger and a core of steel and the longer she stayed at Torchwood, the steelier that core became. She wasn't just scary; at times she was downright *terrifying*.

As Jack hobbled off, Tosh rounded on Owen, hands on her hips and a severely ticked off expression on her face; "And you! What the hell were you thinking?"

Owen had pulled himself up and was leaning up against the railings. His nose was bleeding and he'd pulled his t-shirt up to mop up the blood. He hadn't noticed the blood dripping down his face from the gash on his left temple. He shot her a wounded yet annoyed look and pulled his top down.

"I am fed up of Jack sodding Harkness! He swans off to god knows where, doesn't tell us anything and then comes back and just expects to pick up where he left off! And you," he pointed at both girls, "just let him! And don't get me started on Ianto! Bet he couldn't wait to spread his legs again once Jack got back."

A gasp from Gwen and a slap from Tosh met his comments.

"Get out of my sight Owen."

"Excuse me?" The shock at *Tosh* of all people talking to him like that was etched into his face, his dark eyes gleaming with confusion, brows disappearing towards his hair line.

"I said, get out of my sight." She was no longer looking at him. Instead, her gaze was fixed on her screen, her fingers flying over the keyboard. "If you can't or won't contribute anything to sorting this out then we don't need you here. *Ianto* doesn't need you here. As far as I'm concerned, Ianto is innocent until I see something that convinces me otherwise. So you either help or you leave."

Owen blinked; he opened his mouth to respond before snapping it shut and stomping off to the autopsy bay.

"Wow. I'm impressed," Gwen moved over to Tosh, her awe quite evident in the hushed tone of her voice. She gently nudged her hip against Tosh's. "I don't think I've ever seen anyone tell Jack and Owen off and get them to shut up. It was quite, well, to be honest, it was a bit scary. Especially the bit with the gun. Very action movie that one."

Tosh laughed a little, suddenly realising how out of character her actions had been.

"What are we doing?"

"Well," Tosh, entered a couple more commands, "I was thinking that I would set this up, have it hack into the Torchwood One database and see what we have and that you could get in touch with the police. See if they know anything?"

“Can do.” Gwen turned to go to her workstation. She jogged down the stairs, stopping at the bottom. On tip toes she peered through the railings. “Umm, Tosh?”

“Hmm?”

“You might want to get a shower, yourself love.” She wrinkled her nose. “Just a thought.”

Waiting for his shower to warm, Jack paced like a wild thing caged. His thoughts oscillated from trying to imagine what Ianto could have done to have Torchwood hunting him down, to what they would do to him once they caught up with him. Torchwood, so far above the law it was likely they couldn't remember what it looked like, could do anything to him, and with their repertoire, death would likely be one of the happier possibilities. The problem was though not what they were going to do to Ianto once they got hold of him, but in stopping them getting to him in the first place, because once Torchwood declared someone an enemy, there was nowhere left to hide.

He was furious. Scared, worried, terrified even but above all of that, washing over, straddling every other emotion was a tidal wave of anger. Anger at Torchwood for releasing an arrest warrant for a member of *his* team. Anger at Ianto for whatever it was that he had done to provoke them. But most of all, the anger cresting on the top of that wave, was the anger directed towards himself. Before he had assembled this team: Gwen, Owen, Tosh, and Ianto, before them he had always been able to hold his emotions under a tight guard. And now his anger flared, pure and bright as the Sun, whenever any one of them was in danger.

His team. His precious, precious team.

Yet, he had left Ianto alone: alone in the Hub, alone to deal with anything that came up. And if anything happened to Ianto, if he was shot or tortured or whatever else Torchwood had in store for him, then it would all be Jack's fault. Because Jack had left him alone, trusting that nothing could happen to him if he was just minding the Hub.

As he stepped into his shower, the warm water spattering his skin like a summer rain, he was blind-sided by a crushing realisation. He still hadn't taken Ianto out on that damned date.

Saturday, Day 194, 00.04GMT
Latitude: 51° 30' 7" N
Longitude: 0° 7' 9" W

The rain fell, steady streams of water that beat a tattoo upon the paved floor. A wet newspaper flapped forlornly at them and the smell of a take-away, sweet grease and salt stirred through the air. Apart from the occasional rumble of a car or raised voice, the night was mournfully quiet. The light of the streetlamps refused to reach them, hidden deep in the bowels of a London alleyway.

“So you're a felon then now? Fleeing from the law and the might of the British Empire?”

“So it would appear.” Ianto glanced down at his PDA, shielding it with his hand from the rain. He could not believe it. How the hell had they caught up with him so fast? The one time he had bargained on their inefficiency and they had to go and change the rules.

His companion looked at him in surprise and pulled the collar on his coat up to his ears. To say that the young man had just received a notification of his status as the UK's Most Wanted criminal, he was

awfully calm. Almost nonchalant. And he wasn't sure whether such a show or rather lack of emotion was comforting or worrying.

lanto tapped the screen a couple of times and frowned. The screen flickered, changed and he smiled. Holding it out before him he set off down the street.

"Hey! Hey! Wait!"

lanto paused; turning back to the man he'd left behind.

"Yes?" he asked, raising a sardonic eyebrow.

"Where are you going? You can't just be running around London. In case you hadn't noticed, they are looking for you."

"I am well aware of that, Sir."

"Then where are you going?"

lanto smiled, before turning back and carrying on his way.

"Hey! Wait!"

Two sets of footsteps echoed down the alleyway. One, the calm efficient stroll of well made leather on wet cobbles. The other: the soft distinctive slap of trainers in the rain.

Wednesday, Day 191, 15.43GMT

Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N

Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

The Hub was, for once, peaceful. It took the absence of the rest of the team to make it so but lanto had never had any problems with being alone. Besides, the Hub wasn't the hollow cavernous emptiness that one would expect. It might have been huge but unlike the cold barren wilderness of space, the Hub was *alive*, even when it was empty.

It had a pulse in the steady trickling of water running down the Rift Tower, pooling at the bottom like spilt blood. It had a breath in the wafts of fresh air that streamed through the ventilation shafts near the perception filter, filling the space with cool Welsh air. And it had thought in the steady working and whirring of Tosh's computers, of the rapid firing of information over the neural pathways of cables that spanned the Hub. By all definitions, the Hub was alive and lanto never felt alone cocooned within its stone womb. The Hub may have been Jack's home but it was lanto's sanctuary. He'd had some of the worst moments of his life here, seen more bloodshed and death than anyone had a right to see, yet, paradoxically, lanto had found his life and its purpose at the Hub.

He had carved his place in the very walls of the Hub with tears, harsh choking screams, hours of soul numbing labour and blood. Not all of it his own. And all of that had nothing to do with Jack Harkness.

Well, maybe it had a little to do with Jack given that the man was his boss and he'd been present for most of the events alternatively holding lanto (and the team) up or ripping him to shreds. But, the fact remained that lanto had a place here that was disparate to his relationship with Jack.

Ianto inhaled through his nose. *Relationship*, he thought (hearing the italics that were so well deserved in his head), that was a bit of a laugh. As much as it pained him to admit it Owen had been spot on with his assessment of their *relationship*. How could it be anything more than casual after-hours sex when Jack could so very easily discard it?

Ianto had never considered himself to be naïve. Even as a child, all wide-eyed with wonderment at all the world had to offer, his mind had never just accepted what was told to him. He had to verify things for himself. He simply couldn't believe it when things were just told to him. He needed proof, cold solid fact that couldn't fail him and didn't hang him on the noose of supposition. Ianto had failed to believe that Lisa had fancied him until the day she had, rather brazenly accosted him in the break-room and asked him out. He'd been speechless for a few moments until he realised that he'd spilt ground coffee beans all over the floor.

The fact that she had stayed to help him clear up had been his proof though.

So, he hadn't gone into whatever it was with Jack with the starry-eyed belief that they would live happily ever after. For one, they were Torchwood: there was no happily ever after. The most they could hope for was that they survived whatever Tuesday threw at them and were prepared for what Wednesday could bring. For another, he *knew* Jack Harkness.

Ianto Jones may have been only one of many nameless automaton suits at Torchwood One, but he had been trained by the best. When Jack had relegated him to filing and sorting the labyrinthine archives housed on the sublevels of the Hub, either he'd been arrogant enough to believe that his past was well buried or he underestimated Ianto's skills. Not only had the young man categorised every piece of tech buried down there, but he read *every* scrap of paper before filing it away.

It was amazing what was jammed in the back of old filing cabinets or was stuck to the bottom of boxes. Wage slips, arrest warrants, statements, photos even postcards were still to be found, even after a hundred years. They were all there, all physical traces of Jack's existence through the nineteenth and twentieth century. All proofs that Jack Harkness was not who he said he was. Essentially all the paraphernalia proved was that the Captain suffered from an acute case of longevity and that he didn't age. It had never crossed Ianto's mind that Jack might be immortal, because such a thing would be fantastical at best. It just proved that he wasn't quite human; and innocently desperate as he'd been at the time, Ianto hoped that the knowledge of such a secret would be enough to guarantee Jack's compliance with Lisa.

Being part alien wasn't ideal in Torchwood and Ianto wasn't above blackmail.

He remembered thumbing a faded daguerreotype of Jack sitting on a pier, his arm looped loosely around a smiling young man as they stared off into a sunset. On the back in worn out ink was scratched 'Harkness and unknown male, Ellis Island, 1893' in loopy Victorian scrawl. It was an intimate shot to be sure which told Ianto that Jack wasn't above feeling for people. He just didn't ever commit.

There was also a copy of a signed wedding license but Ianto didn't put much faith in that. He had no proof that it was anything other than a marriage of convenience or business. A slip of paper couldn't prove love.

So, while organising the Archives, Ianto had fallen into the folly of believing that knowing *something* about someone was the same as knowing them. It wasn't until Owen had put a bullet through Jack's skull, a small hole with burnt red edges, Ianto realised how wrong he'd been. He'd assumed that Jack

was just the beneficiary of longevity. He hadn't realised that the man could, and did, die. He hadn't realised that they all – even Gwen – knew so very little about their leader. And in that moment, in that fragile moment when Jack came back from the dead to leave them for good (or so it had seemed at the time) that the iconic image of Jack Harkness shattered like crystal.

Before, when he'd just been another face at Torchwood One, Ianto had, along with many others, been fascinated by the tales of the enigmatic American that had taken over Cardiff and all but stolen it from the Torchwood Institute. Break rooms were full of gossip, what had happened in Cardiff, what the Rift had done, and those that had met the man were able to hold court at lunch, describing the way his coat flared as he walked and how he'd offered them a flirtatious wink as he'd passed. Ianto had hated it. He hated the idea of a maverick playing with such a dangerous job. But nevertheless, he'd been drawn to the break room tales like everyone else and had found himself – along with others – watching the CCTV footage every time the man entered the building.

Jack had been an enigma then, all wrapped up in a flamboyant pretty package (not that Ianto had acknowledged the delicious appeal of those blue eyes and that well defined jaw at the time). What Ianto hadn't realised was that the pretty package was nothing more than a webbing of lies, one layer lying heavy upon the others. And once one lie faltered the others came crashing down with all the subtlety of a landslide.

Over the months that followed Jack's departure the image Ianto had of him, the image the team had of its Captain, cracked even more. They didn't even know the man's name. They didn't know that he knew the Doctor. They didn't really know anything about him. And the more Ianto realised he didn't *know* the man he was falling for the more his emotions became brittle and frosted. But still, somehow, there was this small immortal flicker that refused to release Jack completely from his heart. And the more he found he didn't know the Captain, the more stubborn the tiny flame became.

Only to become a fully fledged inferno once Jack came back and implied he was back for Ianto.

But now, after weeks of *nothing* Ianto was back to brittleness and frost and the flame was fading. And he hated the contradiction within himself. With Lisa it had been so very simple. She had inspired in him such *good* that everything had been alright. He'd loved her; all he knew was that he loved her and that he was quite willing to give her the moon. There was no dark shadow to the feelings, they were all as light and bright as the dawn and fresh spring leaves. There was no churning in his gut, no dark night teeth gritting anger; there was nothing but simple love and peace.

With Jack though...how could you love someone so much that you were prepared to give your life for them – even though you knew it would make no difference – and hate them with everything in your being at the same time? For every bright sweet feeling he had for Jack there was a deep bloody hate that refused to release him from his jaws. He lusted, loved, loathed, despised, feared, revered, worshiped, adored, detested, and abhorred Jack. He wanted him, wanted to pluck him from the world. But he could never work out whether he wanted this so that he could smother Jack in love and light or bury him in a pit of damnation.

And he hated it.

Ianto was *angry*. He was angry nearly all the time lately, his life edged in the black of rage and not the golden glow of contentment as it had been in days gone by. He was past being hurt, with its sad grey shades, because being hurt was a depressing and vicious cycle and anger was much more focused. He could channel anger: push it into his work, use it to shield him from Owen's tongue or Gwen's sad eyes

or vent it on some unsuspecting weevil. Hurting...hurting was a waste of energy. It was waking in the middle of the night with a gaping hole in your heart and bile churning in your stomach. It was cold. So cold and Ianto preferred the raging inferno of anger over the maelstrom of softer emotions that had whirled round before.

When Jack had been shot there had been guilt. Acres of black ugly guilt spreading out like a plague through his body, swiftly chased by horror. Then he'd come back only to sacrifice himself and lie on a mortuary slab for days and even after losing the love of his life and witnessing Canary Wharf, Ianto had never felt the all encompassing grief he'd felt when they'd returned Jack's body to the Hub. It was a gaping maw that swallowed him down and he didn't even put up a fight. He couldn't. The grief raced along his nerves and veins and sapped all his strength, all his fight and worse – all his hope.

It was then he realised that he'd fallen, if only slightly, for Jack Harkness. They all had; even the flint-hearted Owen. They'd tied themselves to him with bands stronger than steel and more enduring than a Welsh winter and Ianto couldn't do it anymore. He couldn't be in love with Jack Harkness and like who he was at the same time. Or rather, who he was becoming. Because, he had to admit it, if only to himself, he was changing.

Torchwood attracted those with slightly sociopathic tendencies (well unless your name happened to be Gwen bloody Cooper) because a certain lack of conscience was needed in a job where lying was essential as breathing, and Ianto had always been one of the quiet ones. Happy to lose himself in the quest for knowledge whilst normal teenagers drowned in alcohol and parties. It didn't matter to him that people found him a tad odd or that he could lie to his teachers without batting an eye, but for all his eccentricities and anti-social tendencies, Ianto had never been mean. He had never taken pleasure in another's suffering or gone out of his way to inflict it. He'd been the boy who'd avoided fights at school, preferring to walk away and forget all about it.

Now he was the man who'd put Dale Harris in the hospital with a severe head injury simply because he'd created a situation that had put Jack, and the rest of the team (although they had been on the periphery of Ianto's thoughts at the time) in danger. And Ianto had felt nothing but vindication as he'd pressed the stun-gun into the man's forehead and held the trigger. Remorse should have come later; should have flowed like lava into his soul when he remembered that you never held a stun-gun to someone's head or neck, that you never held the trigger for longer than two seconds and you never left a victim collapsed when there was time to put them in the recovery position. But the remorse never came. Just anger at the thought of what could have been. And then even more anger at the realisation of what was. That Jack wasn't willing to let go of Gwen, even to follow the Torchwood protocols he'd so stringently enforced up until that moment. That Jack cared for Gwen and the 'what could be' of their relationship so much, that he hadn't realised Ianto was silent and hurting having almost lost his own life that day.

And then anger raged through him stronger than ever before. All the bile Jack had ever brought forth in him – from the tiniest infraction of not using a coaster to killing Lisa – all of it bubbled up into an overwhelming supernova of rage that had Ianto hacking the police records and sending the now slightly brain-damaged Mr Harris for a long stretch at Her Majesty's Pleasure.

It hadn't changed anything though. The minute the Rift alarms had sounded, Ianto had been there, faithful as ever, with Jack's coat in hand and a witty quip on his lips. He'd welcomed Jack into his arms and bed and nothing had changed but the self-awareness of what he had become. All because of Jack Harkness.

Ianto didn't like the knowledge that if he ever saw anyone hurt Jack he'd put a bullet in them without hesitation. He didn't mind dumping bodies, he could even rationalise mutilating a corpse in the name of Torchwood. He just didn't think he could live with the knowledge that he'd kill to protect a man that couldn't die. Or, that should the Doctor ever reappear, Jack would leave again. Because it was all about the Doctor for Jack. He was the reason Jack existed, the reason Jack fought and the reason he was still on Earth.

In one breath Ianto had reason to both thank and hate the Doctor.

But knowing that the Doctor was the one who held Jack's heart – despite all Ianto was willing to do for the man – cut to the quick. And Ianto couldn't carry on that way.

All his life, Ianto had needed but one thing: to be in control; of himself at the very least. He'd seen the devastation that followed the loss of control and had vowed, through tearing childish eyes, he would never lose himself to his emotions. His mind would always be his tool, he would never allow himself to fall foul of its mercurial temperament and become its prey. Sometimes the almost obsessive need to be in control of himself extended beyond his form; like when he couldn't let the team play with his Archives or touch the coffee machine. But then, they were simply physical extensions of himself weren't they? They were the anthropomorphic manifestations of his purpose within Torchwood: his semblance of self, and so he clung to them.

But now, with Jack and the team away, he had time to claw back who Ianto Jones was. To decide what he wanted. Without Jack Harkness.

Breathing in a lungful of fresh Jamaica Blue Mountain, brewed to perfection and just too hot to sip, Ianto felt the calm of the Hub wash over him. Everything was going to be fine. It had to be, he'd never accepted anything less than perfection from himself before. He wasn't about to start now.

He was sitting at his own desk within the Hub proper, not that he sat there enough for it to be officially his desk, but it was the workstation where everyone dumped the files they wanted him to sort. All the phones, alerts and alarms were diverted to his mobile, and he was happily sorting his way through a month's worth of unorganised files. It was nice, working at his pace, no calls for coffee, or biscuits. Nothing to do but his job. And think. It was practically a holiday.

He'd been alone for only five hours and he felt more relaxed than if he'd had the whole weekend off.

But such calm wasn't to be had in Torchwood.

He heard the phone in Jack's office ring once and then his mobile started. Wincing at the jaunty tune, he scanned the name. Withheld. That didn't really mean anything, only that it wasn't one of the team. And, given that he'd already spoken to the PM and UNIT, he doubted it was them.

"Good afternoon, Ianto Jones speaking."

Although the internal Torchwood numbers were all ex-directory and supposedly isolated from all public access, there had been a couple of unfortunate occasions where sales calls had managed to break through. Ianto didn't know how but it had had Tosh muttering a blue streak of Japanese under her breath for days whilst she worked things out. They never answered the phone with "Hello, Torchwood Three, Cardiff, how can I help?" as had been the fashion at One.

"I'm calling for Captain Harkness."

“May I ask who is calling?”

The voice, rich and British and very public schoolboy, set Ianto’s teeth on edge. He had the horrible feeling that he knew *exactly* who was calling.

“I wish to speak to the Captain.”

Ianto felt his face curl into a tight, overly polite smile. “I’m afraid the Captain isn’t available at the moment. May I take a message?”

“Now see here, I didn’t call to deal with a secretary,” Ianto grit his teeth at the patronising anger that flooded the line, “I called to speak with Harkness. And I’m not hanging up until I speak with him. This is of the utmost urgency! It’s a matter of national security!”

Ianto’s mouth curved into a slightly naughty smile. The type reserved for slipping Owen decaf without his noticing. “I am afraid then that you may be on the line for sometime. Captain Harkness has been called away to deal with a matter of the *utmost urgency*.”

“I don’t care. This is a matter of national security!”

“As is the small invasion force the Captain is heading off.” In truth, Ianto had no idea what it was that the team were investigating. Mysterious energy pulses in the middle of nowhere didn’t often come with a synopsis.

But, his glib remark, delivered with a perfect dead-pan, took the wind out of the other man’s sails.

For a moment.

“And...Well, when do you expect him back?”

Ianto rolled his eyes. Torchwood London was very far removed from Torchwood Cardiff, and not just geographically (although the miles between them were a blessing). London hardly ever saw action on a real scale. Weevils hadn’t reached that far, they had barely made it beyond Splott, and the most the action their Field Agents saw was collecting space debris that might be slightly charred from passing through the atmosphere. They didn’t understand the difference the Rift made, or the fact that Jack’s leadership, whilst highly unorthodox to say the least, *worked*. They were little more than scientists really, it had been the same when Ianto had worked for One, they researched and studied and pontificated, but they never learnt. They never experienced what it was to really be part of Torchwood.

“I honestly couldn’t say. It could be this afternoon, it could be next week. Frankly, he could be killed and never return at all,” Ianto finished with melodramatic flare, although he couldn’t tell if the intake of air was shock or disbelief. He didn’t really care.

“And his team? Is there someone in charge whilst the Captain is away?” The man, who had yet to introduce himself, which ticked Ianto off, sounded slightly desperate.

“I am in charge of Torchwood Three in Captain Harkness’ absence. I have full authority to act in his stead,” his voice was steely. Ianto hated people who underestimated him because of his job title. Administrator was so bland and ordinary that the team, other agencies, those they dealt with and even Jack on occasion didn’t see the work Ianto did. And that was part of his job, to be invisible, but what they all forgot was that Ianto *knew* Torchwood. He knew where the bodies were buried. Quite literally

in some cases. He knew Torchwood, at times more intimately than Jack, and yet at every turn he was dismissed as the office boy.

After a while, it kind of grated.

There was no response from the other end and Ianto's just indignation wilted. Deflating like an untied balloon, Ianto rolled his eyes and sighed, "I can always try to contact him for you?"

"Do so."

"Would you like me to pass a message along?"

As Ianto listened to the message the air around him became increasingly thin. He loosened his tie, numb fingers tripping through the professional Half Windsor.

"Did you get that Mr – James wasn't it?"

"Yes sir."

There was a pause, as if the gentleman on the other end of the line was waiting for more, but Ianto just didn't have the capacity to come up with anything.

"Good day."

Ianto quickly flipped his phone closed and off and then just stared at it. Really, it was nothing more than a small piece of plastic and metal, wires and electronics, but it was capable of so much trouble. You could set them up to be the detonator for a series of bombs, or simply send a text that destroys someone's happiness. Pictures and video of drunken fun became incriminating and ended relationships. And solitary phone calls from the mother-ship no one wanted to know anymore could cause the world to spin on its axis.

Idly he turned the phone over in his hands, twirling and twisting it through his fingers, flipping it head over tail. Fuck. That was perhaps the only word in Ianto's vast vocabulary, to best describe how he was feeling at the moment.

He should ring Jack. They wanted him to ring Jack, to tell him that he was needed in London. To get Jack to go to London. But they didn't know Jack. Hell, he didn't *know* Jack.

But, he knew *Jack*.

Carefully, he placed his phone down.

Wednesday, Day 191, 17.33GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

The shrill ring of his mobile startled and interrupted his planning. Glancing at the display, he hoped that it wouldn't be Torchwood London; he didn't want to have to deal with them again. Or talk to them, at the moment. The screen read but one name. *Jack*.

Oh god.

Ianto's eyes flicked up and he caught sight of himself in the black of the hibernating monitor. His pupils were blown and there was a light sheen of moisture on his forehead, his skin was pale and his cheeks flushed and he looked for all the world like a guilty man. Glancing down at the notepad he'd furiously scribbled, crossed out and sketched over, he realised: he *was* a guilty man.

He was keeping secrets, even though he had promised that he would never keep something from Jack again. It had been part of the deal in his coming back to Torchwood after Lisa. He had to tell Jack about any and everything that may have an impact on the team, no matter how inconsequential he thought it at first.

The phone rang again, shrill and insistent and Ianto closed his eyes before flipping open his phone.

"Jack?"

There was a crackle of static.

"...to? ...hear... need you to..." Ianto put a finger in his other ear and pressed the phone tighter to his ear. "Got...?"

"Jack! I can't hear you! Say that again."

"Ian.. Can.. hear... now?"

Jack's voice was distant and tinny and shrouded in static. Ianto growled.

"Jack it's no use I can't hear you!"

"Ianto... will..." There was a beep and the line went dead.

For a second Ianto kept the phone to his ear, "Jack? Jack?"

Naturally, there was no response other than the dial tone. He briefly considered trying to phone Jack back but guilt and common sense (reminding him that Jack might try to phone again) persuaded him not to. Nor would he try to phone one of the others. Chances were that if Jack didn't have signal, neither would they.

Or at least that was what he told himself, ruthlessly crushing the well of guilt that was building.

Glancing down at his pad, he ripped the top sheet off and began a new page in neat, careful handwriting.

Wednesday, Day 191, 17.38GMT

Latitude: 52° 17' 2" N

Longitude: 3° 35' 2" W

Jack snarled at his phone. There was absolutely no signal. He'd tried waving it in the air, wandering around and had even gone so far as to climb up on the bonnet of the SUV. Nothing had worked. The wind had picked up since they had arrived, it was now howling around the parked SUV and Jack pulled the collar of his greatcoat up to cover his ears. Glaring at his phone he tried waving it half-heartedly once more.

“Anything?”

He turned to see Gwen dumping a pile of wood on the ground next to the car before clapping her gloved hands together to stave off the cold. They had learned from last time: no leaving the SUV and the equipment unattended. To that end, Jack had paced outside trying to call Ianto and Tosh had sat in the back of the car, desperately trying to narrow down the odd signal whilst Owen and Gwen had trudged off to find some wood.

“Nope.” He shrugged and threw the phone into the car. “No signal. Where’s Owen?”

Gwen cocked her head in the direction she’d just come from, “Bitching in the woods.” Owen had been bitching the minute the SUV had peeled away from the garage, and it was beginning to aggravate everyone. Gwen did not look happy, not that he could see anything but her eyes over the top of the scarf she had wrapped around her face. “Tosh?”

“Hmm?” The petite woman was quite obviously distracted by her computer screen. Not that was an unusual occurrence.

“Anything?”

Looking up from the screen, Tosh removed her glasses and offered them a small watery smile through the open window. “Not really, the signal seems to be bouncing around all over the place.”

“What does that mean?” asked Jack, frowning at the idea that they might be out here longer than anticipated. He leaned on the SUV, one arm slung onto the roof, head peering in through the window and looking at Tosh’s screen.

“I don’t know really. All I can think is that there used to be a lot of mining in this area and the mine network and residual metals are causing a disturbance.”

“Can you do anything?” Gwen asked as she hopped into the passenger seat and closed the door behind her. The sun might have been out but it was bitterly cold and standing outside doing nothing was excruciating. She flicked on her seat-heater and twisted into the seat so that she could comfortably see Tosh.

Tosh looked back at her screen and bit her lip. “If I can filter out what is echo and what is actual output then maybe. But it might take a while.”

Jack reached through the window and squeezed her shoulder. At times like this, when no matter Tosh’s genius, parts of the problem were outside of their control, the technician became rather desolate. She needed things to fit in their little boxes, and if they didn’t they rocked her absolute faith in technology. She didn’t mind puzzles that she could eventually work out, but if things like geography and geology were against her, it depressed her cheerful spirit.

And Jack didn’t like it.

“So, it may take a while? Well, I guess we’d better set up camp for the night.” Jack flashed them all a grin, trying to make light of the situation.

“Camp?!” There was the rumble of wood and the three turned to see a horrified Owen standing a little way away.

“Yup. And guess what Owen?” Jack’s smile was bright and naughty, “You get to share with me! Won’t that be fun?”

Owen narrowed his eyes.

Wednesday, Day 191, 18.32GMT

Latitude: 51° 30' 2" N

Longitude: 0° 0' 2" E

“Any word from Captain Harkness?”

Jonathan Fairfax was a middle aged man, greying at the temples, and more suited to science labs than running Torchwood One. Yet, as he had been the highest-ranking surviving (by way of being in the Bahamas at the time of the invasion rather than any heroics on his part) member of Yvonne Hartman’s administration, he had been the prime candidate to take her place. Not that he’d wanted to, but one didn’t say no to Torchwood.

“Uh, no sir, no. His assistant a Mr...” Thomas, his administrative aide looked down at his phone pad. “James said that he was currently out dealing with “a small invasion force” and wouldn’t be back for some time.”

Fairfax raised a dark eyebrow, “And?”

Thomas looked up, his eyes wide and slightly fearful, “Mr James said that he would contact the Captain directly.”

“That was nearly three hours ago Thomas.”

“Yes sir.”

“Do they not realise what we have here?” Fairfax asked, his voice, normally bland and controlled, taking on an incredulous note.

“I made James aware of the situation.”

“Not good enough! I want Torchwood Three here. Two have already arrived; I won’t have those cowboys showing me up. Get hold of Harkness!”

Fairfax strode into his office, leaving a blushing Thomas alone in the concrete corridor to stare at his notepad. With a put upon sigh he dialled the Cardiff number.

Thursday, Day 192, 10.03GMT

Latitude: 51° 33' 6" N

Longitude: 2° 33' 8" W

Ianto tapped the steering wheel idly as he drove, reflecting that perhaps he should have taken the train. But the trains were easier to monitor than the roads and a car gave him a certain luxury that a train ticket didn’t. Actually it gave him two luxuries: he couldn’t be observed in his car. Nor could he be overheard.

Whilst at University, Ianto had been the go-to guy if you wanted revision notes, purely because of his unconventional approach. He put everything on tape. Having a partially eidetic memory was fine for learning diagrams and tables but it made reading large passages of text difficult. He was often tempted to just learn everything, and, as his grades attested, that wasn't a good thing. Ianto's problem in school had always been that he knew too much and never had enough time to get it all down. Vital facts were missed because Ianto knew other things that were just as worthy of mention. So, he'd discovered that by recording his information and listening to it over and over, he learnt what he needed to know.

He'd pulled his Dictaphone out of retirement last night.

Pressing play, he continued down the M4, listening to his own voice repeat what he needed to know. Smiling, as he heard himself sounding out names and dates, he couldn't help but feel that Jack would kill to be in the car with him now.

Thursday, Day 192, 10.04GMT
Latitude: 52° 17' 2" N
Longitude: 3° 35' 2" W

It had been a long night and an even longer morning. They had come to the agreement – although 'agreement' inferred that the parties involved were happy with the decision – they were best staying put whilst Tosh cleaned up the echo-location. It wasn't the best of plans but it was the safest.

They were in the middle of nowhere for a start. They had no phone signal, there was one road and no-one had driven past since they'd arrived the previous afternoon and they had yet to see so much as a sheep. And in Wales, that was a serious concern. However, Jack was a man of action and sitting in a tent, listening to the rain patter on the canvas was akin to torture for him.

For a start it was a little too reminiscent of his year spent in chains, although in comparison his shared two-man tent was luxurious compared to the Master's make-shift torture chamber, and it lacked the smell of stale blood and sweat. But, it gave him the same feelings of restlessness and helplessness. Ever since Jack had been able to crawl he hadn't sat still for too long. His legs needed to move, to run in powerful long strides. The only time they stilled was when in bed, tangled around another warm body, although there had been some past lovers whose body temperature hadn't been all that warm.

He hated sitting still.

Partly it was because he knew – with absolute certainty – that the universe was still spinning out there. That there were species that were evolving, discovering, *living*, and he was sat doing nothing. It irked him, crawled into that tiny part of his psyche that was capable of envy and churned it up. There was also the fact that he'd have millennia to sit and do nothing. He could probably spend an entire century just sitting and doing nothing more than surviving should he choose to. But he didn't. He wanted to *help*. He was in a unique position that he could help and he'd been taught how to help by the Doctor himself. If he was ever to be worthy of calling the man a friend, he couldn't sit and do nothing.

But the real reason he hated sitting still was that it gave him time to think. Time to remember. Time to imagine. And the things Jack Harkness could remember and imagine were not very nice. He could see images of all the people he'd known, all the people he'd lost and he couldn't help wonder how he'd lose his own team when the time came. Would it be soon? Who'd be first? Would it be Gwen, cut down by an alien she was innocently trying to save? Or Owen, destroyed because he couldn't ignore the call of the Oath he'd taken? Perhaps it would be Tosh, her innocence defiled and her body broken?

Or Ianto...One day it would be Ianto, one day his eyes would simply stop seeing everything and the bright blue would fade behind the dull sheen of death. He'd seen it happen before, so many damn times that it made him sick. And when he was alone, without distraction and nothing to do but think his mind painted him pictures of the possibilities to come.

So he hated sitting still. Reaching for his rucksack he wondered if he'd bothered to pack anything interesting. Even paperwork would be welcome right now: anything to distract him.

"I hate the smell of grass!"

Owen flopped face first into his bedding roll. It was still unfurled and had the alcoholic tang of his aftershave imprinted into it. He took a deep whiff and buried his nose further as the sweet green smell of wet grass tried to wash over it.

Jack smiled, "Really, I had no idea. And here I thought you were Torchwood's own Ben Fogle."

Owen turned his face out of his duvet, "Ben who?"

"You know: TV presenter guy – does a lot out of doors."

"No. I don't." Owen sneered at the very idea of watching anything on his telly that wasn't of an adult nature. "Quite frankly, I hardly have the time to watch porn let alone some God awful 'out-of-doors' rubbish. Besides, with what we see, programmes that witter on about the wonders of Earth just don't do it for me any more."

Jack hummed in agreement, leaning back into the tent wall and closing his eyes. He could feel the rain melting through the canvas and into his shirt. He couldn't believe how obscenely grateful he was for Owen's brash interruption.

"How'd you know about this Ben guy anyway? Didn't think outdoorsy programmes were your thing mate?"

Jack opened one eye to see that Owen had flipped onto his back, his arms folded behind his head. He was staring at the roof but when Jack didn't answer immediately he turned and eyed the older man.

"Let me guess, Tea-boy likes it. Right after "Songs of Praise"."

Jack snorted, "Trust me; the only thing Ianto watches on TV is "QI", James Bond or copies of the CCTV from the Hub." There was the hint of a smirk in his voice but Owen missed it entirely.

"Oh, now that is just sad! Bet the poor Welsh idiot just sits and watches deciding what he's going to clean tomorrow."

"It's more like watching re-runs of our activities in the Archives," Jack leered before his face fell. "Well it was..."

"So don't want to know." Owen sighed.

Shaking himself Jack clamped down on the thoughts of the mess he'd made of the relationship. He'd been careless with Ianto's feelings and he was appalled at just how callous he'd been. But, dwelling on the thoughts only led him back to the depressing spiral of what-ifs that he avoided sitting still because of, so he turned back to the present.

“How’s Tosh doing?”

Owen snarled. “Go ask her yourself mate.”

“Can’t,” Jack shrugged, his voice breezy and indifferent, “She banned me from going near the SUV remember?”

“Yeah well, you were being a giant git. I was ready to shoot you just so you’d shut up for a minute.”

“Hey! I can’t help it if I want to know what’s going on can I?”

Owen turned his head and gave the Captain an incredulous look, “You are kidding right? You don’t *want* to know what’s going on, you *need* to know. You have the biggest set of control issues of anyone I’ve ever met!” He paused and then added, “And when you’ve known Tea-boy and all his anal retentiveness, that’s saying something!”

“You’re saying I’m controlling?” Jack tried to laugh.

“Yep. You just can’t stop being the Captain.” Owen gestured vaguely with his hand, “It’s like when we turn up at a crime scene you’re all ‘Look at me! I’m in charge!’ For Christ’s sake, we have Torchwood emblazoned on everything we own just so people already know that they have to tell you stuff.”

“Didn’t know you were a part time psychologist Owen.”

“M not. Just fits is all. Besides, look at you. You can barely sit still and wait for Tosh to give you answers.”

“Maybe I just don’t like doing nothing?” Jack tried to suggest as a paltry defence.

Owen’s lip curled at the pathetic attempt. “Or maybe you don’t like being in the dark?”

Narrowing his eyes Jack decided that he didn’t like being psycho-analysed. “You suck as a shrink.”

“Yeah, and you’re not itching for me to tell you what’s going on out there.”

“So what if I am?” Jack snarled.

“I’d say go ask Tosh yourself!” Owen snapped back.

“I can’t! She banned me from coming near her!”

“Yeah well join the club,” Owen sighed and Jack started to laugh. “Said if she had to hear me ask how much longer we had to stay here and look at the sodding grass, she’d pin me down and feed it to me. PC Cooper also offered to help.”

Jack was really laughing at this point. Sweet demure Toshiko Sato had banished her boss and the Chief Medic to their tent like naughty school boys. No one would believe it.

“Anyway, why do you know who Ben whatsit is?”

And they were back to their original question. “You really want to know?”

Owen shrugged and settled back into his sleeping bag, "Not like I've anything better to do. As long as it isn't going to turn into one of your usual tawdry tall tales?"

"Tall tales? I'll have you know Owen Harper that every story I've told you have been the honest truth. Cross my heart and all that!"

Owen looked doubtful but Jack blithely continued. "Let me tell you a story of how I was maliciously duped. Comfortable? Well, it all began with reading an advertisement for a promising programme called 'Extreme Dreams with Ben Fogle'. Now, being the red-blooded 51st Century, dashing hero that I am, naturally such a title piqued my curiosity."

Owen snorted, "You thought it was a sex show."

"Well how was I supposed to know it was a programme about people going on hikes?"

Owen shook his head but couldn't help but laugh at the indignant pout on Jack's face. "Only you Harkness," he muttered fondly. "Only you."

Thursday, Day 192, 10.05GMT
Latitude: 51° 30' 2" N
Longitude: 0° 0' 2" E

Tea tray in hand, Thomas made his way towards Mr Fairfax's office. Every morning it was the same routine, he'd take the Director a tray of tea and pastries the moment the morning mail arrived. Not that they got that many letters, digital was a much more secure method of communication, but sometimes there was something that had to come by mail. Or there was something relevant in the morning papers of the world that the research team wanted the Director to read. Either way, by ten-thirty at the latest, Thomas was always delivering a tray to the Director's Office.

"Set it down over there."

The Director refused to look away from the monitor despite the presence of another in the room. He was the very essence of Torchwood, arrogant and superior and Thomas' presence wasn't enough to merit his valuable attention.

Thomas coughed, politely, but the Director ignored him.

He was Torchwood; the last remaining member of the Old Guard that had been Torchwood One. Now they were Torchwood London because Torchwood One had burned that day at Canary Wharf and whilst the wound was still raw and bleeding through its bandages, Her Majesty had refused to allow their revival. But Torchwood hadn't been willing to accept defeat, and phoenix like it had risen again.

But when a phoenix rises from the ashes, it is still the same bird. This Torchwood was a different creature entirely. It still had the arrogance and determination of Torchwood One, but it no longer had the same power.

Nor the same address.

Other organisations had seemed relieved that One was forbidden to open its doors again. Torchwood One had been a menace of the first order; bullies who cared for nothing but their own advancement and mission. UNIT had been spurned many times, as had Two and Three, left to fend for themselves and it

had seemed, at the time, that Torchwood One had burnt all bridges. In the emergency agency meetings after the fall there hadn't been a single friendly face in the crowd. No one was willing to allow them to return to their former power and glory.

Harold Saxon had turned out to be their saving grace. To say that neither the Prime Minister nor the Cabinet were meant to even be aware of Torchwood's existence made it all the more ironic that Mr Saxon had been all too supportive of Torchwood London re-opening. Especially as they were more determined than ever before to stick to their original doctrine: capture the Doctor. For some reason, Saxon was just as convinced as they were that the Doctor was a threat to Great Britain that shouldn't be tolerated. With his backing and support, Torchwood London had been born.

Compact and hidden away beneath London's Millennium Dome in what was once one of their many storage facilities, no longer were there corner offices to jockey for or views over London. Instead they had cold concrete walls and the rather perturbing knowledge that the Thames was somewhere above their heads. But given that their mission had changed somewhat, such things hardly mattered.

Torchwood London was now, primarily, a research facility, happy to let UNIT's soldiers deal with the most obvious attacks in London. They were happy to scavenge the wrecks and steal the corpses but no longer would they police the world. Miles of laboratories and archives still remained but gone were the weapon stores and combat rooms. Gone were the gun-turrets, decommissioned or relinquished and the only training given out was on procedure in the labs and stores.

It was a new Torchwood and the only alien they were willing to lay their hands on was the Doctor. The only one who'd walked away from Canary Wharf unscathed, his little blue box winking out of existence – oblivious to the death and destruction littered around him. That was something he'd have to answer for.

Thomas cleared his throat again, louder this time, and Fairfax graced him with a sharp look over the top of his wire rimmed spectacles.

“Word from Three, sir.”

Taking off his spectacles and muting the monitor he waited for Thomas to settle his tray on the side desk. “Well?”

“A Mr. Ianto Jones is on his way. He left Cardiff this morning and barring any unforeseen events should be with us by lunch.”

Fairfax nodded slowly. Ianto Jones – the name rang a bell. “Captain Harkness is not coming?”

Thomas shook his head. “No sir, he is most definitely unavailable; he's investigating an alien incursion out in the middle of nowhere apparently,” Thomas informed his boss, in a tone that suggested he could think of better things to do with his time. “Mr Jones is acting in his stead. I have put a copy of his file with your other documents.”

Turning back to his monitor Fairfax let out a breath. “Thank you Thomas. Anything I need to be aware of?”

Pulling his PDA out of his pocket Thomas checked one of his many lists. “Nothing of importance, sir; although UNIT has been rather more communicative recently.”

Fairfax narrowed his eyes. "Do you think we have a leak?"

"One can never be sure. But, if I were a gambling man sir, I'd put money on Daniel Jenkins. His brother works for UNIT I believe."

"Really? Interesting." His eyes remained fixed on the screen. "Look into it Thomas."

"And if he has been passing information on?"

"Torchwood has no room for traitors," Fairfax's voice was disinterested.

"Understood sir."

Quickly and quietly Thomas gathered up the files left in the 'Out Tray' and left the room, pulling the door closed softly. Fairfax didn't even notice his demure exit.

Staring at the little figure, pacing as far as his chains would allow him on his pixel screen, Fairfax allowed himself a small private smile. Harkness wasn't coming, at least that was one problem solved. Blindly he pulled the folder – 'Jones, Ianto Merric' – towards him.

Ah, he was One.

Well...that made things so much easier.

Saturday, Day 194, 01.47 GMT

Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N

Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

Not bothering to towel his hair dry and snapping his suspenders into place as he went, Jack headed straight to Tosh's work-station.

She wasn't there, but her computer was whirring away: codes reeling over the screen with military precision and lightning speed.

"She's having a shower." Turning Jack found Gwen, coffee in one hand and a sheaf of paper in the other. "Owen is sulking in the autopsy-bay; Tosh banished him there after she told you off." Gwen was smirking.

"He's still here?"

"Refuses to leave. At the moment he's banging about, slamming his cupboards and rattling his equipment."

"I don't want him here." Jack's voice brooked no arguments and his eyes were cold.

Gwen, however, had never been one to heed the warning signs or back down from Jack in a snit. "Jack, be reasonable. Until we know what's going on we need all hands on deck."

Jack shook his head – water droplets hitting Gwen and landing on the computers, leaving an iridescent trail behind – and his face settled into a blank mask. "No. If he can't keep his mouth shut and doesn't want to help Ianto, I don't want him here." He pushed past Gwen to read the arrest warrant again. "I don't need him here."

“That’s what I told him.” Tosh padded up the steps, her flip-flops flapping on the floor.

“But he’s part of the team,” Gwen protested; her eyes wide, unable to comprehend how they could be so cold. Even to Owen.

“Well, he’s not acting like one is he?” Tosh pushed her way past her empathetic colleague, heading for her computer. “Excuse me Jack.”

Jack moved, or rather he jumped away from the console as if burnt. “Uh, Tosh...”

“Yes Jack?”

Jack shuffled his feet, shifting his weight nervously. “About earlier...It’s just, it’s lanto Tosh and I...well, I wasn’t thinking clearly.”

Tosh snorted.

“Sorry?”

Rolling her eyes, Tosh pushed the desk slightly making her chair spin to face Jack and scrutinised him carefully. She knew her boss – and not in the way Gwen claimed she knew Jack – in the way only a person who had studied and fought side by side with him for years could. She knew when he was joking, flirting, lying and, most importantly, being sincere. With those bright blue eyes it was easy for him to fool almost anyone, especially when he flashed that dazzling grin, but she’d never seen him as a potential lover. He’d always been her boss, her brother, her saviour and she saw him without Gwen’s rose-hued glasses.

He was being sincere now, she knew that. She could see it in his eyes. And beyond that, lurking in the darker tones of his irises was fear. That didn’t mean he was off the hook though.

“You should be,” she scolded softly. “We need you Jack. We can’t go up against Torchwood One without you.”

“I know.”

“No, I don’t think you do.” She pinched the bridge of her nose and wished Gwen away. When the woman didn’t move, other than shifting on her feet and tapping a long, surprisingly well manicured finger against her papers, Tosh lowered her voice, “It hasn’t been five years yet Jack. We can’t afford...” she trailed off as understanding dawned.

She hurried on, tears welling in her eyes, before Gwen could query what they were on about.

“Besides, lanto might need you to rush in and save the day.” She tipped her head to the side, “Be his hero. Like you were mine.”

She knew she was begging him, willing him to give her a miracle as he had in the past. He had saved them all, so many times – from cannibals, talkative blow-fish, from UNIT... She needed to believe that he could save lanto. He could save her brother. Because lanto was, he was her baby brother who looked after her and all of them, but who was so very broken inside. He needed a hero now, and Tosh was determined that Jack would be it.

He just needed a kick up the backside every so often.

Reaching out Jack grabbed Tosh by the shoulders and pulled her into a tight, engulfing hug. Compared to him she was tiny, lost in the circle of his arms. But she felt safe. And loved.

"I will Tosh," Jack whispered into her hair before pulling back and cupping her face with large warm hands. "I'll get him back."

Her smile, watery though it was, was genuine enough and completely inspired by the vicious conviction in his words. "Good."

She held his gaze and for a moment there was just the two of them, the invisible spectre of Ianto hovering between them and all their love for him tied them together. Encircling his wrists with tiny hands, her fingers barely able to span the circumference, she squeezed gently. "He couldn't ask for a better one."

There was a moment, nothing more than them just existing, before Jack pressed a kiss to her forehead – a silent and eloquent benediction – and moved away, allowing Tosh to resume her rightful place in front of her computer.

Buoyed by the absolute faith Tosh had in him and more than a little humbled, Jack watched her go. How, he wondered as he had so many times before, did he – the unknown con-man from the fifty-first century – manage to inspire such loyalty, such unwavering *faith*, from all these wondrously special people? Why did they believe in him? He wasn't worthy; nowhere near in fact. But he would be, was trying to be. They deserved it.

Ianto deserved it.

Grinning, although his smile lacked its usual brilliance, Jack moved to look at the screen Tosh was examining closely. "Anything?"

Pursing her lips Tosh shook her head.

"Nothing?"

"Nothing more than the original warrant. Whatever they were doing, whatever Ianto was caught up in, they didn't want anyone else to know."

"They can do that?" Gwen asked, edging closer, reminding them of her presence.

"They're Torchwood Gwen. They can do anything." Jack's tone was weary and his shoulders were sagging as if the world's weight was resting upon them. For him it was. "Seriously, there's nothing there?"

"Not even a single byte of information." Tosh began chewing her lip. She did that when something was bothering her; either that or suck on the temple of her glasses. "Although...UNIT seem to have been creeping about the system."

"You can tell that?" Gwen's eyes were wide again: this time in astonishment. Tosh seemed full of surprises tonight.

"Same IP as when they try to hack us. Luckily they can't get past our firewalls." Tosh laughed, "Actually, Ianto had this..." she trailed off.

Jack squeezed her shoulder. "He isn't dead," he said smiling – though it was forced. "You can talk about him. I won't break."

"No," she took a deep breath, "but I might."

"Ok, then I won't ask if anyone needs coffee," Jack teased. And it was good.

"Nowhere will be open at this time Jack," Gwen said despairingly. "I'm on instant."

"That'll do," Tosh declared decisively. "Anything with caffeine. I need caffeine."

Gwen and Jack exchanged looks before clenching their fists and beginning a game of 'Rock, Paper, Scissors'. Despite the fact Jack's paper was trumped by Gwen's vicious scissoring fingers, he was not forced to play barista.

In Jack's office the phone rang. Bounding up the stairs Jack raced to pick up before it rang off. Deep in his gut he knew the call was about Ianto. Diving across his cluttered desk, sending papers and artefacts to the floor, Jack snatched up the handset. His fingers were sweat as he gripped the handset, sliding on the smooth plastic.

"Ianto?"

"Afraid not Jack," came the gruff reply.

"Alistair?"

"The one and only." There was a soft chuckle before Lethbridge-Stewart resumed his more formal attitude. "Although I am calling about that boy of yours."

Thursday, Day 192, 13.42GMT
Latitude: 51° 30' 2" N
Longitude: 0° 0' 2" E

"I trust that the journey down wasn't too arduous for you Mr Jones?" Thomas asked as he led Ianto through the identical subterranean concrete corridors of Torchwood London.

He'd been waiting for Ianto when he'd pulled up and ordered one of the security guards to park Ianto's Audi.

"Not too bad." Ianto replied reservedly.

"Good. I'm afraid that the others have already had lunch but I can have something brought to you?"

"A sandwich would be acceptable. If it's not too much trouble Mr...I am afraid I don't know your name. Sorry."

"Thomas. Thomas Hunt."

Ianto nodded as they strode along, bland walls and utility blue carpet blurring into nothing but drab monotony. "Ah yes, Director Fairfax's aide."

Thomas shot him a sidelong look and Ianto smiled. "It's my job to know things Mr Hunt."

“Call me Thomas, sir.”

The walked further into the complex. Eleven subterranean levels – plus one hidden level no one was meant to know about – built entirely utilising alien tech and tax payers’ money, and Ianto reflected that it would be very easy to get lost down here. Not that he would of course.

“Where are we going?” he asked.

“Well sir, as the other delegates are already here and have been debriefed, I am afraid that you are playing catch-up. I’m taking you down to the storage facilities and laboratories on Level 11.” He gestured to the elevator at the end of the corridor.

“Not the holding cells?”

Thomas shook his head, laughing lightly. “Afraid not. Director Fairfax wants to build the suspense. It’s quite the coup really, after all the struggles we’ve gone through building One back up, this is just what we needed to re-launch.”

The reached the elevator and Thomas entered a fourteen digit code before the doors opened. He didn’t notice Ianto’s lips moving as he tapped the keys.

“So today is just background really. Tomorrow is when all the fun begins.” Thomas smiled at Ianto.

Ianto smiled back. Jack would have been able to see the slight strain to the smile – but only because he’d seen Ianto really smile.

“You will of course need these.” Thomas handed him an I.D card and what looked like a swipe card. Ianto pinned the I.D. card to his jacket, disliking the way the shiny white plastic interrupted the flow of his suit.

He’d chosen his clothes very carefully that morning, spending more time getting dressed than he had in months. Nowadays, it was easy to dress; Jack seemed to have enough of an office fetish that he found anything with pinstripes or a tie exciting. For once Ianto could dress for himself, not caring about impressing his superiors. He luxuriated in colours and textures that wouldn’t have been appreciated in the Torchwood Tower. Basic black cotton suits and stark white shirts, crisp with starch and shined shoes, were the only acceptable uniforms. Passionate reds and sumptuous purples were only seen in the colour coding.

Going back to London meant back to black and white, no more colourful Cardiff rebellion. Once again his suit was black and his shirt was white, but both were expensive and, in deference to his Captain, he’d chosen a silk tie whose hue approached the warm blue of Jack’s greatcoat. But despite that momentary whimsical weakness, his suit gave off the air of authority. Of danger.

Though that could have been the gun he had tucked away in his shoulder harness.

The lift doors opened silently. There was no illuminated floor number, no LED, no ‘ding’ and no chirping voice announcing that they had reached their destination and the lift doors were opening. Ianto missed it. He wasn’t given chance to dwell on the impersonal nature of Torchwood London though as Thomas quickly ushered him down the corridor.

Oddly, there was nothing labyrinthine about this level of the complex. The corridor simply led away from the lift in one direction, each side lined with plain steel doors. Ianto imagined that they must be storage rooms as each rather small and self contained. Also, he could see the clear Perspex of a Torchwood lab directly ahead of him, its transparent windows clearly marked with the hexagonal 'T' shape that was invariably stamped on everything Torchwood came to possess.

When they reached the windows, Ianto was surprised to see that the lab was actually on a lower level than the one he was currently standing on. He turned to Thomas with a questioning glance.

"It's called Level 11 even though, strictly speaking, the labs are on what would have been Level 12."

"Labs?" Ianto could only see one lab – and it was impressively large.

"Oh yes," Thomas gestured to either side of them, "they run down this corridor. The extra head room comes in useful."

Ianto imagined that it would. It certainly did at the Hub on the odd occasion.

"Although," he continued on, "some of the labs are on two levels. But we always keep these for the non-volatile experiments. Health and Safety protocol."

Ianto nodded, though since joining the merry little band at Cardiff, he rather suspected that he'd forgotten what 'Health and Safety Protocols' looked like. Jack's idea of health and safety included waterproof lube in the showers.

Thomas didn't have time though to wait for Ianto's comparisons; turning left he headed down the row of laboratories. "The laboratories are all set out in a square, sir. The architects felt that was the most economical use of the space." He turned right. "We're currently using Space IV. It's the largest of Torchwood's laboratories, complete with an anti-grav generator and temporal monitoring equipment. The laboratory also houses..."

Thomas' voice fell away as Ianto felt something warm reach out to him and swirl around him like cotton candy on a stick. He'd never felt anything like it, not in all the strangeness he'd been subjected to in working with Torchwood. The only thing he'd ever experienced that was even remotely comparable was waking up wrapped in his goose down duvet and bathed in early morning sunlight. And, for some unfathomable reason, Ianto knew precisely what it was.

It was the TARDIS.

It was doubtful such a feeling could have come from anything terrestrial and certainly nothing Torchwood could have created. It felt...*beautiful*. And terrifying. The warmth seeped through him; clinging to every breath he took, chasing every thought and wrapping round every pulse of his heart. Judging him.

Healing him.

It was – *too much* – his heart screamed, desperate for some relief from the sheer benevolence that washed through him. His heart jaded and scarred as it was shrank away from the sweetness with all the fervour a moth chased a flame. It didn't matter how much he wanted to bask in the glow, there were too many shadows in his psyche – littered ghosts and raging storms – he didn't want the ancient creature to see.

He knew it was a creature, he could sense the compassion that could only come from a sentient being washing over him, a gentle hum of energy resonating with the sheer weight of wisdom and knowledge that came from time. Or perhaps, more accurately, *Time*.

Ianto Jones.

The words seemed to thrum through him and in them all that he was and the promise of all he could be.

Ianto was not a spiritual man, no matter how hard his Mam had tried by dragging him to Church on a Sunday. Strictly speaking though, he wasn't a man of science. He believed in what he could see, touch and prove, but everyday he was confronted by that which, even in the wildest flights of fancy, no one could conceive of and still he just couldn't find it in himself to believe in the divine. Yet, as he entered the largest of Torchwood London's research rooms, he found he could understand the people who did.

The TARDIS was sitting on a raised tripod and there was a pair of legs peeking out from underneath it. Despite the fact that to look at it was little more than a bright blue Police Box, its paint flaking in places, it had a presence in the room. Like the elephant no one wanted to talk about. Except everyone was talking about the TARDIS – or rather – they were talking *around* the TARDIS.

Apparently, to everyone else, it was nothing more than the Doctor's ship.

"...And this is his assistant – Fiona Hamilton."

There a beat where Ianto gathered his bearings after reality had burst through the tranquil cocoon the TARDIS had wrapped him in and then he remembered what he was here for. Recognising Dr. Fairfax – or rather Director Fairfax as he was now known – and Archie Grogan of Torchwood Two, he guessed that the young lady must be Archie's assistant.

"Pleasure to meet you Ms. Hamilton."

"Likewise Mr. Jones," she smiled and extended her hand.

His parents had been obsessive about manners when he'd been younger so reaching out and shaking her small, well manicured, hand was an instantaneous reaction. Archie had already wandered off, not one for touchy feely moments.

Fairfax also extended his hand. To Ianto it looked like the Devil's own, but he shook it anyway.

"So glad you could join us Mr. Jones."

Ianto nodded his face perfectly bland. Like a plain scone. "It's Ianto, please."

"Naturally," Fairfax seemed to have expected nothing less.

"Fiona."

Ianto smiled. The woman seemed charming. And normal. Which for Two was a definite improvement.

Fairfax turned and gestured towards the scientists. Like a gazelle scenting the wind one of them looked up, caught the 'suits' watching and broke away from the small flock of lab-coats, a digital tablet clutched in his hands.

“Ah, Dr. Graham, nice of you to join us. This is Mr Jones from Cardiff.”

The old man didn't seem embarrassed by the faint hint of scolding, he just nodded absently. “Sorry Director, but we think we might have figured it out.”

Ianto wanted to listen to whatever it was they'd figured out but his attention was drawn to the table of instruments sitting in front of the TARDIS. Axes, saws, sledgehammers, chisels, particle gun, sonic-blaster: all in different shapes and sizes. One or two were bent out of shape, their blades lying at odd angles.

“We're trying to get in.”

Ianto turned to see a young man, shaggy sandy hair spilling down on to the collar of his white coat. He reminded Ianto a little of Tosh, geeky but sweet with it. Hazel eyes peaked out from thick black rimmed glasses.

“Excuse me.”

“In,” he pointed at the TARDIS. “We're trying to get in there.”

Ianto blinked and looked again at the table. *Now* its contents made sense. “Ah. No luck I take it?”

“Nope, not one iota. It's like the thing is keeping us out!” He grinned. “Hugo.”

“Ianto.”

“You're from Cardiff?” There was the distinct gleam of gossip-hunting in his eyes and a couple of technicians moved closer to the conversation.

Ianto offered them a wan smile. “Afraid so.”

“Thought we'd have been getting the legendary Captain?” there was a smirk in the man's voice and Ianto felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise. The others chuckled at the reference to Jack's reputation. He had one, Ianto couldn't deny it, but he'd learnt Jack's reputation was another layer to his smoke-screen.

He offered a smirk, refusing to laugh. “I'm afraid Captain Harkness was detained.”

“Apparently, Wales is being invaded. Again,” Fairfax expounded in his supercilious tone, moving in behind Ianto.

“Shame, we were looking forward to meeting the Captain. Admin have a pool running on whether he's as bad as the stories say. Guess we'll have to take your word for it Jonesy!”

Ianto grimaced at the young scientist. He hated people butchering his name. He'd hated it at school, he'd hated it at college and he still hated it now. Even Owen had given up after the fourth cup of decaf.

“Oh, he's as bad as they say,” insisted Fairfax. He had the look of a man who'd endured many a conversation with Jack over the video link.

“Really?” Fiona joined the conversation.

“I'm afraid so.” Ianto sighed. “It's a full time job just filling in the harassment forms.”

There was a smattering of laughter and Ianto felt Fairfax's appraising eyes on him. He was being judged. He shook his head.

"I'm afraid it is beyond me to describe Captain Harkness' character – the stories don't do him justice." Again they laughed but Ianto felt smug satisfaction in that they'd missed the true meaning of his words.

The stories didn't do him justice; he was braver and more selfless than they could describe. Jack was his hero.

"We're ready sir."

"Ah, Jones let's move over here." Fairfax's hand on his shoulder guided him behind a strong plexi-glass screen. "This will be their thirtieth attempt."

In front of them, a gaggle of scientists were playing with some sort of gun.

"Have you tried picking the lock?" Ianto asked the Director.

"First thing we tried."

"Have you checked for a force-field?" Fairfax gave him an odd look. "Sorry sir, it's just some of the things we come across in Cardiff have protective shields sitting just off their surface."

"Hmm... might be worth a look. After they've-"

There was a boom, a flash of light and the plexi-glass rattled ominously.

When the smoke cleared one of the technicians was peeling himself off the floor, gun still clutched firmly in his white knuckled grip.

Fairfax growled, storming round the screen. "Why isn't this working?"

As the others picked themselves up and Dr. Graham tried to placate his boss, Ianto made his way to the TARDIS.

"Impressive isn't it?" Hugo asked, looking up at the blue box with respect.

"Indeed."

"Not even a scratch. Look." Hugo grabbed Ianto's hand and laid it on the hull of the TARDIS.

Warmth crept into Ianto's fingers, tingling like champagne and soft as wool. Pressing his palm further into the wood, grazing gently along the grain, Ianto was sure he could hear purring in his head.

Ianto Jones.

Saturday, Day 194, 01.51GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

The van was parked behind the Millennium Centre. He'd have preferred to pull it onto the Plass, but even at this time there were people around and the Cardiff Police were notorious for interfering; hopeless in alien situations, fantastic at getting in the way.

Turning to his men, nine black clad operatives, Agent Samuel Price nodded and fixed his Comm. into place. "Check. Price Check."

"Receiving sir."

There were nods from the other eight.

Price nodded, slipping the safety of his automatic. "Let's go."

The van doors slid open and ten shadows disappeared into the Cardiff night.

Thursday, Day 192, 15.36GMT

Latitude: 51° 30' 2" N

Longitude: 0° 0' 2" E

Dutifully, Ianto laughed along with the other sycophants as Dr Graham brandished the Sonic Screwdriver and Psychic Paper, adopting suitably heroic poses for each.

Inwardly, he cheered the alliteration – finding it perversely pleasing – and waited to get his hands on them.

Saturday, Day 194, 01.53GMT

Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N

Longitude: 3° 9' 7" W

Not having the energy to slam the phone down – as he was sorely tempted to do – Jack gently laid the receiver down on its cradle. Whilst mobiles were indubitably more convenient, there was something timeless about a *real* phone; the type with a heavy black receiver and rotary dial rather than touch-tone buttons. Taking a deep breath he stroked his finger down the silken back of the receiver. Of all the things Alistair could have told him... Now he didn't just have Ianto to worry about, he had the Doctor as well.

"Jack?"

Looking up he saw Gwen and Tosh, lurking just inside the doorway, twin expressions of tremulous hope painted on their faces. Shaking wisps of hair out of his eyes he offered them a watery smile.

"Was it-"

"Alistair," he interrupted Gwen before she could say Ianto's name.

Gwen looked slightly confused whilst Tosh frowned, a slightly hostile look creeping into her features.

"What did he want?"

"Who's Alistair?"

Jack sighed. There were times he forgot that she had barely been with them a year. A year at Torchwood was a small lifetime – the only lifetime some of them get. "Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart: Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. He works for UNIT."

"He's a Sir now Jack."

“Really? The Brig was knighted? Guess there’s hope for me yet!”

Jack smiled, but it lacked much of its usual sparkle. Still, it brought a smile to Tosh’s face and a faintly disapproving frown to Gwen’s. It reminded him faintly of Ianto’s, but Gwen’s expression wasn’t quite as eloquent. Ianto could say “I highly doubt that, sir” by merely raising his eyebrow. The left usually. The right was reserved for more *personal* thoughts.

“What did he want?” Tosh asked, moving further into the office, her arms wrapped defensively around her.

“Apparently, according to a number of UNIT spies in London, Torchwood London has the Doctor.” He paused, pinching the bridge of his nose, “Or rather, they *had* the Doctor.”

Tosh gasped, she liked the Doctor, even though she’d only met him the once. She knew all about the Torchwood Charter; they all did, apart from Gwen. Jack had explained it to her when she first arrived in Cardiff, told her all about their mission to protect the world from the Doctor and other such threats. At the time he’d sounded so serious, as if he himself had a giant net and was waiting to capture the Doctor. Only after his disappearance did she understand his fervour in explaining why they had to find the Doctor.

“They have the Doctor?”

“Had, Tosh. They *had* the Doctor.” Jack confirmed solemnly.

“Your Doctor?” Gwen put in, rather out of the loop. Torchwood had history, too much to read and learn, and sometimes it was easy for her to be on the outside looking in. After all, she had only spent a fraction of the time as part of the team the rest had, and there were times it seemed as though they spoke a foreign language.

“Yeah... UNIT were working out how to get him out of there when he apparently vanished. Then, before they could do anything else the alert on Ianto was released.”

Jack felt tired. Life had been far simpler when he’d been a con-man. He’d only had to worry about himself, pulling his own – mightily fine, if he did say so himself – ass out of the fire. But now he had a team, he had *responsibilities*, people to care for and protect: including the Doctor. And it was exhausting. Being a con-man may have been less fulfilling, a shallow, hollow existence, but at least it was easy.

He’d heard that if something worth doing it was worth doing well, but at times he wished he didn’t care enough to even try.

Gwen shifted from foot to foot, catching Jack’s attention, her lower lip caught between her teeth. At any other time Jack might have found it somewhat alluring – having the most inappropriate libido – but currently it was infuriating.

“Spit it out.”

He may have been a tad harsher than he intended, but it worked. Gwen’s eyes widened and she licked her bottom lip before wincing and saying what was on her mind.

“You think Ianto’s involved, don’t you?”

“You don’t?”

Gwen wrung her hands, but it was Tosh who spoke. “Not to put a dampener on things but why would Ianto help the Doctor?”

Jack’s incredulous gaze swung to Tosh before it, pendulum like, returned to Gwen. “Of course he’d help the Doctor!”

He couldn’t believe that they were questioning Ianto’s compassion after everything the young man had been through. Gwen might be the obvious heart of the team, but it was Ianto’s quiet dedication that kept them alive.

Sharing a nervous glance with Tosh, Gwen squared her shoulders and faced the Captain. “You didn’t...I mean... Well you weren’t-”

“Oh, for crying out loud!” Tosh marched into the office to join Gwen at Jack’s desk. “What Gwen is trying to say is that you weren’t here when Ianto found out *who* you’d gone with. He identified the TARDIS from the CCTV footage of you running across the Plass. He was, well, he was a mess Jack.” She deflated, her infuriation burnt out like a damp firework. “He was devastated.”

Gwen nodded. “Owen had to sedate him.”

“What!”

Jack was very aware that in the time he’d been away his team had actually become a team. They were no longer four co-workers. They function as a cohesive unit, with shared stories and a working language. If he was honest, which he rarely was with himself, he was jealous. It was a novel feeling and one he didn’t like at all. There was so much he didn’t *know* about them any more. He knew all the pertinent information: how they’d updated Mainframe, reworked the Weevil Spray, what had come through the Rift; but he didn’t know what they’d done. He didn’t know how Owen had celebrated his birthday or how Gwen’s family had taken news of her engagement. He couldn’t begin to consider how Tosh had coped with Mother’s Day – alone once again – and now he was hearing what he dreaded. That Ianto hadn’t coped with his leaving.

That there might be no hope of forgiveness.

He hung his head – in shame or defeat even he wasn’t sure.

Ignorant to Jack’s churning emotions, Gwen carried on. “Seeing the TARDIS took him back to Canary Wharf.”

Jack’s head whipped up so fast that the snap of bones was audible to the two women and the look of abject horror on his face caused tears to well in Tosh’s eyes. He shook his head, knuckles gripping the arms of his chair and teeth clenching together.

“Shit.”

“Yeah,” Gwen breathed, nodding gently. Her sympathetic eyes were tempting Jack to hit her. He didn’t want sympathy.

He didn’t deserve it.

Tosh caught his eye. “He said that he saw the Doctor walk past the conversion room – the one Lisa was in. He said that he just walked past. There were people screaming and crying and there was blood,” her voice hitched as she remembered the scene they’d walked in on when they’d finally reached London, “So much blood...and the Doctor just walked past. He didn’t stop to help or anything. He just got in his TARDIS and left.”

“He left them to die Jack,” Gwen added superfluously.

“Jesus.” Jack’s head dropped into his hands and he buried into his palms. It was a mess.

The Doctor had lost Rose and her family at Canary Wharf. But no matter how much Jack had loved Rose, she was still alive and he couldn’t find it comparable to what Ianto had lost. What Ianto had endured.

And Ianto hadn’t had a time-machine to escape the world in. He’d carried Canary Wharf with him, quite literally, all the way to Cardiff and hidden it for months in the Hub.

The Doctor hadn’t had to suffer that.

Still, he couldn’t believe that Ianto was a vengeful person. He’d found it in his heart to forgive Jack after Lisa’s execution; coming back to the team and trying to make amends. He’d even begun to forgive himself. Yet maybe, Jack’s fear cautioned, he could only do that because he could still, justifiably, blame the Doctor.

Hope refused to die. “But surely...” he looked beseechingly up at Tosh, “Surely it’s too much of a coincidence.”

She, and Gwen, kept very quiet.

“Brilliant!” Jack laughed, hysteria creeping in, “Just fucking brilliant!” Abruptly he stood, slamming his hands on the desk before sweeping them to the side, his paperwork avalanching off the desk. “We go away for a few days and Ianto gets into trouble, the Doctor gets captured and now – just to top it all off – I can’t concentrate on finding either of them because I have to worry that Ianto might have kidnapped the Doctor in order to kill him!”

Jack was shouting by the end of his rant and neither woman knew where to look.

Gwen rallied first.

“Surely...I mean – it’s *Ianto* – he wouldn’t...” Her words trailed off into nothing under Jack’s quelling glare.

“He shot Owen,” Tosh mumbled guiltily, her eyes glued to the floor.

“Not helping!” Gwen hissed back.

Jack groaned. “Fuck. That’s all I need.” At their blank looks he explained, “Owen’s fucking right! We don’t know what Ianto is capable of! Not really. He keeps to himself, he *hides* himself, from us! From me! And we left him here!”

“Jack...” Gwen started, her face pinched in disbelief but Tosh nudged her into silence.

Jack turned away from them, unable to bear the twin expressions of incredulity. The doubted him now because he doubted Ianto. So much had changed. Before he was the Captain and Ianto was the quiet dependable Tea-boy. Now he was the prodigal son and Ianto was the dark enigma that walked amongst them.

Being a con-man was so much easier.

Bracing himself on the desk, he took deep breaths, willing his heart to calm. He heard Gwen move forward, as if to comfort him and he went rigid. He assumed she saw it as her approach hesitated before retreating. Breathing deep he tried to focus, find a central point to fix himself on, but he found himself in the last place he wanted to be.

The TARDIS.

Of all the ironies Jack had come across, he thought that this was perhaps the most twisted. The TARDIS was the safe place in his head, the vessel that had cursed him to eternal life, and yet the Doctor was one of his current problems. He'd always thought that when he found the TARDIS and the Doctor that'd be it. He'd be home. But when he'd been there all he could think of was what he'd left behind.

It had been different for Rose, her family and Mickey travelling with them occasionally. It had even been different for Martha – she had her... Phone!

"I need to call Martha!" he cried, flinging himself over his desk towards his still sopping coat.

"Who?" Gwen's voice was tinted with jealousy as she watched him.

"Martha!" Jack reiterated as if it explained anything.

Gwen took a breath, watching as Jack manhandled his phone out of the wet wool, and opened her mouth to ask who 'Martha' was when the Hub alarms screamed into life.

"Great," she sighed. "That's all we need."

Tosh and Jack exchanged a worried look. "That isn't the Rift alarm," Tosh told her before flying out of the room and towards her workstation, Jack hot on her heels.

"What?"

"That, PC Cooper," Jack called over his shoulder, "Is the seldom heard intruder alarm."

There was a manic grin on Jack's face that scared Gwen somewhat. It was conceivably the worst possible time someone could choose to break-in to Jack's Hub.

Owen emerged from the Autopsy Bay, lab-coat on and a serious expression on his face. His gun was unwaveringly pointed at the cog door.

"Who is it?" he asked Tosh, his voice still simmering with his earlier rage.

"Checking!" Tosh's fingers danced over her keyboard, tapping out a jaunty rhythm. Bringing up the images from the Tourist Office she turned to Jack. "Jack?"

“Torchwood. To be specific Torchwood One.” He smiled and Tosh felt her skin crawl. “Torchwood One are trying to take my Hub!”

His voice was belligerently happy, the complete antithesis of the seriousness of the situation.

“What do we do?” Gwen asked, her wide eyes fixed on her Captain.

“Let them in,” came the command as Jack bounced towards the cog door.

That had not been the reaction Gwen had been anticipating. She’d expected Jack to take the lift and try something heroic. Not...*this*. “What! Why?”

Owen shrugged; his gun still aimed and primed, “Why not? They’re coming in anyway. Might as well take the fun out of it.” Tosh nodded. “Bloody Tea-boy.”

Gwen spared him a withering look before turning to watch Jack.

Standing with his hands on his hips, his best shit-eating grin on his face, Jack watched as the doors rolled back to reveal a small Torchwood London hit squad.

“Hello boys!”

Friday, Day 193, 14.30GMT
Latitude: 51° 30' 2" N
Longitude: 0° 0' 2" E

Getting time alone with the Doctor had been easier than Ianto had anticipated. For once it seemed as though his tenure at Torchwood One was working in his favour – it certainly had never helped him before. Torchwood One, as an organisation, had had a reputation as a bully therefore as an employee you were either a sycophant or a tyrant, never mind that many had worked for Torchwood One simply because it was a good employer. After all, a job was a job, and Torchwood had health benefits, company cars and promoted internally. That had been Ianto’s reason for joining, never truly believing in Torchwood’s place as a frontline defence for Earth until he moved to Cardiff.

Other people hadn’t seen it that way though.

His tad, a man far wiser than his years, had always told Ianto that you were judged by the company you kept. He’d been proud that Ianto had joined Torchwood; his son working in London. He’d been right though; although in this case it wasn’t the company you kept so much as the company you worked for.

Yet, there were benefits in coming back. It was rather reminiscent of an old boys club. Fairfax had been quite pleased that Ianto had been the one to join them and it had everything to do with the fact that Ianto was Torchwood One. It wasn’t overt but it was there, a subtle undertone to their conversations that Ianto understood what they were about because he had been one of them once. That he knew how the world should work...

Still, he didn’t mind their making assumptions of him. He would nod and hum in the appropriate places as they twittered on about how Torchwood Three was a disgrace to the name and UNIT wasn’t worth the shiny uniforms they wore – “all style and little substance, rather like that Captain of yours,” as Thomas had put it – as long as his nodding and humming got him what he wanted.

And so far it had.

The Doctor was waiting for Ianto in the interrogation room. The same interrogation room Fairfax and Archie had used earlier. Officially it was simply designated as Storage Room A12 on the blueprints and, to be fair, it did have a filing cabinet in one corner. The fact that Ianto knew, from a brief secondment whilst at One to technical support during an experimental merger of the tech support and archiving teams, that the filing cabinet was filled with various restraints, stun-guns and several vials of a synthetic psychoactive drug that worked as a truth serum on most humanoids, was neither here nor there. The very fact that the filing cabinet was there qualified the room as a storage space. Incidentally, the merger had fallen through eventually – neither team director willing to lose his corner office for the sake of efficiency. Still, it had been a learning experience.

As the door clanged shut behind him Ianto was struck by how vulnerable the Doctor appeared. Trapped in the steel room, shackled to the table and floor by chains and cuffs on his wrists and ankles, swamped by his ill-fitting orange jumpsuit (and Ianto was fairly certain that orange was not the Doctor's colour...but it might work for the Weevils they caught and released. Easy to spot, easy to track – he'd have to mention it to Jack when he returned), the Doctor seemed more a young man than the genius god Jack's few tales made him out to be. Ianto had always imagined a force of nature who'd take to being imprisoned as little more than another adventure; an eternal child with the power of the gods at his fingertips and the exploits of mere mortals for entertainment. He'd imagined a giant striding across the cosmos leaving and quelling chaos as he went and benevolently protecting his chosen whilst smiting his enemies. Ianto never expected to see such a figure cowed.

The image broke suddenly as the Doctor looked up and grinned at Ianto.

"Hallo!"

"Good morning, Doctor."

"Oh, is it morning? I'm sorry, no watch you see – took it off me earlier, not that there was any real reason to do that. It was only a Swatch, got it from, well that's not the point really, but it was just a watch. Now normally I'd be able to tell the time anyway but hmmm, it seems as though I can't quite get a lock on it. Could be because we're underground, at least I am assuming we're underground: I am right though right? Or it could be whatever that nice young man injected me with earlier. Not sure which."

Ianto blinked before replying, "Probably the drugs, you never can predict what the side-effects are going to be."

"Quite right, quite right." The Doctor smiled again, his voice affable and animated and Ianto realised that the Doctor was far from cowed. It was in his eyes, burning brighter than supernovas, a rage directed solely at them: at his captors. The Doctor was far from broken, he was biding his time.

Ianto smiled.

Flipping open the paper folder he'd brought with him, he spread the photographs across the table, their glossy surfaces shining brilliantly in the bright overhead light.

"Ooh, pictures. I like looking at pictures but never seem to get round to taking any. Odd that. Wonder if there's a camera on the TARDIS? I have to say, photography, very well done!" He looked up and grinned at Ianto; a grin made entirely of teeth and wonderment. "You humans, you come up with some remarkable ways to catalogue art and pass the time. Like, like...camping!" He concluded snapping his fingers. Taking a breath he leaned into Ianto as far as his chains would allow. "Did you know that

humans are the only species in the universe that camp? You are you know. It's marvellous really. Canvas, ropes and a few sticks and you've built a home for yourselves! Of course other species know all about tents but they haven't gotten around to camping! Brilliant that!"

Dimly Ianto recalled Jack claiming something similar. At least he now knew where the Captain had gotten that little gem of information from. Guiltily, he decided it sounded rather more authoritative coming from the Doctor. But then Jack was known for his tall tales. "Well, we do like to be unique."

The Doctor's smile was positively manic, "Unique! March to the beat of your own drums you lot! It's wonderful!"

"Really?" and despite the sugar coating of sarcasm he ladled over the word Ianto was curious to see if the Doctor really did think that.

"Oh yes! Propels you to the stars it does. Humans are one of the only species that get out into the Universe on their own – without snatching the technology from another race. Always liked that about you. Happens soon I think... Of course you're already out in space, but really getting out there and into the thick of it, yeah that comes soon."

"Fascinating."

"Oh it is." He raised his eyebrows, still smiling wildly and had he not been so securely tethered to his seat, Ianto suspected he may have been bouncing. "So what are we looking at?"

Ianto raised an eyebrow. "You don't know?"

"Nope, not a clue." There wasn't even a hint of apology in his belligerent happy chattiness, and Ianto caught onto the game.

He tapped the middle photo. "This is Roald Dahl Plass, Cardiff." He leant back in his chair. "Have you heard of Torchwood Three Doctor?"

The Doctor's eyes narrowed slightly but other than that his face remained open and cheerful. "Can't say I have. Sorry."

"It's of no real consequence. In the grand scheme of things we're just a small organisation really, nothing like Torchwood One. Captain Harkness," the Doctor twitched and Ianto mentally added a point to his score-board, "doesn't feel the need to expand our operation."

"Captain Harkness?"

"Torchwood Three's Director."

The Doctor was practically vibrating with need, though Ianto suspected that anyone monitoring their exchange wouldn't be able to see it. He didn't even think it was even physical; it was as if the very air around him was resonating with energy. Curiosity. But Ianto refused to react.

"You work for Torchwood Three?" There was the faintest thread of hope in the Doctor's voice, a glimmer of light flickering in his eyes.

"I do." Ianto smiled, "I'm the Administrator there and have been since the fall of Torchwood One." He mentally added two points to the score-board at the Doctor's flinch and his own internal quail. They

were even on that score, both wounded from an experience so far out of anyone's control that the very fact it hadn't been a total massacre was a miracle.

One of the Doctor's miracles.

Meeting the Doctor's fathomless eyes, Ianto bowed his head slightly. It was only polite thanking the man who'd saved your life and Ianto prided himself on his manners. The Doctor quirked his lips slightly, nodding that Ianto's thanks had been received.

And then Ianto's face slid back into its bland mask and, as if their moment of bonding had never taken place, he carried on blithely. "Yes, Captain Harkness was good enough to take me in after Torchwood One came to its end." His smile was wry.

The Doctor cleared his throat, "So, if Captain Harkness is the Head of Torchwood Three, why are you here?"

Ianto smiled, "The Captain, as I'm sure you can appreciate, is a busy man. I'm usually left to deal with the minutia of the day to day organisation. And, between you and me," he leaned forward, lowering his voice to a soft whisper, "he doesn't much like Torchwood London."

The Doctor chuckled, much of the wariness having dissipated as Ianto talked. "Not one for following the rules?"

"No, you and he seem to have that in common Doctor."

Nodding, the Doctor relaxed and Ianto finally realised how tense the alien had been. "I'm sure we do."

The Doctor's eyes flicked around the room, pausing on the door and the small security bud in the corner, before returning to stare at his shackles, a puzzled frown marring his face. Reflexively he tensed and relaxed, testing the bonds that held him to the chair. Ianto knew the trick, one Jack had taught him. If, when being bound your muscles are tense, then the bonds are that much looser when you relax. Easiest way to escape.

Jack had used many games and methods to teach Ianto such tricks. Especially after the time spent with the cannibals, and it had been worth every minute of sweat and rope burn to see that small flicker of pride in Jack's eyes when he'd escaped from Dale Harris, despite the fact that he'd rubbed his wrists raw.

Ducking his head beneath the table, the Doctor checked out the chains securing him to the chair whilst Ianto, impassively, rearranged the photo's on the table.

"That's why I'm here."

The Doctor banged his head on the underside of the table. Pulling up, wincing and unable to rub at the sore spot, the Doctor grimaced. "Oooh, dizzy."

"Shouldn't have banged your head then."

Narrowing his eyes, the Doctor regarded Ianto with the faintest hint of suspicion. "No, I suppose not."

"Now, Doctor, if I may direct your attention back to the photographs?"

“Excuse me?”

“The photographs? Each of them shows the Roald Dahl Plass. Now you have stated that you don’t know of it, but our research leads us to believe that on each of these occasions,” he tapped the photos, drawing the Doctor’s magpie mind to the date and time stamps on the corner of each glossy image, “you were in Cardiff.”

“What makes you think that Mr Jones, Administrator of Torchwood Three?”

“What do you know of the Rift, Doctor?”

“The what?” The Doctor’s face was an abstract on the definition of innocent, but Ianto himself had long since perfected the self same expression.

“A rift in Time and Space runs through Cardiff. It’s nothing visual, I’m sure you understand that there’s more to the universe than what can be seen with the naked eye, but it does cause some anomalies in Cardiff. And it’s Torchwood Three’s job to monitor it. Make sure that the Rift doesn’t compromise the safety of Earth.”

“What’s that got to do with me then?”

“Well, we monitor the Rift very closely, paying particular attention to its fluctuating energy levels and oddly enough, on these dates,” Ianto gestured to the photos, “the Rift’s energy levels dropped.”

The Doctor merely stared at Ianto.

Ianto laid a sheet of paper on the table, covering the photos. “These are readings taken from your ship. We haven’t been able to open the doors to look inside yet, but I’m sure that the technicians are working on that problem. However, we were able to get an output reading. Strange that this spike here,” he tapped the paper, “is the same as the Rift.”

When the Doctor failed to respond, Ianto shook his head and smiled. “All I want to know Doctor is if your ship affects the Rift.”

“And why should I tell you?”

“Because, I am just trying to ensure that the Rift is stable. That it can’t hurt anyone. That whatever your ship does to it can’t harm.”

“I don’t hurt people.”

“I didn’t say you did Doctor.”

“No,” he smiled and it was ugly, “but the inference was there. How very typical of Torchwood. You’re all monsters and so naturally, anything that isn’t the same as you is worse, anything you don’t understand is a threat to be neutralised. But don’t you forget Ianto Jones: I’m not the one who started Canary Wharf.”

“No, but you made it worse. Without you and your Companion, Miss Tyler, the Daleks wouldn’t have been released,” Ianto’s voice was dispassionate, all emotion removed.

“Oh, is that what Torchwood thinks?”

“No, it’s what I know. I was there Doctor. I saw the world burn. So don’t you lecture me on Torchwood and monsters, you only lost one person... I lost everyone.”

“And you blame me?”

“You blame Torchwood. Why shouldn’t I blame you?”

“What? Nonsense! I had nothing to do with the Cybermen. I wasn’t even on Earth when the Ghost Shift began.”

There was a moment of silence.

“You are a fan of logic are you not Doctor?”

The Doctor glared at Ianto, and nodded his head tersely.

Ianto leaned back in his metal chair, refusing to relinquish the Doctor’s glare, even whilst shifting positions. He’d heard, through word of mouth and archival evidence, that the Doctor was known as the Lonely God, the Oncoming Storm, but staring into his eyes, Ianto disagreed with the second epithet. To him, being a Cardiff native, a storm was cold. Burning cold that seeps into your skin and blood and freezes your marrow. The Doctor wasn’t cold. His eyes were full of fire, belligerent and as damning as lava. There was nothing cold about the being before him and, as far as Ianto could see, his only similarity to a storm was in the force of his character and its brutal onslaught. Compared to the righteous flames he saw licking at the Doctor’s pupils, Ianto felt cold and alien.

“Well, dispassionately speaking, if Torchwood was founded because of you, then it logically follows that everything it achieved – good and bad – must also be attributed to you. Cause and effect. If you are the cause...”

“Torchwood is the effect,” the Doctor finished for him in a heavy voice. His eyes were wide and hollow, the fire quenched by Ianto’s soft words.

“Precisely,” Ianto continued in his blindest voice. “Condemn us all you want but be prepared to take some of the blame. Whatever happened between you and Queen Victoria up at Torchwood House set the stage for Canary Wharf. So really Doctor, logically speaking, Torchwood is your fault.”

For a moment the Doctor seemed defeated, but then, as if someone had pumped the bellows, the fire re-ignited. “Oh no Ianto Jones, you can’t lay the blame at my feet. I will not take responsibility for what Torchwood is. Feel free to blame me for Queen Victoria’s actions if you want but I will not be held accountable for what they are.” The Doctor stared at Ianto, his gaze hot and piercing. “That is all down to you.”

Ianto smiled. “To me? I rather doubt that sir; after all, I am merely an administrator. Before that I was a Junior Archivist. Hardly positions of great power.”

The Doctor’s eyes narrowed. “Don’t be flippant we me child, you know precisely what I meant.”

“Did I? I could have sworn you were holding me responsible for the failings of Torchwood.”

“I hadn’t expected you to be deliberately obtuse Mr Jones.”

Ianto pursed his lips. "And I hadn't expected you to be so eager to pass the buck Doctor. That's very political of you, refusing to take responsibility."

The chains around the Doctor's wrists clanked warningly as he leaned over the table, determined to get close to Ianto. "Seems to me, Ianto Jones, that you're the one trying to 'pass the buck'. It's so easy to blame me rather than face your own imperfections," sneering slightly he leant back in his chair. "How very human of you."

"Well, I am human, Doctor." He paused and smiled viciously. "Unlike you."

"And now we get to the crux of the issue," the Doctor said, returning Ianto's smile. "You don't like me because I'm not human. I'm different."

Ianto snorted. "I am hardly that shallow Doctor. After all, Captain Harkness is hardly run of the mill."

If anyone really was listening to their conversation, and in all likelihood they were, Ianto knew they would assume he was simply referring to Jack's unorthodox methods of management. Torchwood One really rather disliked Jack Harkness; he was unpredictable and brash, unorganised and gung-ho – the antithesis of everything One had ever stood for.

Feeling a crick in his neck, Ianto stood and tilted his neck to one side, feeling the bones snap into place. The Doctor was watching him with a small smile that disconcerted Ianto more than he was happy with. In an attempt to distract himself, he moved to the filing cabinet in the corner and took a quick peek.

He was right about its contents. But the Doctor was still smiling.

"And what about Captain Harkness?" asked the Doctor.

Ianto closed the door on the 'interrogation implements' but refused to turn back to that smile. "What about him?"

"I only wonder: does the Captain share your opinion of me?"

"I wouldn't know sir." Ianto blandly responded. "We don't chat about you."

Had Ianto been looking, he'd have seen what looked suspiciously like a pout on the Doctor's face. "You mean to say that he hasn't spoken to his team about their Number One Enemy?" There was an icing of sarcasm drizzled over the Doctor's words and Ianto couldn't help his wry smile.

"No. We have better things to discuss." He moved forwards so that he was standing behind the shackled man, and leaned forward to whisper in the pink ear peeking out of the Doctor's shaggy brown hair. "And *much* better things to do."

Jack would have been proud of the leer Ianto let slip into his voice. Even Owen would have been impressed.

"I'm sure," the Doctor muttered under his breath.

"I'm sorry, I missed that," Ianto breathed. "What did you say?"

The Doctor gave a little laugh and shook his head. His chains jingled gently and his seat scraped on the floor. "I was just wondering what he said when you told him you were coming down to face me. After all, one would think he'd worry about a team member coming to face little old me."

Ianto leaned in closer, determined that the bugs in the room wouldn't hear his words. "Who says I told him?"

The Doctor jerked forcefully but Ianto carried on his sibilant assault. "Why would I? He *abandoned* us because of you. He abandoned *me*. For months we had to work without him, fend off UNIT, Torchwood, the Government...all because of you. We almost died working without him – four people defending Cardiff against the Rift." Ianto laughed softly and felt the shiver that worked its way up the Doctor's spine. "All because of you. And then he came back...*wrong*."

Ianto had heard Jack whimper that word in the early hours, when no one else was in the Hub and Ianto couldn't sleep any longer. He didn't know why that word hurt Jack so much – enough for him to verbally castrate Owen when he'd referred to an alien species they encountered in that very same way, enough for it to be the mumbled words on his lips when he came back from the dead – but he had a feeling he knew who the word had come from.

And he was right if the pallor of the Doctor was anything to go back. He squeezed the alien's shoulders harder than perhaps necessary and felt the tremors under his hands.

"He was nervous, even of *me* and I hate that. I *hate* that whatever happened to him whilst he was with you hurts him. You hurt him. Part of him broke whilst he was away and I can't let you do that to him again. So I'm here and he's not and that isn't going to change."

Ianto moved round so that he was facing the Doctor, and he took a little satisfaction in the man's expression. There was grief etched into his features – for what Ianto didn't know – but it was profound. So deep ran its scars that Ianto hesitated before carrying on.

"I protect Torchwood Three Doctor, it is my job. It's my purpose. And I pride myself on being exceptional at my work." He shrugged and shuffled the photographs, pulling them into a pile. "It's what I do. It's why I am here. I am protecting my team."

"Are you telling me or convincing yourself?" the Doctor asked in a hollow tone.

Looking up Ianto saw that the fire in the Doctor's eyes had died. This was the unstoppable, affable alien defeated. Ianto was looking at a man on the verge of breaking – his hands slipping on his only life-line. Shaking his head Ianto swallowed down the bile that had risen in his throat.

"I'm telling you Doctor. I am good at my job and my job is to protect Torchwood Three." Ianto smiled, "By any means necessary."

He turned and headed to the door, after all he'd done what he had come to do. He'd spoken with the Doctor – a dubious honour few could claim and walked away unscathed – and he'd told the Doctor what he'd thought of him.

There was nothing left to say.

Hand on the door knob he paused and turned back to the Doctor. "You can keep the photos Doctor. I'd say it was a pleasure to meet you – but we both know it'd be a lie."

Once he got outside the room, hurrying past the stony faced guards, he didn't stop until he was in an abandoned corridor and well out of sight of the security cameras.

Leaning his head against the cold concrete wall, Ianto sunk to the carpeted floor.

Friday, Day 193, 16.57GMT

Latitude: 51° 30' 2" N

Longitude: 0° 0' 2" E

As the day progressed and Ianto spent more time with the other delegates, he found doubt creeping up on him. It was like it was lurking in the shadows and corners of Torchwood London, ready and willing to jump on him and wrap him in its cold embrace. Then there was his phone, its weight in his pocket damning and faintly judgemental.

"You seriously think you can keep him here?" Archie asked the Director, leaning across the highly polished boardroom table to look the man in the eye.

"I don't see as we have a choice. We've all agreed that he's too dangerous to release."

There was a murmur of agreement and the scratch of Thomas' pen as he minuted the meeting.

"What about UNIT?" Ianto hazarded.

Fairfax dismissed them out of hand. "They can't be trusted."

"Where were they at Canary Wharf?" one of the London representatives asked, his voice tightly threaded with anger.

Ianto dimly recognised him as having worked in personnel but no name was forthcoming.

"Cardiff has many levels: vaults, prisons. We could take him."

There was no chance that London would hand the Doctor over to him, Ianto knew that. The Doctor was currency. He was power and significance and not only to the various agencies on Earth. It would be imprudent of Fairfax to relinquish such a prize and Ianto knew the man was no fool. But for Jack's sake he had to try.

Fairfax blessed him with a scrutinising gaze. "And Captain Harkness? Would he be happy with Cardiff holding the Doctor?"

The voice in Ianto's head bitterly supplied the affirmation that Jack would be only too happy to hold the Doctor in Cardiff and the validity of the thought made his stomach clench with that aching sensation of hunger but the nausea of grief.

Outwardly though he appeared calm and contemplative; "Captain Harkness would agree with any decision I make."

"How would you transport him?" Archie asked, seriously appearing to consider the option. He might have been Torchwood, but he'd never been happy with the way things were run in London. It had earned him the reputation of being a slightly strange man in Glasgow, and he used that where necessary. Over the past day though, Ianto had realised that there was more to Archie Grogan than even Jack suspected. He was smart and articulate with a shrewd mind and a benign sense of humour.

He was also savvy enough to know that Torchwood Cardiff wasn't the political creature Torchwood London was. Glasgow couldn't hold the Doctor, but Cardiff could. And would without the glory London would revel in.

"How did you get him here?" Ianto asked the London team, tapping the end of his pencil on his notepad.

"Drugged and chained," was the brusque reply.

Ianto frowned.

"And we only had to get across London. You'll have to make it all the way back to Cardiff with him," the gruff man warned. Ianto suspected he might have been military.

"James is right," Fairfax shook his head. "Transporting him is far too risky. He stays here."

"And the TARDIS?" Fiona asked, blushing slightly as she spoke up for the first time.

"Stays here too."

"You can't even get into it!" she bit back.

"And you think Glasgow will, Ms. Hamilton?" Dr. Graham sneered at her. "You hardly have the expertise to switch on a computer."

"I can't believe he travels in a Police Box." Archie interrupted, although Ianto suspected that there was method to his seeming madness. "I mean, a Police Box? I could understand a car or even a plane, something that said movement, but a Police Box?"

There was a pause as everyone considered Archie's words. Ianto smiled. Archie had the most unique method of breaking tension Ianto had ever seen, and it worked every time. Fairfax was momentarily stunned and wrong-footed whilst Archie was still thinking clearly. It was brilliant.

"Yes, well--"

"Cardiff could take the TARDIS." All heads turned to Archie, who calmly reached for his water. "They have the space."

"Actually sir," Dr. Graham began, "Toshiko Sato is very good. She might be able to find a way in."

"She could come here."

"I doubt that," Ianto stated firmly. "Staffing is precarious in Cardiff, and Ms. Sato is irreplaceable. There is no way Captain Harkness would be able to let her join you for the duration."

Jack wouldn't be willing, Hell, Ianto wouldn't be willing to let her leave. It would be like putting a lamb in amongst the wolves. Tosh would cope with the scientists but would be crucified by the politics.

"Hmm..." Fairfax didn't look happy about Ianto's answer. "I think our scientists here have more tests to run. After that we'll discuss the matter afresh."

Ianto and Archie exchanged looks. There was no way the Doctor or the TARDIS were leaving London.

Friday, Day 193, 22.15GMT
Latitude: 52° 16' 5" N
Longitude: 3° 35' 7" W

Owen had never been more pleased to be climbing into the SUV. They'd finally found the cause of the disturbance, an alien escape pod, buried in an abandoned coal mine.

A little later they'd found the alien – and it hadn't been all that happy when they blundered into its nest.

Eggs had squelched under their heavy shoes, blood and what had suspiciously looked like mucus had rained down on them once the bullets started and when the gelatinous blob of alien had smothered Jack, Owen had been slimed giving him CPR.

Eventually triumphant, they'd left the cave; Jack and Owen hauling the corpse, Gwen and Tosh carrying the scavenged equipment (and Owen wasn't sure that it was a fair division of labour) when it had happened.

The bog seemed to appear from nowhere, just in time for Owen to fall in it.

Friday, Day 193, 22.16GMT
Latitude: 51° 29' 8" N
Longitude: 0° 4' 8" E

The splash echoed in the night, bouncing around the docks. A car boot slammed and a few moments later there was the metallic clunk of a car door shutting. The engine revved.

In the river the body of Daniel Jenkins bobbed to the surface, before slowly sinking beneath the murky waters of the Thames.

Friday, Day 193, 22.27GMT
Latitude: 51° 30' 7" N
Longitude: 0° 0' 1" W

The door swung shut behind him with a soft 'snickt' as the latch caught, locking lanto in his hotel room. Soft gold light spilled into the Spartan room, illuminating its neutral green and cream décor, and lanto hung his coat up in the wardrobe. He had, as he'd informed the Director, headed straight to his hotel after finishing up his report on meeting the Doctor. He hadn't, however, headed to Claridges: where Torchwood One believed him to be. Claridges had a long-standing relationship with Torchwood, holding a suite on retainer for Torchwood and visiting officials, so it was only natural that lanto was staying there.

However, according to lanto's protesting credit card statement, he was also checked into the County Hall Marriott and the Hilton London Docklands Riverside hotels. Yet, he was staying in neither of them and had in fact paid cash to stay in the Travelodge on the other side of the river from Torchwood London.

He pulled a small black box out of his travel bag and looked at it for a few moments. If he were Jack, or even Gwen, he'd be itching to depress the large square button in the middle. Luckily, for all involved, he wasn't. Instead he flipped open the little panel and examined the flashing display carefully. The frequencies were within the desired range, but there was too much fluctuation for his comfort, and lanto wasn't one to leave things to fate. Fiddling with the tiny little dials, spinning them clockwise and

anti-clockwise, forwards and backwards with his fingertips, marvelling at the way they rotated on two axes, he managed to manipulate the frequencies to optimum levels.

Leaning back against the headboard of the remarkably comfortable hotel bed, not a scratchy brown blanket in sight, he allowed himself a childish smile of glee and pressed the button.

For a moment nothing happened...then there was a whooshing gurgle of noise and with a 'pop' a shackled man in a hideous orange jumpsuit appeared at the foot of the bed. The Doctor blinked rapidly, slightly discombobulated at the abrupt abduction from his tiny prison cell, and his gaze fell on the mirror over the desk. And Ianto's grinning reflection.



Ianto waggled his fingers.

"What?" The Doctor turned, his hair sticking up at all angles, his eyes wide and bright. "What?"

"The Doctor I presume?" The smile which refused to fall from Ianto's face bled into his voice. "I'm Ianto Jones. Torchwood Three; it's a pleasure to meet you."

The Doctor blinked. Then he rubbed his eyes, or tried to, shook his head and blinked again. "What?"

"There are clothes in the bathroom," said Ianto as he hopped off the bed, leading the way into the adjacent room. Bright, abrasive light bounced off the white tiles when he flipped the switch. "If you'd like to take a shower, I'll order us some room service. I imagine you're quite hungry after your stay with Torchwood." He turned the shower on, testing the water on his palm before standing and pulling the shower curtain closed. "Do you fancy anything in particular?"

His expression was bland, the perfect air of someone who was happy and willing to serve but he was met with the very picture of incredulity.

"I'm sorry...but are you insane?"

"Pardon?"

"Schizophrenic? Multiple personality disorder? Shape-shifter? Doppelganger?"

"I don't think I quite follow you sir."

The Doctor made a 'harumph' of noise. "I am trying to work out whether you are simply insane and don't remember verbally torturing me earlier today – assuming that it was today...my temporal awareness is still a little off – or you are actually someone else."

Ianto smiled; that same comforting smile he'd offered Gwen when she'd tried to sneak into the Hub dressed as a pizza delivery girl. "Ah, yes, about that," he cleared his throat, "I assure you I can explain."

The Doctor waved his arm in what would have been an imperious gesture had the shackles not clanked and impeded his movement. "So explain."

"Wouldn't you rather a shower and food first? I imagine that the cells aren't too clean and quite frankly, well, I'd be rather relieved to dispose of that jumpsuit. Orange really isn't your colour."

Looking down at himself, the Doctor grimaced and wriggled his toes on the cold tile, "You could be right. I don't suppose you have a key to these on you by any chance?" He rattled his chains. "I feel rather like Bob Marley, you know 'A Christmas Carol'?"

"I'm familiar sir."

"I met Dickens you know! Lovely chap..." The Doctor looked as though he was about to launch off into a tale but then snapped his mouth shut, suddenly remembering that he was dealing with a potential enemy. "A key?"

"I'm afraid I don't have one on me sir."

"Bloody Torchwood. What's the use of you then?"

"I used to be rather successful at shop-lifting." Ianto grinned.

"What?"

Ianto slipped his hand into his trouser pocket and pulled out a long metal cylinder, which he offered to the Doctor. His eyes lit up.

"My sonic screw-driver! I love my sonic-screwdriver!" Grabbing the screw-driver the Doctor pulled it close, examining it carefully. "Oh I missed you," he crooned, before fiddling with the settings. There was a soft whine and the chains fell off his hands with a loud thunk.

The Doctor flexed his fingers, making the knuckles crack and Ianto wince, and then shook his hands. "Ooh, that's better. Chains, I really really really don't like chains. Or guns for that matter." Pointing his screw-driver at his feet he repeated the operation, smiling triumphantly when the shackles fell from his ankles. He bounced onto the balls of his feet and then hopped onto his right foot before switching legs.

Ianto frowned at the odd display. "I'll just leave you to your shower sir," he said, making for the door and out of the increasingly steamy room.

The Doctor barely seemed to notice, hopping from foot to foot as he was, examining his toes as he did so.

"Oh Mr Jones?" Ianto turned back. "I don't suppose there's a banana milkshake on the menu? I like bananas...and chips! I could eat some chips!"

Ianto offered him an indulgent smile. "I'll see what I can do sir. Enjoy your shower."

Saturday, Day 194, 02.14GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

When Agent Price rang to inform Director Fairfax that the Hub wasn't abandoned as they had believed – *hoped* – he'd received a verbal lambasting before handing the phone off to Harkness and his over-inflated ego.

"Captain Harkness speaking, how may I be of service?" Jack purred down the phone, tipping Price the wink as he did so.

“Is there any possibility of us conducting this conversation like civilised adults rather than oversexed teenagers?” Fairfax sighed.

“Is there any chance you’ll admit you tried to take my Hub?”

It was at that moment Price, with the good sense of self-preservation any soldier cultivated, decided he’d leave Harkness to it and left the man’s office.

Jack couldn’t see Fairfax but he knew he was wearing the same pinched expression Hartman had adopted when having to deal with Jack. It was a cross between the patient visage of a saint and the fury of a frustrated school teacher.

“I was under the impression that the base of Torchwood’s outpost in Cardiff was abandoned. In these *uncertain* times, it would have been negligent of me if I didn’t make sure the base was secure.”

Jack rolled his eyes, “Yeah, and I’m celibate.”

There was a pause where normally there would have been the snigger of laughter. Fairfax didn’t have a puerile sense of humour though. He didn’t have a sense of humour.

Sighing, Jack adopted his ‘Captain’ attitude; the serious, Earth saving demeanour that got him through any crisis. “What do you want Fairfax?”

“Where is Ianto Jones, Captain?”

There was something in Fairfax’s tone that was faintly reminiscent of a Bond movie. It was the way he drew out his words, especially the vowels. Allowing himself to fall back into his chair, Jack propped his feet up on the desk and studied the CCTV. Torchwood agents were scattered throughout his base, but – and bless his team for it – every single one of them was in sight.

“No idea. Last I heard he was with you.”

It might have been the truth but it still came out petulantly.

“Don’t play games with me Captain. Jones fed us some spiel about you and your team being up in the mountains investigating an alien incursion and-”

“Just so you know, that was the truth.”

Fairfax breezily continued as if he hadn’t heard Jack’s interruption. “Jones claimed he was acting in your stead. I have to admit, *Captain*,” Fairfax all but spat the title, “I was rather relieved that I would be dealing with the more civilized side of your little circus but it turns out that even a reliable member of One can be corrupted by your shenanigans.”

Grinding his teeth Jack refused to rise to the condescension wafting down the phone line. “To be fair, Fairfax, I think Ianto was plenty corrupted before he came to Cardiff. After all he did survive Hartman’s regime.”

It wasn’t the best time to enter into a pissing contest with the other Director but it was either that or shoot someone. Jack could never handle superciliousness with the type of easy grace Ianto did, it wrapped round him and choked the all the rationality out of him. He’d gotten better over the years, at the Time Agency there had been many a time he’d gone off half-cocked just because one of his

instructors or superiors had patronised him. He had long suspected that was the cause for his missing two years.

It wasn't until he met the Doctor that he realised that sometimes, just sometimes, others did know better. The Chula warship had been a humbling – yet oddly vitalising – experience.

Jack grinned wickedly. “Heard you'd finally caught the Doctor.”

“Jones told you.”

“No, UNIT.”

“UNIT.”

The deadpan delivery was enough to tell Jack that Fairfax was probably vibrating with rage. If he concentrated he would probably have been able to hear it down the phone. Still, it just wasn't enough to bring him a shred of comfort.

“Uhuh. They also said you'd lost him. Rather careless dontch'ya think?”

There was a slight growl before: “We didn't lose him!”

“Are you trying to tell me that he just got up and walked away? And here I thought that the Millennium site was one of the most secure in the country.”

Jack grinned at the long pause. However he did it, the Doctor getting out of Torchwood London was enough to destroy any credibility they had clawed back since Canary Wharf. And Fairfax wouldn't be happy, *at all*.

It started subtly, a shift in Fairfax's breathing, and Jack knew that there was more to the story. That, despite everything Alistair had told him, he was missing vital details. Details Fairfax had.

“Oh no Captain Harkness, we didn't *lose* the Doctor. One might actually say that he was...stolen from us?”

His heart was beating so hard in his chest that Jack was sure Fairfax could hear it and all of his fears coalesced.

Ianto had taken the Doctor.

Something of his shock must have been audible. “So, Jones fooled you too. Nice to know that the amazing Captain isn't above being duped by a pretty face.”

“Ianto's more than a pretty face,” Jack hollowly defended.

“That he is,” Fairfax conceded in a rare moment of accord between the two leaders, “He most definitely is. I find it faintly comforting that you were sucked in.” He paused. “You have realised that he only infiltrated Torchwood to aide the Doctor have you not?”

Jack's breath froze, but he must have managed to make an affirmative noise as Fairfax blithely continued, his tone reflective.

“Yes, damned fiendish of the pair of them, long game like that. Makes you wonder how many infiltrates the Doctor has in our system.”

“What makes you so sure Ianto works for the Doctor?”

Fairfax snorted. “Of course he does. It’s the only way this thing makes sense.”

“Explain,” Jack demanded shortly.

“When the Doctor was discovered missing at 22.45 yesterday, immediate protocol stated that the base should be shut down and all CCTV reviewed. Naturally, we contacted the delegates from Torchwood’s Two and Three. Whilst Mr. Grogan and Ms. Hamilton were gracious enough to answer their phones, Mr. Jones didn’t. Nor did he answer his hotel phone.”

Jack surmised Ianto had already thrown his phone.

“When he didn’t answer, security ran additional checks. Apparently Mr. Jones is checked into a total of three hotels – none of which have seen him this evening – and his car is parked in an underground lot on this side of the river.”

Of course it was. Ianto wasn’t an idiot: phones, credit cards and cars were easy to trace. Jack shook his head, Ianto had become so very efficient at making bodies disappear, why hadn’t Jack realised that it’d be nothing more than child’s play to make himself vanish?

“That doesn’t mean Ianto,” and Jack refused to call him something as impersonal as ‘Jones’; he was more than that, “works for the Doctor. It simply means he’s vanished.”

“Well, yes. But on reviewing the CCTV we found two very interesting things. The first was that Mr. Jones was the only person to touch the Doctor whilst he was in Torchwood. The guards refused to do so – and I don’t really blame them – and we made sure that he had nothing other than a standard Torchwood jumpsuit on him. We didn’t even give him shoes. There was nowhere the Doctor could have hidden anything!”

Jack grit his teeth at the idea of the Doctor in Torchwood rags. He was worth so much *more* than any of them. Everything he’d done for all of them and *this* was how he’d been treated. Every single insignificant one of them owed the Doctor their lives and he was repaid by being handled as a criminal.

It *was* criminal.

“That still doesn’t prove anything.”

“No, but when we add all of that to the fact that Jones was also the last person to handle the Doctor’s personal effects – that metal tube and the piece of paper – it all makes him look rather guilty.”

There was nothing really for Jack to say to that.

Whilst none of it added up to conclusive proof that Ianto had gotten the Doctor out, he certainly seemed guilty. He’d done too much for all of this to be coincidental and Jack’s gut, which had yet to fail him (he’d gotten top marks in Intuition at the Academy) was convinced that Ianto had gotten the Doctor out.

But why?

If it was only for revenge then surely he wouldn't have liberated the Doctor's Screwdriver and Paper. They were irrelevant in a revenge scenario.

"So what now?" he asked Fairfax, putting the right amount of weariness into his voice.

"Now, we wait."

"Wait?"

Fairfax chuckled. "I understand that is not your style Captain, but I find it best. Haven't you heard the saying: 'Give a thief enough rope'?"

"And Ianto will hang himself," Jack finished.

"Precisely."

"You can't be sure this will work," he baited. "If they were smart enough to get in and out without your noticing then they could already be off-world."

"They could," Fairfax conceded sounding incredibly smug, "But it is doubtful."

"Why?"

"We still have his ship."

Friday, Day 193, 23.19GMT

Latitude: 51° 30' 7" N

Longitude: 0° 0' 1" W

"How did you do it?"

"Hmm..." Ianto looked up from the PDA he was scrutinizing to see the Doctor stood in the doorway of the bathroom pulling on his shirt cuffs, arranging them under his suit jacket. Steam billowed out around him, like something out of a bad sci-fi movie, rolling out on to the beige carpet where the Doctor's toes were wriggling contentedly.

"I said: how did you do it?" He reached up and adjusted his tie so it was hanging loosely around his neck, flipping the edges of his collar over it.

"Get you out? Well..."

"No, no, no...well yes, of course, I mean, getting me out of Torchwood – genius! And you did it without hurting anyone, or at least I'm assuming you did and well, assumptions can be dangerous things but I don't think you hurt anyone." Ianto shook his head in confirmation, earning him a grin, "Brilliant!"

The Doctor crossed and flopped into the large green chair in the corner. "No Mr. Jones, what I want to know is how you found me clothes to fit!"

"That's what you want to know?"

"Yup!" The Doctor nodded.

There was a knock at the door and Ianto rose gracefully from the bed to get it.

“My father was a Master Tailor,” Ianto said, returning with a room-service tray, “He could tell a man’s inseam from watching him walk across the room. I’d have been a poor show not being able to estimate your measurements from all the documents and photos Torchwood have on you.”

For a brief moment, the Doctor looked rather put out at such a benign explanation for his perfect fit, navy pin-strip suit, white shirt and red tie. There was even a pair of bright red Converse waiting next to the chair he was sitting in. But his eyes all but popped out of his head when he saw what was on the tray Ianto was holding.

“What is that?” he asked, edging towards Ianto and the food with a scuttly crab-like movement.

Ianto smirked, “Well, they didn’t have banana milkshake on the menu, I’m afraid.” The Doctor tried to pout in disappointment, but his attention was still riveted on the concoction in the bowl. “The receptionist however assured me that their chef makes the best banana sundae spilt thing this side of the river.”

The Doctor grabbed a spoon and dug into the creamy banana concoction with a reverence that belied his energetic personality. “Oh.”

“I take it you approve?” Ianto asked, somewhat nervous of the response.

“Oh yes. Ianto Jones, *this*, is perfection!”

Ianto smiled. “There are chips as well and...”

“Tea!”

Taking his own order - a chicken club sandwich on white bread - Ianto returned to his seat on the bed watching as the Doctor all but devoured his sundae, whilst valiantly trying to savour every mouthful. It was like watching a body wage war on itself. Ianto forgave him though, aware that the Doctor probably wouldn’t have had much to eat whilst in captivity.

“So tell me, Ianto Jones,” the Doctor began, curling his tongue around his spoon, “how did you get me out?”

“I used what apparently was a Slitheen teleport Jack appropriated from God knows where and Tosh fiddled with and I tucked it under the collar of your jumpsuit.”

“You have a teleport?” The Doctor’s tone was suspicious.

“Well, it’s not technically a true teleport anymore. Tosh modified it so that it could only move an object from A to B within a five thousand foot radius. A is always the where the teleport actually is and B is this.” He waved the little black box at the Doctor, who made grabby motions with one hand. Ianto tossed it to him.

The Time Lord let out a low whistle as he examined the box. “Very impressive. Who did this? Tosh?”

“Toshiko Sato. Torchwood Three’s technical expert – I believe you’ve already met.”

“Dr. Sato! I remember! The space-ship in the Thames. You know it wasn’t actually a space-ship at all – it was just a plot by the Slitheen to start World War 3. Did you know that?”

"I did. We got a copy of the details later. Did you know that Tosh isn't actually a doctor? She was apparently standing in for Owen Harper – our medic – who was suspiciously unavailable after a heavy night of drinking."

The Doctor laughed. "So, where are the rest of the intrepid Torchwood Three? I can't imagine that Jack is happy waiting in the wings. He's more a centre-stage type of fellow!"

"That he is," Ianto agreed weakly.

"So, where are they?"

The Doctor picked up his, now cold, bowl of chips and sat on the foot of the bed, bouncing the mattress a little. Ianto drew away from him, sitting stiffly on the pillows, his back ramrod straight against the headboard.

"They're not here sir." Ianto sounded like a chastised school-boy in the headmaster's office.

"Well I can see that Ianto Jones! Unless they're hiding in the wardrobe – but I don't think Jack could stay hidden or quiet for that long."

Ianto, against his will, chuckled feebly and the Doctor smiled. Sighing, Ianto looked up and met the Doctor's gaze just as he popped a chip into his mouth.

"I didn't lie to you back at Torchwood. Jack doesn't know you're here."

The Doctor choked on his chip.

Spluttering, he managed to cough out, "What!"

Ianto blushed and ducked his head. "I thought it best not to inform him."

"You thought it best not to inform him? I was stuck in Torchwood! What if something in your plan had gone wrong?" he demanded.

And far from being cowed by the Doctor's somewhat justifiable anger, he was strangely reassured that he'd done the right thing. There were times when cunning and stealth was more appropriate than brute force and this was one of those times.

"Because, Jack would have gone in there guns blazing. That's all he knows. He's a man of action – you've said so yourself. And what would have happened then?" His eyes were cold as he gazed at the Doctor. "He'd have died Doctor. He'd have gotten himself killed to save you."

"But he's immortal. He can't die," the Doctor pointed out reasonably.

With those few words, all the hate Ianto had felt for the Doctor when Jack had run off, chasing him across the universe, came back full force. A biting anger stirred in his gut, black and vicious and very hungry to hurt.

"He can die Doctor. I've seen him die," Ianto's voice was as solemn as a funeral knell. He smiled; a mocking smile that narrowed his eyes and sapped the colour from his cheeks. "Oh, he comes back to life and it's all ok then but he has to die first. And do you know what's worse than that? No? It's those

few seconds after he comes back, when his soul is stripped bare and lays vulnerable for the entire Universe to see. You can see how scared he is. And you expect me to put him through that?"

There was no expression on the Doctor's face. His mouth was a thin line of neither anger nor repression and he'd put his bowl of chips to one side. His eyes though, they were looking right into Ianto and Ianto suspected that the Doctor was seeing him on every level possible. He was flayed under that assessing gaze.

"You are quite something Ianto Jones." The Doctor smiled, brilliant and affirming as the sun. "I think I'm going to like you."

Ianto coughed gruffly. "Yes well...Well, Jack's plans usually involve chaos and an inappropriate amount of sexual innuendo and quite frankly, I didn't want to have to deal with the inevitable paper work."

"So that's why you rescued me on your own is it?"

There was a knowing smile on the Doctor's face that Ianto didn't like.

"Well, yes. That and the fact that the team is somewhere in the middle of the Cambrian Mountains chasing down alien tech, and I couldn't get hold of Jack."

"Sooo... Hmmm... I can see why you decided to rescue me... Oh Rassilon! The TARDIS!" The Doctor slapped his hand to his forehead and all but leapt from the bed.

"Pardon me?"

Frantically the Doctor rushed Ianto, leaping into his personal space and filling it with nervous energy. "The TARDIS! It's still at Torchwood! We have to get her out of there!"

Guiltily Ianto hurried to his bag and pulled out another black box.

"Not necessarily sir."

Saturday, Day 194, 02.36GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

After finishing with Fairfax, Jack knew there was no point in contacting Martha. There was nothing she could do except worry. Either Torchwood had the Doctor's phone or it was still on the TARDIS. Which Torchwood had.

Instead he called Alistair.

"Lethbridge-Stewart." His voice was harried.

"It's me."

"Harkness! What do you know?"

"More than I did earlier."

Jack quickly gave Alistair a run down of the conversation he'd had with Fairfax and, for once, he wasn't interrupted. It was always nice dealing with Alistair, like Ianto he knew when to be silent and listen and when to question. That innate understanding was one of the things Jack treasured so much.

"So they still have the TARDIS?" Alistair let out a deep breath, and Jack imagined he'd been holding it for the entire conversation. "That's not good Jack."

"I know. They'll have bugged it by now."

"Naturally, it's their only option now."

Jack sighed, spinning slightly on his chair. On the CCTV he could see that the Torchwood London agents had been corralled into the boardroom, with fresh mugs of Owen's coffee and a plate of Rich Tea. It wasn't quite Ianto's hospitality – nor was it quite as palatable – but the thought was there.

"So what's the plan Brig?"

"Hmmm..." There was the rasp of skin on stubble. "I have a team already on their way to you as we speak Captain. Their orders are to aid you in any action you take to stop London getting hold of the Doctor and Mr Jones."

"You're sending me soldiers?" Jack leered.

"*Captain,*" Alistair's deep baritone warned.

"Will they be in uniform?"

"Jack! For God's sake man, concentrate!"

"Oh, I'll concentrate alright!"

"And to think, I thought Major Davies was exaggerating when he warned the men about you."

Jack laughed, the Brig's deep rolling chuckle accompanying it. "All the stories are true I'm afraid."

"So am I Jack." Despite the moment of levity there was something darker in Alistair's tone.

Jack scrubbed his eyes and returned his seat forwards. "We'll get him back."

"Of course we will! He's not going to let something as small as this stop him. And your boy Jack, well, I imagine he's got something up his sleeve."

"I wish I knew what it was."

Maybe Owen had been right earlier, when he said that Jack needed to be in control. He felt so *helpless* sitting in his office waiting for things to happen.

"If it's anything like what Jones has already accomplished I don't think we need to worry."

Jack hadn't shared all of his fears with Alistair, not wanting to put Ianto in more danger, but he was worried. He was worried for the Doctor but the man seemed to have the tenacity of a cockroach. And Jack meant that in the nicest possible way. He walked away from situations that destroyed worlds.

Ianto didn't have that luxury.

Saturday, Day 194, 00.33GMT

Latitude: 51° 30' 1" N

Longitude: 0° 0' 7" W

"Can I drive?" The Doctor's eyes were flicking over the dashboard and steering column with the curiosity of a child with a chemistry set.

"No."

"Why not?" The Doctor asked petulantly, looking up at Ianto with wide eyes.

"Do you have a driver's licence?"

The Doctor spluttered, "Well, no, of course not!"

"Then you can't drive."

The Doctor bristled indignantly, reminding Ianto slightly of the cat he'd had as a child and its reaction to a bucket of cold water. "Now you listen here young man, I'll have you know that I have been piloting the TARDIS for nearly nine hundred years! And the TARDIS contains technology you humans won't ever be able to conceive of. You make it all the way to the end of the Universe, hanging on by your fingertips, but you could never design something like a TARDIS. You don't even come close!"

Ianto gave him a winning smile. "And yet I'm the one with the driver's licence. Belt up."

"Excuse me?"

"Seat belt," Ianto carefully enunciated. "Put it on."

"Oh, well yes, of course. Seat belt! Genius! Don't have them in the TARDIS."

"No, I imagine not."

Ianto watched as the Doctor fiddled with his seat belt, inserting the tab and then pushing the red release button, grinning as the belt reeled back.

"No point really, not when travelling through the Vortex. It's usually quite a smooth ride. No hills or other traffic to worry about. Or weather. I've heard that that can play havoc with travelling here. No snow in space." Ianto reached over and did up the alien's seat belt, desperate to be off. "Did I mention that the TARDIS can travel through Time and Space?"

Ianto rolled his eyes. "No, but I had gathered."

"And you're not going to let me drive? Even though I can pilot through the Time Vortex and get to anywhere and any-when I want?"

Ianto narrowed his eyes and looked at the Doctor. "Have you ever navigated the London inner ring road?"

"Well no, but how hard can it be really? You just go straight."

“You’re serious aren’t you?”

The Doctor gave Ianto such a look of wide-eyed innocence that he had to choke back a laugh. For all his brilliance and wisdom, the Doctor knew nothing of navigating the London road network. Silently he thanked whoever was listening that they hadn’t taken the Tube.

“Very. I think if I can handle a time machine, I can handle this!”

“Doctor, with all due respect, this isn’t a time-machine. It’s a Ford Focus, and not even a clean one.”

Beside him the Doctor’s face twisted into what suspiciously looked to be the beginnings of a pout so Ianto cut in before he could think of anything more to say. “I promise, the minute you get a license, you can drive.”

Narrowing his eyes the Doctor quietly appraised Ianto as he put the car into gear and pulled out of the car-park. “And when I say license,” Ianto added as he checked his mirrors, “I don’t mean it as an invitation for you to wave that psychic paper under my nose.”

The Doctor not-so-stealthily removed his hand from its stray into his coat pocket and Ianto swallowed down a smile.

“Out of curiosity Doctor, do you need training to pilot the TARDIS?”

The Doctor looked slightly hunted, “Well, yes...sort of. Why?”

“Like I said, I’m just curious.” He paused, “Would I be correct in assuming you passed?”

Muttering under his breath, and not in English, The Doctor shifted in his seat, turning to look out the window.

“I’ll take that as a ‘no’ then shall I?”

Saturday, Day 194, 02.59GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

“A word, Owen.”

It wasn’t a question. There was no inflection at the end of his sentence and even Owen wasn’t pig-headed enough to ignore the grim tone of Jack’s voice.

Looking up from the remains he’d unloaded earlier from the SUV, he saw Jack leaning over the railings of the Autopsy Bay. That in itself wasn’t unusual, the team often hung about if he was performing a particularly interesting or gruesome autopsy, but the look on Jack’s face was new.

He looked almost...penitent.

Despite that, Owen couldn’t find it in himself to extend an olive branch and his voice was brusque when he spoke. “What?”

Jack sighed. There was no way this was going to be pleasant. Or easy. Owen and he were too alike, too stubborn and passionate to let arguments lie.

“UNIT are here.” It was as neutral a beginning as Jack could come up with.

“So? Do they want their monthly physical?”

“No,” Jack pushed the word past his teeth.

Owen glared belligerently at him.

“Look, about earlier,” Jack ran his hand through his hair, tugging viciously at the strands, “I was out of line.”

“Too bloody right you were.”

“But you were insubordinate.”

“Excuse me?”

Jack shook his head feeling Owen’s glare blister into his skin. “You were questioning my command and implying that my professionalism was compromised by my personal feelings. And, just for the record, *nothing* clouds my judgement.”

“Sure it doesn’t.”

Snapping on his latex gloves, Owen shuffled to the corpse on his table. Jack followed out of habit, poking at one gelatinous limb with his finger.

“Don’t.”

“I killed it,” Jack responded petulantly.

“Yeah, it smothered you to death and choked. And the award for Most Heroic Act goes to...” he mocked, his expression vicious and twisted. Owen wasn’t classically attractive and most definitely couldn’t hold a candle to Jack, but in that moment he was truly ugly, his inner hate and loathing spiralling and painting themselves on his face.

“Listen,” Jack hissed, reaching over the table and grabbing Owen’s hand before the scalpel could cut into the alien. “You might not like me very much at the moment but you will do as I say. It’s bad enough that London are crawling around my base without you making things worse.”

“Yeah, well blame the Tea-boy. He started this mess.”

Jack growled and pulled Owen closer, “He tried to save his girlfriend!”

“She was a Cyberman!”

“Not according to Ianto.”

Breaking free of Jack’s grasp Owen shoved off the autopsy table, bearing his teeth, his eyes wild and black. “Yeah, and he’s leading you round by your dick! Of course he told you she wasn’t converted but I did the autopsy and as your Chief Medic I’m telling you that she was. She was a fully functional Cyberman with the capability to take down this base!”

“That may be-”

"I'm not done Harkness," Owen snarled. "I accepted that you didn't kill him. I could even see the wisdom in you keeping him on here. What I can't accept is that he's allowed to shoot me and get away with it! That he's allowed to do God knows what to One and we all have to pretend he's a saint who couldn't have possibly done anything to merit this!"

"That's not-"

"*Yes it is!*"

Oddly enough, the angrier Owen got the lower his voice dropped. Owen wasn't one of those people who shouted when he was angry. He shouted when he was pissed off, but when he was *angry* he was quite and spiteful like a spitting cobra. He snaked out, striking for the vein, filled with toxic venom and curled malice.

"That's not..." The worst thing about the situation, now knowing most of the facts, was Jack could see his point. Ianto hadn't given Owen any reason to trust him. He'd bonded with Tosh and Jack, was friendly to Gwen but Owen and he maintained an uneasy alliance.

But Owen didn't know all the facts.

"Owen, listen: Ianto helped the Doctor."

"Your Doctor?"

"Yes."

The medic laughed. "Can this get any bloody better? All we need now is Hart and all your fuck buddies will be in on this mess."

"It's not like that!" Jack protested.

"Yeah, tell that to someone who gives a damn!"

"I thought I was!" Jack's voice was soft and for a split second Owen got to see past the Captain's tarnished armour. He saw the man Ianto saw. "Ianto needs our help." Or at least Jack hoped he was. He wasn't willing to believe that Ianto had gone after the Doctor to hurt him. "He was doing the right thing and you're right: he has made some bad decisions but Owen, he's twenty-four. He's *twenty-fucking-four!* And he cleans up and looks after us like he's the adult round here!"

Jack paused, panting like a champion race-horse and desperately holding on to his passionate flow. He *had* to get this right.

Jack wasn't a conman for nothing.

"If Torchwood One catches him before we do they won't just kill him. They won't put a bullet between his eyes and stuff him in a morgue drawer. Oh no, they'll break him first." He fixed Owen with a steely look. "They'll fill him to the gills with alien drugs that'll box his liver and fry his brain but will make him spill his guts. He'll tell them *everything* he knows and once he does that – how long do you think it'll be before they're breaking the door down and we're next?"

Owen shook his head, denial holding him firmly in its grip. "I don't-"

“Sure you do Owen.” Jack whispered, his voice low and seductive: charming as a devil and twice as vindictive. “Sure you do. When Ianto tells them about the Weevils and Diane and how *you* opened the Rift – despite Ianto’s objections. How you *shot* your superior officer – a capital offence – and opened the Rift *again* letting out Abaddon.” Jack smiled. “And when he’s told them all that...what do you think is going to happen to you?”

As he spoke Jack watched with a perverse satisfaction as Owen’s skin paled and his pupils blew. He thrilled in the way the doctor staggered back and braced himself on the tiled wall. But he didn’t like the calculating look that came over the young man’s features.

“If I help you get Jonesy back – make sure we get him back safe and sound with not one hair out of place on his pretty little head – does that mean I can give him a good bollocking?”

Jack laughed, relief swamping his gut like a biscuit being dunked in tea. “Yes! You can say what the hell you want!”

Owen smiled, and Jack felt slightly uneasy. “Let’s get our Tea-boy back!”

Saturday, Day 194, 01.13GMT
Latitude: 51° 29’ 9” N
Longitude: 0° 6’ 5” W

Ianto skilfully piloted the car through the London streets. Even though it was night and there were few people on the roads, the one way systems and the drunken pedestrians meant he had to concentrate. Still, there was one thing he really needed to know.

“How did they get hold of you?”

“Hmm?” The Doctor didn’t seem to be listening to Ianto, staring excitedly at the lights of London.

“Torchwood. How did you let yourself be captured? I know you know all about us – you were at Canary Wharf after all.”

The Doctor turned his narrowed gaze on Ianto. “Who did you lose there?”

“Everyone,” he answered glibly. Ianto hated talking about Canary Wharf; he could still taste the ash and metallic blood in his mouth.

Pursing his lips and watching Ianto’s figure – ramrod straight, tendons straining in his neck and knuckles white on the steering wheel – the Doctor sighed and turned back to the window.

“The TARDIS.”

“Pardon?”

Leaning forward to rummage in the glove-box, unable to sit and do nothing, the Doctor explained how he had ended up in Torchwood.

“A while ago someone, another Time Lord, stole her.”

“You had your time-machine stolen?”

“Yes.” His pride still hurt that he hadn’t been able to stop the Master taking the TARDIS. No matter how many times he told himself that he couldn’t have realised who Yana was until Martha mentioned the watch, it still niggled at him. Like a celery strand sticking between his teeth: irritating and impossible to forget.

“Is there a word for that?” Ianto considered. “Joyriding? Time-riding...Nah that doesn’t really work. We need to think of a good name.”

“Do you mind?”

Ianto had the grace to look sheepish. “Sorry. It’s become a habit at Torchwood – Cardiff that is – to name things. You were saying?”

“He turned her into a Paradox Machine.”

Ianto cursed.

“So I don’t have to explain what one of those is? Pity, I like a good exposition. Makes the plot more interesting.”

“Jack beat you to it.” At the Doctor’s slightly worried look Ianto continued. “We had to throw a bomb into the Rift-”

“You what?” Snapping forward, straining his seatbelt to its limit, the Doctor turned to glare at Ianto.

“In our defence, we had no choice. It was Cardiff or the Rift.” The Doctor didn’t look much happier but relaxed back into his seat. “It through us into a Time Loop.”

The Doctor nodded. “Right, so you know. Well, we reset the Paradox, eventually, but the damage was done. The people in the middle of it would always remember but things were right. Time was right and Mr Jones, you have no idea how *wrong* Time can be.”

Ianto took the turning for the A4. “So if you put things right, what happened?”

The Doctor sighed. “I’m not sure. She was sluggish, using fuel too fast, taking me to the wrong places and times. Not that that hasn’t happened before mind you, but usually she’s not so far off. I mean, I wanted to go to Barcelona and it’s not that far away – just a quick trip through the Vortex and voila! Dogs with no noses! But we ended up on Pluto Seven four thousand years after the end of Barcelona. And no dogs with no noses.” He paused, scratching at his manic hair. “Although there were cats with no tails. Odd that.”

“Doctor?” Ianto prompted.

“Oh, what? Yes, where was I? Barcelona!” he clapped his hands together, smiling at the M4 sign. “So I decided to head to Cardiff.”

“The Rift?”

“Precisely Ianto Jones!” Wriggling his fingers, the Doctor waved at a trucker in an Eddie Stobart lorry as the Focus sped past it. “You were very very impressive with your supposition on the TARDIS’s effect on the Rift. You were almost right!”

“Well, I was hardly going to tell London that the TARDIS was fuelled by the Rift was I?”

Ianto, ostensibly checking his left hand mirror, snuck a sly look at the Doctor. It was rather gratifying to see the delighted shock on his face.

“You are a clever boy!”

Ianto felt the tips of his ears turn red. “Thank you. So, if you were heading for Cardiff, how did you end up in London?”

“No idea really,” he shrugged, as if the fact that he’d just been held prisoner for the last few days was an inconsequential detail. “But, things always happen for a reason.”

“That’s it?” Ianto frowned at the Doctor. “That’s all you can think of.”

“Well, maybe it happened so I could meet you?”

Had Jack said that it would undoubtedly be a come-on, but with the Doctor he wasn’t so sure.

Saturday, Day 194, 01.42GMT
Latitude: 51° 29’ 2” N
Longitude: 0° 23’ 7” W

“So, you and Jack?” The Doctor asked, rocking on the balls of his feet. His hands were deep in his pockets, his shoulders curled forwards. Despite the fact that he’d posed the question his body language was uncomfortable.

Ianto refused to blush as he feigned ignorance concentrating instead on filling up the car. He may have somewhat made his peace with his feelings for the Doctor, but that didn’t mean he was willing to chit-chat with the other man about this. “Jack and I?”

The Doctor coughed awkwardly, “Well, I mean, I assume, well...you are his type.”

“Excuse me?” Ianto couldn’t have been more shocked had the Doctor propositioned him.

“I mean, well, your young, obviously smart, and well, not that I’m any judge but you are pretty and...”

“I look good in a suit?”

“Well,” the dark eyes skittered away from Ianto’s mockery, “that’s not quite how I’d have put it but...I am right though. You and Jack are together aren’t you?”

Ianto sighed, replacing the nozzle in its holder. It was a question he’d asked himself countless times and had come to no real conclusions except that he wasn’t sure he liked who being with Jack was turning him into. He was becoming ruthless, devious and was skirting the edge of being dangerous. He’d never been a saint, knowing that there were times when he bent the rules and dabbled in dubious morals but he’d never broken the boundaries of his own ethics – and he was in danger of doing so for Jack. He’d promised himself just one thing on joining Torchwood-that he’d preserve the sanctity of life. And he’d done so, equating the necessity to stop a hostile alien with the knowledge that it would kill the first unsuspecting, defenceless person it came across, so in taking one life he would save countless. He could condone that. Rationalise it so that it wouldn’t eat him up late at night when he was curled in bed alone. But, being with Jack, Ianto was scared that he’d cross that line and kill for his Captain.

“Honestly Doctor, not that this is any of your business, but I have no idea if Jack and I are together. We sleep together but whether it’s just taking comfort in another body after everything we see or a relationship...that I don’t know Doctor.” His tone was flat and melancholic and, to the Doctor’s eagle eye, he shrunk into himself.

The Doctor narrowed his eyes at Ianto. “You, Ianto Jones, would make a wonderful Companion.”

Ianto laughed. “I don’t think I’m meant for the rigours of trans-universal and temporal travel.”

“Can you run?”

Ianto blinked.

“There’s a lot of running involved. But that isn’t what I meant.” He caught Ianto’s gaze and held him still, willing him to hear the truth in his words. “You are amazing. I’ve seen a lot of things in my long life Ianto but the depth of loyalty you’ve displayed to Jack, and by extension me – which I am incredibly grateful for by the way – is a rare thing Ianto. Rare and beautiful and I have to conclude that you love him.”

Shaking his head Ianto wandered into the petrol station to pay.

Saturday, Day 194, 03.09GMT

Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N

Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

Captain Mark Jacobs listened attentively as Private Howell repeated what he had heard, his fingers idly beating out a tattoo on the conference room table.

His team had been sent in to aid the Doctor once they’d heard of his plight at the hands of Torchwood. It was the Brig who felt that it would be best if they were in Cardiff – what with Harkness being on their side.

He obviously didn’t know about this though.

“Are you sure about this Private?”

“Positive,” the red-capped man nodded.

Jacobs rubbed his jaw, finger pads scratching over the stubble. Howell shifted slightly. He was a well trained soldier, but the atmosphere of the Hub was oppressive and slightly disconcerting. He’d heard – through scuttlebutt naturally – that Torchwood kept hold of its dead. Somewhere below his feet, therefore, was a hundred years worth of bodies.

And with all the weird things he had seen on the job...well it wasn’t the most comforting of thoughts.

“Howell,” Jacobs mused, “what were our orders?”

“For this mission sir?”

Jacobs gave him a blank stare and drummed his fingers harder on the table.

Howell coughed then snapped to attention. "Brigadier Sir Lethbridge-Stewart issued orders for UNIT Task Team Alpha-12 to assist in the rescue of the alien known as the Doctor, Clearance Code Omega. Unit Task Team Alpha-12 are authorised to use any means necessary to ensure the Doctor is permitted to leave Earth, unharmed and with no ill will, so long as civilians are not endangered."

"Hmm...Would you say that Torchwood operatives were civilians?"

"Sir?"

"Answer the question Private."

Howell thought for a moment before answering. "No sir. They are not military but they are aware of the threats posed to Earth. They are on the front lines of defence."

Still ramrod straight, eyes focused upon the swirling display on the plasma screen just behind the Captain's head, Howell waited patiently. He owed no loyalty to Torchwood, but his guts were squirming slightly anyway.

"Private," his eyes snapped to his superior. "You're dismissed."

Howell nodded and left the room, quite happy to get back to the rest of the team. They were trying to figure out how to operate the shiny coffee machine in the kitchen and Private West had unearthed a pack of ginger biscuits under the sink.

A cup of coffee and a biscuit was just what the doctor ordered. No pun intended.

Jacobs waited until the door closed behind Howell before reaching for his mobile.

"Captain Howell of UNIT for Director Fairfax... No, I won't call back... Tell him I want to make a deal."

Saturday, Day 194, 01.57GMT

Latitude: 51° 29' 2" N

Longitude: 0° 23' 7" W

"I was thinking," Ianto said, breathing in some petrol station coffee. It wasn't good but at least it was caffeine. "Going to Cardiff might be problematic."

"Why?"

"Well, I had thought that we would have had a better start on Torchwood London. But by now they're probably already in Cardiff."

The Doctor looked faintly confused as he peered into his cheese and pickle sandwich. He flicked at a piece of the dark brown pickle and licked his finger. Satisfied he took a bite. "So? Jack might be back by now."

"But he might not. And we can't rely on that."

"So what do you suggest?"

Reaching towards the back seat, Ianto snagged his satchel and tugged it into the front. Fishing out the map of Wales he'd brought with him and a pen he drew a jagged line across it, resting on the steering wheel for support.

"This is the Rift." He traced the line with his pen, bracketing off a smaller section in the middle. "Before the Rift opened last year this was its farthest extent. This is now how far it reaches."

"And?"

"The TARDIS doesn't need Cardiff does it?"

"Oh... No! That is brilliant! Fantastic!" He grabbed the pen, his sandwich falling to the floor. Had it been his car Ianto might have worried, or said something, but he'd sold his car – and the one he'd traded it for – and was now driving a messy little Focus with scuff marks on the passenger door. He didn't really care about the carpet. "What's this place?"

"Talybont Reservoir, it's in the Breacon Beacons."

"This is the farthest reach?" The thick marker was tapping against the map, erasing Abersoch and Pwllhelli. Ianto assumed Llanbedrog was the next to go.

"As far as I'm aware, yes."

"If we refuel there then there's every chance we'll seal that part of the Rift! Brilliant!"

Ianto breathed a sigh of relief: he'd been hoping for that.

"Of course," the Doctor blithely continued, "we could always blow the place up." Spotting Ianto's alarmed expression he grinned, "Not to worry though! We'll figure something out!"

"Right."

The Doctor peered curiously at Ianto, nudging into his personal space. "Cheer up Ianto Jones! We're going to a *reservoir*!"

Ianto spluttered on his coffee, "You're excited by that?"

"Oh yes! Aren't many planets with reservoirs! Do you think it'll be big?"

Dimly a memory stirred, the ghost of a brochure fluttering up from the recesses of his mind. "I believe it's the largest Stillwater reservoir in the Breacon Beacons. I guess that's something."

The Doctor beamed. "You are a mine of information!"

"I work in a Tourist Office and am the Archivist at Torchwood. I know everything."

Laughing at Ianto's self assuredness a challenging glint entered the Doctor's eye. Flicking the lever on his seat, he reclined back and propped his feet on the dashboard. "So, what are the Breacon Beacons like?" he asked, rolling the 'r' so it turned into a "brrrr".

"Pretty." The Doctor smiled. "Lots of rolling green hills with grazing sheep and scattered villages built of real Welsh stone." He sounded like something out of a brochure. "And cannibals."

The Doctor blinked. "I'm sorry...Did you just say cannibals?"

Saturday, Day 194, 02.24GMT

Latitude: 51° 31' 6" N

Longitude: 1° 43' 4" W

Ianto pulled off the M4 at Swindon. The route he'd devised would add an extra hour to their journey, but it was the least obvious route to Talybont – not that they'd know where he was heading. They'd be watching the M4 near Cardiff, assuming he'd head back to the Hub and familiar territory.

In the passenger seat the Doctor was flicking through the car manual he'd found in the glove-box. Every so often he'd declare something "Brilliant!" or laugh as if he'd just opened *The Times* to see Gerald Scarfe's latest work. Some might have found it annoying, or even demanded to know just what was so funny, but Ianto was quite happy that the Doctor was entertained.

Or he was until the Doctor had started doing *that*.

Sticking his finger into his mouth to wet it, the Doctor would pull it out with a loud 'pop' before turning the page.

Not only was it *incredibly* aggravating, Ianto couldn't imagine that it was particularly hygienic.

Out of the corner of his eye, Ianto saw the finger rise again.

"Could you please stop that?" he implored.

The finger was released with a wet sound that reminded Ianto of Jack. "Doing what?" the Doctor asked innocently.

Ianto gripped the steering wheel tighter. "Firstly, it's rude to answer a question with a question and secondly: that!" he waved his hand in the direction of the car manual. "Licking your finger like that!"

"Sorry."

He didn't sound sorry.

"Soooo.... Ianto Jones!"

Ianto had a feeling that whatever was coming, he'd prefer the finger thing. "Yes?"

"I'm curious," the Doctor shifted round in his seat, facing Ianto, "about you. Why would you work for Torchwood? You seem intelligent – well, not as smart as me but then no one is – and I can't understand why you'd go back to them after Canary Wharf. And I understand everything!"

"I had my reasons."

"Jack?" Ianto didn't need to look at the Doctor to see the knowing grin he had to be wearing.

"No, I had to persuade him to hire me."

The Doctor laughed. "I bet it didn't take too much persuasion."

“No, just showed him Myfanwy and helped him catch her. That seemed enough to get me the job.” A small smile played on Ianto’s lips as he fondly remembered rolling around on the warehouse floor, dodging a drugged prehistoric bird.

“Myfanwy? Who’s that then?”

Ianto’s smile softened. He missed Myfanwy. “Our pterodactyl.”

Claiming her as theirs – and by ‘Our’ he had meant to mean Torchwood – gave him a squiggly feeling in his stomach. Myfanwy was his pet. His and Jack’s. It was as if, in catching her, they’d proved worthy of looking after her. They were the only people she approached, listened to or condescended to be fed by. Never mind prehistoric bird, Ianto was convinced there was some cat in her too. She could be irritatingly aloof when the mood took.

“A pterodactyl!” the Doctor seemed excited.

“Well, I think she’s really a pteranodon, but I’m no expert.”

The Doctor’s eyes were saucer wide and his fingers were twitching. “A real live dinosaur?”

Ianto nodded. “Complete with wings and a foot long beak.”

“Blimey!”

Despite the excitement he seemed to feel over Myfanwy, the Doctor hadn’t been distracted from his questioning. “So why did you have to persuade Jack to hire you? I mean, well... you are his type... We’ve already discussed *that* so what I want to know is why you – after all you saw there – wanted to go back?”

On the trip to London, Ianto had assumed he’d get there, free the Doctor and watch as the alien’s little blue box winked out of existence. He’d even entertained the vengeful notion of the Doctor piloting into a Sun even though he hadn’t wanted the Doctor harmed. It was how he stayed sane, contemplating scenarios where those who’d hurt him got their karmic retribution.

As a child, when Kai Davies had called him a fag because his Tad was a tailor, Ianto had imagined him falling from the school swing and landing in the biggest puddle. At the time it had seemed like a just punishment.

When Jack and the team had shot the Cyberman that had once been Lisa, Ianto imagined scenarios where they were hostages and he could save them and chose not to. It had got him through the anger of grief.

He’d never imagined that he might have to discuss Canary Wharf with the Doctor. Or that they’d share a pack of *Starburst*.

“My girlfriend – Lisa – she was Torchwood...”

He began the story slowly, describing how they met and detailing their first few dates. He even told the Doctor of how he’d booked a weekend away for the two of them at the first campsite they’d ever visited together for the weekend after Canary Wharf. He’d been planning on proposing.

"...It was only a small diamond, and the band was plain. White gold, not yellow – she didn't like yellow, thought it was cheap. She was a silver girl but you can't have silver for an engagement ring..."

He'd thrown the ring into the Bay the same day Owen completed her autopsy.

Ianto spared the Doctor details of what happened in Torchwood Tower that afternoon, the man had been there after all – he knew how horrific it had been – choosing instead to describe how hard it had been to take apart the Converter and transport it to Cardiff, reassembling it in the Hub when the team were missing.

He spoke of months of loneliness and nightmares, waking screaming himself hoarse and seeing blood splattered up the walls of his white bedroom. Morphine, anticonvulsants, antidepressants and benzodiazepine taught him the language of syringes and injections. Blood stained every suit he owned, tears every shirt and he still had cufflinks that had been scratched beyond repair by having to hold Lisa down on her bad days. Ianto couldn't help but speak of the hours of gruelling labour that pushed his body beyond its limits: making his muscles scream and filling his bones with molten lead until he just had to curl up in his cold lonely bed.

There was guilt, lashings of it served with a side of confusion as he betrayed Jack by keeping Lisa and Lisa by liking Jack.

"...He'd smile or tell a joke and I couldn't help it. He's like that. But then, at night, I'd go down to Lisa and read to her – it soothed her she said – and she'd tell me she loved me and...Oh God... I hated myself..."

And the dreams that came at night, telling him that everything was alright and that Canary Wharf had been the nightmare. Dreams that sparkled like Swarovski crystals but, in the light of day, proved as substantial as smoke.

And finally he told the Doctor of respiratory failure and multiple bullets, delivered without mercy or remorse and the blood soaked floor of the Hub.

"...It wasn't her. I knew that when she killed Annie. Annie didn't deserve that. Wasn't her fault she had to deliver to Torchwood. And Jack, he...he made me ring the pizza place and complain that our order hadn't arrived. I hated him..."

By the time he'd finished, his voice hollow and hoarse there was a dark look in the Doctor's eyes.

"I know, it was foolish and I know it was dangerous but I've had plenty of time to think about it. For four weeks I did nothing but think about how wrong it all went and all I can think is: *she was human*. She might have been partially converted and living in one of those units, but until Dr. Tanizaki messed with her life support systems she was still Lisa. After that, well, I think she died when he did that."

"Jack forgave this?" the Doctor asked incredulously.

Ianto shook his head and laughed bitterly. His hands had curled into claws and he could feel his nails digging into the hard plastic of the steering wheel and the tears burning in his eyes. He wasn't going to cry. "Oh, he was going to shoot me. But later, after, when I was cleaning the blood off the floor and putting the bodies away, he said...he said: 'You conned the con-man. Not many could do that.' He never told me what he meant by it, he doesn't really speak about himself, but I think – *I think* – he was slightly *proud* of me."

“Proud?”

“Yeah. Don’t know why, but there was this look he gave me – after – and occasionally he would just watch me with something other than suspicion in his eyes.” He turned briefly to the Doctor. “Does that make sense?”

Slowly the Doctor nodded. “In a way.”

“You disapprove.”

The Doctor sighed. “We’ve all done terrible things in our lives. We’ve all made mistakes. I’d be a hypocrite if I condemned you now.”

“Why?” Ianto’s voice was bitter. For some perverse reason he *wanted* the Doctor to condemn him.

Fire, vicious and solemn – the reflection of a far off place – burning in his eyes, the Doctor stared at Ianto. “I destroyed my own planet. All my people, gone, just like that. No more Time Lords to travel the Universe. I did it to end a war...I did it because it was the *right* thing to do.” He paused, his fingers digging cruelly into his thighs and tears welling in his eyes. He could still hear the screams as Arcadia burned and the sight of the Nightmare Child as it swallowed all those ships. “But, I still felt vindicated. I relished watching the Daleks burn. I *enjoyed* it. In the end, it didn’t matter that I’d stopped the war and saved the Universe. I’d destroyed my people. I just wish I’d had as noble a reason as doing it for love.”

Ianto swerved the car. He couldn’t breath. He felt hollowed out and scalded with shame. All he’d wanted was for someone – *Jack* – to understand why he’d tried to save Lisa. But no one had. No one had cared.

Except the Doctor.

He released his seat-belt, his fingers thick and heavy and scrabbled with the door handle. Out, out out out.

He needed air.

Shivering at the side of the road, the taste of bile in his throat and tears in his eyes, Ianto finally released the ghost of Canary Wharf.

And it was the Doctor, his once supposed enemy, holding him.

Saturday, Day 194, 03.32 GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

Alone in his office, CCTV cameras dutifully tuned into the various groups of Torchwood and UNIT scattered around his Hub, Jack devotedly trawled through restaurant reviews.

Saturday, Day 194, 02.44 GMT
Latitude: 51° 43' 1" N
Longitude: 1° 56' 2" W

The Doctor, thoughtfully, wrapped the coat he’d found in the car around Ianto before sitting down next to him on the dew-damp grass. It was too early for the Sun to be up but there was a distinctive

lightening of the horizon that made the night sky seem much darker. Dropping down next to the emotionally exhausted man, he folded his legs into the Lotus Position – or the Squatting Cow as it was known on Terrang, and he had no idea why, not even Terrangian Cows could bend their knees like that – he scrubbed at his face.

lanto was broken.

Maybe not entirely, certainly not as badly as he or the Master, but he was still being held together by little more than plasters. Torchwood destroyed everything, *he* destroyed everything.

He hadn't wanted to admit it earlier but he had the niggling suspicion that lanto was right. And he hated it when other people worked things out before he did. But it didn't make lanto any less right. He'd created Torchwood, not knowingly and certainly not willingly, but Cause and Effect. He rushed in and saved the day, changing the lives of the people he met – mostly for the better because they were still alive when he left and that hadn't been a guarantee before he arrived – but, as long as he and his Companion left safely, he wasn't too bothered about what he left behind. He never went back.

You can't go back.

And he never had to go back. He could go forwards, sidewise, clock-wise, anti-clockwise and backwards; why would he want to go back? Going back meant interfering with his own Timeline and causing ripples to spread. Time Ripples were not nice things, best seen at a distance – like between the pages of a book – and never confronted head on. They got testy.

But he still left. He left others to clean up after him and go on with their lives as best they could after the storm had blown over. Selfishly, because he couldn't ever forget the things he'd seen or done, he only chose to remember the brilliant parts: the moments of genius and courage, the vibrancy of life burning against the black of danger and the sheer tingle of adrenaline when everything went wrong.

He couldn't understand it though. lanto Jones, of all the beings in creation, actually had a valid reason to hate the Doctor. He wasn't an arrogant child like the rest of Torchwood, hiding behind their Charter. He thought things through, seeing the world as it truly was, not as others said it should be. He was intelligent, scarily so, and he used that gift wisely and selflessly. In many ways, he reminded the Doctor of himself: passionate, born to run wild but tamed by responsibility. And he had the Darkness. He was teetering on the edge of the abyss, just as the Doctor had been. But whilst the Doctor had found Rose, his wonderful Rose Tyler, and she'd pulled him back from the brink, lanto was walking the tightrope alone.

So why had lanto Jones come to his rescue?

Curling his arm around the shivering man he asked that very question.

lanto snorted through the remains of his tears. "For Jack."

"Because he couldn't?"

lanto shook his head. "I knew Jack was immortal before the team found out. I thought he couldn't die because there were pictures of him in the nineteenth century and wage slips..." He turned soulful blue eyes on the Doctor. "I didn't realise he could die. That he did die."

The Doctor nodded. Another mistake.

“When he left with you I buried myself in work. It was easier than thinking about what had happened. Why he’d left. The others looked for him, searched for his phone, his Vortex Manipulator and I hid myself in the Archives. It only made things worse though.”

The Doctor frowned in confusion and opened his mouth to ask how, but Ianto pre-empted him. “The Archives have been neglected since the turn of the century. Jack assures me he means this century when he says that but I’m not sure I believe him. They need sorting so I did. I had the time. I read everything, catalogued every artefact, filed every scrap of paper and can safely say that there isn’t anything in that Archive I don’t know about.”

“Do you know how Jack joined Torchwood?”

The Doctor quickly scanned through his memories. Jack had sheepishly admitted he was Torchwood when there was no other option left to them. But he’d never mentioned how he joined. “Now that you mention it, our dear Captain wasn’t very forthcoming with the details. He didn’t even tell me about *you*.”

Why would he? Ianto thought bitterly, the Doctor’s casual words hurting more than he’d thought possible. He hadn’t been anything more than brief distraction for the lonely man; ease and familiarity after a long day. He wasn’t even sure he was more now, despite Jack promises and smiles.

And that relationship wouldn’t have been so bad if he could guarantee that he wouldn’t truly fall in love with Captain Jack Harkness; then the offer of casual sex where and when ever would be ideal. It wasn’t as if working at Torchwood was conducive to dating. But he couldn’t guarantee that he wouldn’t fall for Jack. Because, no matter how much the man hurt him, all he had to do was smile and Ianto could feel his heart swell.

And it would only get worse.

“Which is criminal if you ask me!” the Doctor carelessly continued. “If I had someone like you – I’d be bragging to all and sundry. Have you met Ianto? Brilliant he is!”

The Doctor’s smile was infectious and Ianto felt his spirits lift. Perhaps the Doctor had never been his enemy. Perhaps it was his relationship with Jack that was wrong.

“That’s very kind of you.”

The Doctor airily waved a hand, “Not at all! I only tell the truth! Fascinating thing it is. People are willing to believe any lie you tell them, but they don’t like the truth. Nasty stuff it is.”

Ianto shook his head, a smile curving his lips. “Mad. Quite mad, sir.”

“Oooh, sir. I like that. Sir.” He nudged Ianto with his shoulder. “I like being a Sir. Queen Victoria knighted me you know? Well of course you do! Know everything you do! Sir Doctor of TARDIS: it has quite the ring to it though doesn’t it?” he asked with a happy sigh.

“It does indeed, sir.” The Doctor chuckled softly. Ianto didn’t know what possessed him to call the Doctor that but he figured the man deserved it. If Jack did, then the Doctor more than did.

“Do you call Jack sir?”

“He is my boss.”

“Does he make you salute?” Ianto cracked up. “No, that’s his thing really. Always saluting me he is! And how long was he a soldier for anyway?”

“World Wars One and Two, so that’s ten years give or take,” Ianto calculated. “I don’t know if he served during peacetime. But I imagine Torchwood kept him more than busy.”

“Well, yes, of course. How did he join them then?”

Ianto pulled the coat tighter round him. People said that it got darker before dawn; they never mentioned how bloody cold it could get. “He was apprehended by two agents in 1899 after a declaring to anyone who’d listen that he was waiting for ‘the right kind of Doctor’. Naturally, words like that caught Torchwood’s attention. They caught up with him and tried to find out what he knew about you.”

“What did he tell them?”

“Nothing.” Ianto shrugged. “Or at least nothing was noted in their reports. Alice Guppy and Emily Holroyd were their names, although Jack likes to call them the Torchwood Lesbians. He didn’t like them very much.”

The Doctor scratched at his hair. “Why did they employ him though? If he didn’t know anything about me, what use was he to them?”

“They found out he couldn’t die.”

A heavy silence settled over them like a thick blanket.

“There’s a list, written by Emily I think, listing all the ways they killed him. Electrocution, exsanguination, suffocation, poisoning... there are hundreds of them, written in tiny little letters like a shopping list. I think they started out torturing him for information on you and just escalated – they became fascinated by killing him and forgot about you.”

“Oh Sweet Rasillion, *no*.”

Ianto turned to the Doctor to see the tears in his eyes. He was startled to feel them in his own. “I’m sorry Doctor.”

“I didn’t...You have to understand, Jack...for me, Jack is wrong and I don’t mean that how it sounds.” His eyes implored Ianto to understand. “He’s a fact, a fixed point on the timeline and it’s hard to even be near him. I...when Rose brought him back, I didn’t know. I suspected but I was in the middle of regenerating and she was unconscious and I’d just watched an entire space station get wiped out.”

Ianto wound his fingers through the Doctor’s.

“I didn’t leave him to hurt him. I promise.”

“I believe you. But I couldn’t let Jack come to get you. Torchwood has forgotten he’s immortal and I couldn’t let them be reminded.” He squeezed the Doctor’s hand, noticing that his skin was slightly cooler than Ianto’s. “He’d do anything for you, Doctor – and I have to admit that I hated you because of it – he’d willingly die to keep you safe. If they did all of that to him then, can you imagine what they’d do to him now? He’s pissed off everyone in Torchwood over the years; they think he’s a maverick, a loose cannon. Not worthy of the prestige of Torchwood.”

“If they found out he was immortal he’d be thrown into the cell next to yours and then what would happen to Cardiff? The rest of us would be retconned back to puberty or worse, leaving the Rift in the hands of the megalomaniacal morons in London or the Cardiff Police and I’m not sure who’d destroy the planet faster.

He paused for breath and his shoulders slumped. “I’m sorry Doctor, I just couldn’t risk it.”

The Doctor slung his arm around Ianto’s shoulders. “No. You couldn’t.”

Saturday, Day 194, 04.31 GMT

Latitude: 51° 52’ 3” N

Longitude: 3° 18’ 5” W

The sun was just over the horizon when the Focus arrived at Talybont Reservoir. Unsurprisingly, it wasn’t hard to find a parking spot as there was no-one around to witness their arrival so he pulled into one of the little lay-bys and killed the engine. He got out of the car – gesturing for the Doctor to do the same – and took a deep lungful of fresh Welsh air. There was nothing quite like the taste of Wales on his tongue: the fresh green of grass, the sweetness of clear water and the tang of lanolin from the sheep.

Pulling out his PDA – his own personal one, bought from PC World in Cardiff on Wednesday – Ianto quickly pulled up the Rift Programme he’d downloaded.

He and Tosh had designed it whilst Jack was away and it had been another welcome escape from lonely nights and Owen’s sharp tongue. Basing it on the original system, they didn’t have to modify it much, just a few refinements really. Rift Prediction was still in early testing but they had worked out how to combine Rift activity and the GPS mapping to make locating activity easier. Where before they’d been able to narrow it down to a general vicinity, now they could pinpoint the exact location of Rift anomalies. They’d even managed to integrate the city’s CCTV system so they could get up to the minute images.

Ianto had mourned its loss once the project was complete – nothing left to keep him from his thoughts – but Tosh had been ecstatic. As had Jack once he’d returned.

According to the map, their best chance of strong Rift energy was across the dam that spanned the Reservoir. Grabbing his bag, making sure the remote for the TARDIS was still in it, and grabbing the rest of their purchases from the petrol station, Ianto locked the car.

He wouldn’t be coming back for it.

Once the Doctor was safely off world Ianto would contact Jack. There was always the chance that Torchwood would catch up with him but Ianto had been very thorough with his research.

Blackmail might be an ugly word but it was a bloody useful one.

“Ready?”

The Doctor was busy munching a pack of Prawn Cocktail crisps. He tried the Cajun Squirrel earlier and had been rather unimpressed and had returned to the classics. He nodded, balled up the foil packet and stuffed it in his pocket and wiped his greasy fingers on his suit jacket. Ianto winced. That had been a nice suit – Ianto wouldn’t have bought anything less – before the sticky fingers.

“We going?” There was a barely concealed energy in the Doctor, rather like a toddler on its walking-reins, and Ianto suspected that once given his head, the Doctor would be off.

“Yup. I think that hill,” he pointed across the reservoir, “is our best bet.”

The Doctor licked his finger, and for a brief moment Ianto thought he was going to give himself a post-Prawn Cocktail tongue bath, before sticking it up into the wind.

He brought it down and popped it back into his mouth. “Oooh...fizzy!”

Ianto blinked. “I’m sorry?”

“Don’t be!” He offered Ianto a blinding grin. “Tastes like sherbet!”

“What does?” The Doctor’s smile just grew. “The Rift?”

“Yep! Come on Ianto Jones! Allons-y! Hmm...Allons-y Ianto!” He wrinkled his nose. “Not as good as ‘allons-y Alonso’ but not bad!”

With that he bounced off towards the dam. Ianto sighed, slung his bag over his shoulder and followed at a pace more befitting of a man who’d spent the last three days running off nervous energy and the last 27 hours awake.

He was looking forward to dropping the car-keys off the dam.

Saturday, Day 194, 04.32 GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

Tosh, glasses perched on her nose, ran yet another scan for Ianto’s phone. She knew it was pointless, Ianto was smarter than that, but she couldn’t just sit there.

Gwen was trying to police their unwelcome guests. Jack was a brewing storm lurking ominously in his office, so they were avoiding him at all costs and Owen was performing a particularly repellent autopsy and revelling in the role of mad scientist, waving organs in jars under the nose of anyone who dared to brave the autopsy bay, so they were giving him a wide berth. UNIT seemed particularly squeamish for soldiers. So that left Gwen to look after their *guests* and make sure that none of them fell prey to the weirdness of the Hub, especially as Myfanwy was particularly twitchy.

The Archive alarm blared and a little pop-up sprung to life on her screen. He was a determined little pest, Tosh thought grabbing a stun gun, and she was going to make sure that the little Torchwood rat didn’t get into Ianto’s archives.

Saturday, Day 194, 04.56 GMT
Latitude: 51° 52' 2" N
Longitude: 3° 17' 7" W

Barely winded they reached the top of the hill, and spent a moment enjoying the panorama.

“Well?”

lanto smiled indulgently before producing the little remote with a flourish. This one had a range of 200 miles and was used for the big jobs. A Harwood's lorry just didn't cut it when a fully functional Ark needed transporting.

The Doctor grabbed it, a wistful look in his eyes, and lanto wondered just how much he'd missed his TARDIS. Living in that ship and then being stripped of it would be like losing a friend, he imagined. Or maybe a limb, maybe that was a fairer comparison. She – and the Doctor had given him the distinct impression that it was a she – was an essential part of the Doctor's life. His Companions were ephemeral and insubstantial, but his TARDIS was the one thing in the fluctuating Universe the Doctor could rely on. Torchwood taking it from him was cruel.

His thumb rubbed a soft circle round the shiny button but he didn't press it.

"They'll be tracking her."

"I know."

"They'll come here."

lanto covered the Doctor's hand with his own. He was fully aware of the dangers.

lanto pressed the button.

For a moment there was nothing more than soft singing of birds and the distant bleat of a lone sheep and then a very distinctive cyclic wheezing groan filled the silence and the TARDIS materialised before them.

The Doctor ran to his ship, delight written all across his face, and her doors flung themselves open in welcome and lanto couldn't help the grin that broke over his face.

He'd done it.

Saturday, Day 194, 04.57GMT
Latitude: 51° 30' 2" N
Longitude: 0° 0' 2" E

Dr Graham was once again arming the photon-gun, now at its highest possible setting, determined to break through its obstinate wooden doors if it was the last thing he did. He gave one of his many technicians, a young man with sandy hair, the nod and pulled his safety goggles down.

The red LED countdown began.

3...2...

The TARDIS vanished.

Saturday, Day 194, 04.58 GMT
Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N
Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

The moment the TARDIS vanished from London the pagers the operatives were carrying went crazy, but the Torchwood Three team were the first out of the door, Tosh routing the co-ordinates to her mobile

station as she ran to the garage. Despite the fact that Jack knew UNIT could scramble a helicopter within minutes, there was always a chance that the Doctor and Ianto were somewhere the terrain was unsuitable for a landing and Jack needed to be there to make sure they were safe.

“Well?” he snapped, throwing himself into the car and fastening his seatbelt.

The engine revved.

“Talybont Reservoir,” Tosh replied, working away. She hadn’t had a chance to do her own belt up. “I’m sending the co-ordinates to the Sat-Nav.”

Jack bounced his fingers on the steering wheel, watching the garage door crawl open, the car revving as his foot tapped on and off the accelerator.

“Shit,” Gwen breathed, looking at the Sat-Nav. “They’re in the Beacons.”

“Bloody hell!”

The SUV roared to life and the car sped away from the underground lot, tires squealing on the tarmac. Jack didn’t care about discretion. The blue lights were lit on the dashboard and Tosh was clearing their way. The timing on Sat-Nav read one hour and four minutes but Jack knew that he could do it in forty.

He had to.

“Tosh,” he barked, putting more pressure on the already stretched technician. “Get me through to Martha Jones, UNIT.”

“Who’s she Jack?” Gwen asked, clinging to the handrail as the SUV tore through Cardiff.

He grinned briefly at her, “An old friend.”

Jack’s face settled back into an impassive mask. They had the advantage over Torchwood London – they were on home turf and London had to scramble out of the Hub and to their van. So, they had a head start. But it was only a small one.

The phone rang.

“Dr. Jones.” The professional, yet sleepy, voice filled the car’s speakers.

“Martha Jones, voice of a nightingale-“

“Jack!”

“-and just as pretty,” he leered at his team. It didn’t carry; his eyes were just too serious for flirting.

“How are you?”

“Stressed.”

“Anything I can do?” she sounded genuinely concerned, and knowing Martha she probably was. She wasn’t a doctor for the money or the glory – or even the challenge like Owen was – but because she truly wanted to help people.

“Give me the Doctor’s number.” It wasn’t a request and he couldn’t say please.

There was an ominous pause and Jack knew she was biting her lip. For moments all that could be heard was his own heartbeat, too loud to his ears, and Tosh’s fingers clacking away on her keyboard.

“I know you have it,” he prodded, gripping the steering wheel, the sweat on his palms making the leather slick.

“I can’t,” she whispered, sounding torn.

“Sure you can,” he cajoled, desperate not to let either Ianto, or the Doctor, slip through his fingers.

He loved them both too much.

“Jack...”

“Jack!”

He growled. “Not now Tosh.” His voice smoothed out, “Come on Martha, it’s me!”

“Jack!”

He glared at Tosh through the mirror but, defiantly, she met and held his gaze.

“You need to hear this.”

Jack blew out a frustrated breath and beeped aggressively at a lorry driver. He got a, deserved, two finger salute for his fit of pique.

“Martha,” he snapped, not caring anymore about sucking-up to her. She was going to give him that number eventually. “Do not hang up.”

At his nod Tosh quickly overrode the phone. There was a moment of static before the line cleared.

“...How will we know which he is – I’ve never seen the Doctor.” The voice was young, a distinct Midlands accent colouring his words.

“Torchwood sent a photo. Recent. He’s probably still wearing the same clothes.”

Jack frowned.

There was a snort. *“I can’t believe Torchwood is letting us take one of their own.”*

The silence in the SUV turned deathly.

“It’s a deal. Get Jones and they’ll let us have the Doctor.”

“And he’ll go free?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s good.” The young man sounded relieved that the Doctor would go free. *“Why’d they want Jones?”*

Jack wanted to know that himself.

“Somat about a Cyberman.”

The car screeched to a halt as Jack hit the brakes. His face was distinctly ashen, reflecting the shock of his team and he wasn't quite sure that his heart hadn't stopped. A black maw had opened up in his chest and he could remember, very clearly, how easy it was to kill a man. Snuff out his life and send him hurtling into oblivion. He didn't dare look at Owen, sure that he'd do something he'd regret. The steering wheel creaked under his grip and he could dimly hear the honking of horns over the roaring of blood in his ears.

“Jack?” Gwen whispered, but Jack reacted as if her voice had been the crack of a gun.

“Martha!”

The phone clicked back on.

“Martha! I need that number! Now!”

Saturday, Day 194, 05.06 GMT
Latitude: 51° 43' 6" N
Longitude: 2° 51' 4" W

UNIT's sleek black HH-60PaveHawk helicopter cut through the early morning skies. It was like a shark, moving with swift and deadly precision towards its target.

Saturday, Day 194, 05.26 GMT
Latitude: 51° 52' 2" N
Longitude: 3° 17' 7" W

The phone rang.

Given that the Doctor was inside a Police Call Box it shouldn't have been all that surprising. However, travelling in the Vortex wasn't all that conducive to receiving signal even on Martha's phone, which was the one currently jingling merrily.

“Hello?” the Doctor asked curiously, the identity of the caller withheld.

“Doctor?”

“Captain?”

“Yes!” The jubilation in Jack Harkness' voice that brought a smile to the Doctor's face.

“And what can I do for the Captain, Captain?”

“Is Ianto there Doctor?”

“Oh Ianto Jones! He's *marvellous* Jack! Where on earth did you find him?”

“In the woods.” There wasn't even the faintest hint of irony in Jack's voice, but the Doctor laughed anyway.

“Why can’t I find anyone like that in the woods? Why do I always have to be in end of the world situations to find someone?”

“If it helps I was on the verge of being torn apart by a rapid alien when we first met.”

“Really? Come to think of it, it doesn’t surprise me! You should have seen him Jack – he just marched right into Torchwood and got me out! He was *brilliant!* And none of them realised he was doing it! I didn’t realise – and it takes a lot to get past me! Oh he was good, all official in his dark suit and serious face but underneath it all...Well! He’s just-”

“Doctor! Shut up!”

“Excuse me?” the Doctor’s eyebrows had risen to join his hairline.

“You’re distracting me! Bad Doctor!”

“I’m...sorry?”

“Is Ianto there Doctor?”

“No, well yes...He’s sat outside.”

“Good.” The relief in Jack’s voice was palpable..

“Jack – what’s-“

“Doctor! I think the cavalry’s arrived!”

“Got to go Jack!” The Doctor hung the phone up with a flourish, enjoying the way the little red button ended conversations. He dropped it onto the console where it quickly became lost in detritus littered about and ran out to join Ianto.

Saturday, Day 194, 05.29 GMT

Latitude: 51° 52’ 2” N

Longitude: 3° 17’ 7” W

Sitting with his back to the TARDIS, Ianto idly munched the last cheese and pickle sandwich whilst the Doctor fiddled with his repairs inside. The door was open, swinging slightly in the breeze, and every so often he heard a muffled curse in a language he didn’t know. He hadn’t gone inside himself, hadn’t dared set a foot over the threshold of the alien ship – not because he didn’t trust the Doctor but because he didn’t trust himself. He wasn’t sure that he’d be able to walk back to the ‘normalcy’ of Torchwood if he experienced that wonderful ship.

He’d already felt her, singing in his head wrapping him up in downy soft warmth, and it was very tempting to give in.

He had responsibilities though, people who relied on him and leaning against the wooden blue hull was all he’d allow himself.

Ianto hadn’t been back to the Beacons since Brynblaid. Looking out on the scenery, light tripping over the ripples of the reservoir and lazy green hills he couldn’t understand why. It was beautiful, in the true

sense of the word. It pleased all of his senses, allowed him to wallow in the luxury of space and fresh air. He'd never thought himself a coward, but why else would he have stayed away?

Gently, like a sun breaking through a cloud, realisation dawned.

The problems in his life; the anger and loneliness and soul-numbing fear, were all his own. No one else was responsible for them. Canary Wharf and Brynblaidd had been out of his control, but his reactions weren't. He'd hung on to the nightmares and grief, wrapping them round him like a Kevlar blanket to keep the world out. He'd cultivated his anger at Jack, using his abrupt departure as an excuse even though Jack had never made any promises. Instead, his departure had torn open the wounds of Lisa's death and rather than deal with that, he'd blamed Jack.

Their relationship had been easy, one of smiles and flirtations and truly mind-blowing sex. It wasn't Jack's problem that he had become a part of Ianto's heart without his acquiescence or knowledge. Nor was it his problem that Ianto had had a real relationship, a real love, with Lisa and in comparison to that he'd found their relationship something empty and meaningless.

Perhaps he'd been too harsh on Jack. Watching the Doctor hop about in excitement because of a packet of *Skittles* or something equally as mundane, just illustrated how apart from the world he was. He was excused by virtue of being extra terrestrial, but Ianto thought that part of the problem was also Time. The Doctor could appreciate everything or nothing because he had all the time in the world to do so; the pleasure he'd derived from looking at the car manual was testament to that. Jack was much the same; unlike the Doctor though, he had even more time. He didn't have to value things now because chances were that he'd find himself in the same situation years down the line.

Ianto though only had a small amount of time, mere grains of it compared to the beach that was Jack's life. He had to experience everything *now* and he wanted some of those experiences to be with Jack. It was selfish now he thought about it, but he still wanted it.

He could change things, Jack didn't own him. He could walk away from Jack and their relationship and find someone new. Find someone who only had one lifetime to live and be happy with them. It would be hard, Torchwood and normal life were oil and water, but Gwen managed it. How he wasn't sure – she seemed to neglect Rhys something shocking – but Ianto was sure he could lead a dual life much more successfully. He had before. No-one had known a thing about Lisa until that night.

He could have what he wanted: someone to share the small things with. The problem was...he *wanted* Jack.

A whopping noise interrupted his musings.

Looking up and out he spotted the dark shadow of a helicopter on the horizon.

"Doctor! I think the cavalry's arrived!"

Saturday, Day 194, 05.30 GMT

Latitude: 51° 45' 3" N

Longitude: 3° 22' 0" W

The dial tone sounded like a funeral dirge in the silence of the SUV but not before they heard Ianto's voice.

“Shit!”

Owen clung to the door handle, as Jack took the tight curves at a breakneck speed, desperately trying to stop himself from sliding into Tosh. First, he was going to make sure that neither UNIT nor Torchwood got hold of Ianto. Then he was going to *kill* him.

The car swung to the side again, the right hand wheels lifting off the road.

There was every possibility that he might throw up before they got there though.

Saturday, Day 194, 05.34 GMT
Latitude: 51° 52' 2" N
Longitude: 3° 17' 7" W

By the time the Doctor's trainers had hit the grass the helicopter was close enough to see the UNIT insignia on the black paint. Aesthetically, it was more pleasing than Torchwood's hexagon 'T', but Ianto had to roll his eyes at the pretension.

“It's UNIT,” the Doctor confirmed, looking quite happy. He liked UNIT – always had – even though they saluted far too much. “I could probably get them to give you a lift home.”

Melancholy suffused the Doctor's words. He'd hoped to offer Ianto a quick trip in the TARDIS by way of a thank-you before taking him back to Cardiff. With UNIT here the Doctor lost any excuse to tempt the young man on board. Ianto would have made a wonderful Companion.

Rappelling ropes of official looking black nylon dropped from the sides of the craft hovering above them and six men slid down.

Seeing the fully armed UNIT officers, the Doctor felt the fine hair on the back of his neck stand on end. He'd much preferred his eighth incarnation – his long hair meant that he didn't get that disturbing sensation.

“Ianto...” There was the snapping of assault rifles and the Doctor and Ianto found themselves being held at gunpoint. “I have a bad feeling about this.”

Saturday, Day 194, 05.34 GMT
Latitude: 51° 50' 7" N
Longitude: 3° 20' 5" W

They saw the helicopter overtake them and Jack's foot was flat on the floor. He'd never driven so fast in his life, nor been so scared. At times like this he cursed the Doctor for disabling his wrist-strap.

He heard the clicks as his team readied their own weapons, not that they had any hope of surviving a fire-fight with UNIT. If they could just get there, he'd have a chance. Throw his weight around with UNIT and arrest Ianto himself. It'd be easy to convince them that he was Cardiff's problem and Jack could handle him. After all, these were simple soldiers and he was head of Torchwood Three.

“Jack,” Gwen started, sympathy laced through every word. He grit his teeth.

“Not now Gwen.” He didn't want any hollow assurances that things were going to be fine.

He just needed to get there.

Saturday, Day 194, 05.37 GMT
Latitude: 51° 52' 2" N
Longitude: 3° 17' 7" W

There was a tense silence.

"Hello!" The Doctor stuffed his hands in his pockets and surreptitiously moved so that he was stood in front of Ianto.

One of the men moved out of his assault position, straightening and raising his arm as if to— "Don't salute," the Doctor ordered. The man's arm dropped.

"Doctor, Captain Egan."

"What can we do for you Captain?" the Doctor asked convivially.

"Nothing sir, you are free to go."

The Doctor smiled and nodded. "And you nice chaps came to see us off! Isn't that nice of them Ianto?"

Ianto nodded, not quite sure what was happening but very aware that they were in a precarious position. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a black speck hurtling up the road. *Jack*. He'd know that driving style anywhere.

Something was wrong.

Egan coughed gruffly. "You are free to go sir, but I am under strict instruction to take Ianto Jones into custody."

Ianto felt his stomach drop.

"Oh, I don't think so." The Doctor didn't seem a bit concerned, as he suddenly realised what Jack had been calling him about.

The man could have said something.

"Sir, we're under orders."

"I don't care. You see, this man has just saved my life – at great risk to his own – so you aren't going to arrest him. I'd be very upset if you did."

For a moment, Ianto thought it had worked; that the Doctor's mild manner had talked the soldiers down. Egan's shoulders slumped and the other men shifted uncomfortably.

"I'm sorry sir," Egan had a defiant glint in his eye, "I have my orders."

The Doctor's eyes narrowed. He'd known UNIT for years – trusted them enough to reveal who he was and what he did and respected them enough to join them in his second incarnation. He'd even gotten Martha a job there, although she really had merited the position and he'd done little more than pass on her name. He knew that they were passionate in their defence of Earth, and more honourable about it than Torchwood.

This was unexpected and very unwelcome.

“Doctor,” Ianto’s voice was gentle, as was the hand on the Doctor’s arm. “It’s alright.”

“You haven’t done anything wrong!”

“Actually sir, he has. He’s committed treason.” Egan’s eyes were flinty, no trace of sympathy.

The Doctor whirled on him. “What? Because he rescued me?! That’s ridiculous!”

“That’s not what this is about.”

“Then what?” the Doctor growled.

“He is under suspicion of aiding and harbouring a converted Cyberman.”

The bottom dropped from Ianto’s world. They knew about Lisa.

He’d been under no illusions after the haze of mad grief had cleared; Jack was standing between him and the world. By keeping the ‘incident’ in house, he claimed he was keeping the other agencies out of his business. In reality he was keeping Ianto out of prison. Ianto knew it even if Jack wasn’t ready to tell him, but oddly he hadn’t felt grateful to the Captain. At the time he’d felt beholden – he’d rather of taken his chances than owe Jack Harkness.

His feelings though inevitably changed with the passing of time. But it didn’t matter anymore.

“Oh,” the Doctor’s anger wilted. “Oh, well then, that’s a bit different.” He scratched his head. “A Cyberman you say?”

Ianto sagged. The Doctor believed in justice. He wasn’t going to save Ianto.

There was a screech of tires and spray of gravel as the SUV tore up the hill and UNIT snapped back to attention.

“Doctor, that is Torchwood. It is advisable that you leave,” Egan urged the Time Lord, pointing at the black SUV. “We can hold them off, but I would rather you retreat to the TARDIS sir. With all due respect sir, we need you to leave.”

Shaking off his thoughts Ianto stood straight. If he was going to be arrested, he was going to face it like a man, head held high and shoulders straight.

The Doctor too shook himself, although rather more physically than Ianto, a full body shudder that started at his toes and ended with his hair vibrating. “Right then.”

There was a slamming of doors and Jack’s voice bellowed, “Stop!”

“Doctor go!”

Ianto offered Jack a smile, watching as his Captain ran towards them, his coat flying in the breeze. Had his coat not been so dirty he’d have looked like a fairytale knight racing to the rescue. As it was, he looked like a hero, and Ianto loved him for it.

“Righty O!”

His arm was squeezed in a punishing grip and Ianto found himself whirled inside the TARDIS. One door slammed shut leaving the Doctor room to shout out, "Bye!" before the other closed locking them in.

"What are you doing?" he cried, watching as the Doctor ran to the console.

There was the hammering of fists on the door and the garbled yelling of many voices and Ianto pressed himself up against the wood, trying to hear Jack.

"If you think," the Doctor stated, his voice adamant, "that after all you have done for me I am going to leave you to the tender mercies of UNIT and Torchwood, then you aren't as clever as I thought."

Frantically he pumped a lever before spinning some sort of wheel, racing round the console in a frantic flurry of activity.

"But – Jack – he could–"

"Jack couldn't do anything! You know that Ianto," he grabbed a hammer and brought it down hard.

"You came to get me to keep him safe, now I've got to save you."

"But–"

"No!"

Ianto's eyes were wide, a fearful wildness about them that was faintly reminiscent of a cornered fox. He wanted out. As a child he'd read about alien abduction but, even after joining Torchwood, he never thought he'd be a victim of it.

"Please," he begged. "Let me go back."

There was a distinctive whooshing-gurgle and Ianto felt the ground shudder.

Saturday, Day 194, 05.58 GMT

Latitude: 51° 52' 2" N

Longitude: 3° 17' 7" W

It wasn't so much a fire-fight as a scrap over box office tickets. UNIT, their helicopter still circling above them, were banging on the TARDIS doors, trying to pry them open with their fingertips. Torchwood were pulling them off, throwing them to the floor or stun-gunning them. Prising Egan off the TARDIS was Jack's job, one that he took great pleasure in, cleaning the man's clock with one sure blow to the face. It was messy and disorganised and the most fun Owen had had in a while.

By the time the TARDIS dematerialised only Torchwood were left standing, panting and blood-streaked and somewhat jubilant that Ianto had gotten away safely.

Jack whooped and punched the air in triumph before falling to his knees and crying.

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They were safely in the Vortex before the Doctor turned back to Ianto. He was huddled by the doors, a broad palm pressed against the wood, his face slack with shock. He couldn't help but feel for the boy. He was lost.

But, he wasn't the one Ianto needed.

Saturday, Day 194, 21.04GMT

Latitude: 51° 27' 9" N

Longitude: 3° 9' 9" W

Ianto had been gone almost an entire day. The team had retreated to the sanctuary of the Hub after their return from the Beacons, a strange air hanging over them. It wasn't quite grief and it wasn't quite triumph, it was an indecisive mix of the two. There were tears and smiles; because Ianto wasn't dead, he was just gone.

Jack didn't like it one bit.

After he'd sent them home, Tosh coming to him for one last hug and Gwen assuring him it'd be alright, he'd retreated to his office half expecting to hear the TARDIS at any moment. After an hour of waiting and hoping, he'd turned to his faithful friend and poured a generous measure of whiskey into one of the fine crystal tumblers. Whiskey...the slow burn and amber glow were always there when he needed them.

His phone rang.

Jack ignored it, letting it ring off. He'd deal with the fallout tomorrow. They couldn't do anything to him really – Ianto had kindly emailed his blackmail material to Tosh – but there would be some fallout. Not that he cared. UNIT and London could fall off the Earth for all he cared right now.

The ringing started again and Jack snatched the little phone up.

"What!"

"Temper temper Captain."

Jack fell out of his chair he sat up that fast. "Doctor?" he whispered, barely able to hope.

"Hello, Jack. I think I owe you an apology."

Jack laughed, tears building in his eyes, "You stole a valuable member of my team."

"I didn't steal – I don't steal," the Doctor responded indignantly. "I merely...borrowed." His voice was bright and cheeky and broke through Jack's gloom like a knife through butter.

"How is he?" he choked out.

"Shattered. But then, he thinks he's lost everything."

"Let me talk to him," Jack demanded in his best Captain voice.

"In a minute." He sighed. "I'm so sorry Jack. I couldn't leave him behind."

Jack dragged his hand through his hair. "I know. I didn't want you to." He laughed. It had a bitter edge to it, but it was laughter all the same. "I rang you to tell you to get him the hell out of there if I couldn't. You did what I wanted – even if you did hang-up on me."

"Sorry about that," the Doctor sounded more abashed than penitent.

“Doesn’t matter now.”

“He’s wonderful you know.”

Jack knew it but he hadn’t expected the Doctor to realise it. He tended to find all humans brilliant – just because they were there. Ianto was brilliant above and beyond being human. He had a luminosity to him that had ensnared Jack like a moth.

“Should I be jealous?” he joked.

“Maybe,” the Doctor replied blandly. “I would be if he were mine.”

“Doctor.”

“Jack. He loves you – really *loves* you. He came for me not because it was the right thing to do but because of you. There is nothing as loyal as love Jack – and that boy loves you whether he knows it or not.”

Jack hung his head. The Doctor’s words were sweet and anyone would kill to hear them. But hearing them when your lover was lost in the Universe was the sweetest of tortures.

“Can I talk to him?”

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“Ianto?”

Ianto blinked bleary eyes up at the Doctor. He felt as though he’d been asleep with his eyes open, they were dry and gritty and his head was muzzy. “Hmmm.”

“Phone.”

The Doctor held the small mobile out to it and Ianto watched it as though it he’d never seen one before. The Doctor waved it slightly under his nose until Ianto reached out and took it with thick fingers.

“Hello?” his voice was raspy and unsure.

“Ianto?”

Jack’s voice was water to a parched man and Ianto cradled the phone to him. “Jack? Oh God Jack I’m so sorry-“

“Hey, shh,” Jack spoke slowly and soothingly, calming Ianto’s spooked nerves. “You have nothing to apologise for.”

“But, I screwed up Jack. I got caught.”

“No. No, Ianto – you did nothing wrong. I am so proud of you.”

Ianto felt the burn of tears in his eyes and his chest tightened. “You are?” he whispered.

“Hell yeah! Proud and unbelievably turned on. I just downloaded London’s CCTV. I *love* the look,” Jack leered.

It was so inappropriate, so unbelievably ill-timed, that Ianto couldn't help but laugh. It was just so typically Jack. "Really Captain?"

"Oh yeah, hot spy Ianto – I think I've found a new kink! And was that a new suit?"

No-one should be able to make the word 'suit' sound dirty, but Jack managed it effortlessly.

"Maybe."

"I'm hurt Mr. Jones. You bought a new suit for London and not one for me." Ianto could see Jack pouting. "Are you still wearing it?"

"Jack!" he hissed, scandalised. The Doctor was still in the room. He might have been all the way on the other side but if there was even a chance he could hear what they were saying...

"Oh, go on Ianto...Just think about it – trans-temporal phone sex! That's got to be a first!"

Ianto narrowed his eyes. "For me or you?"

"Both of us, unless you're not telling me something."

"You know all my secrets Jack."

There was a pause and Ianto felt his heart climb into his throat. He'd said the wrong thing.

"I thought I did."

He'd barely finished before Ianto was hurrying to reassure him, his eyes wide with worry. "You do. I promise you do."

"No, Ianto, I don't. 'Cos if I did – I'd have known you'd do this. You'd save the Doctor despite all your animosity to him. That you'd save him for me."

The tears flowed free.

"But I didn't know that Ianto and that's my fault." He laughed and Ianto smiled automatically at the sound. "I am actually jealous that the Doctor worked out how brilliant you are immediately but it took me months to see it. Months to see how clever you are, how loyal, how brave. And now the rest of the Universe is going to see it. And I am so jealous of them."

"I'm coming back!" Ianto hissed.

"Not for a while. It isn't safe," Jack insisted gently and Ianto felt lost.

He couldn't go home. It was the worst feeling in the world. His heart-wrenching grief over Lisa paled in comparison.

"Are you in a lot of trouble?"

"Nothing I can't handle," Jack breezily negated his concerns.

Ianto snivelled. "I'm sorry."

“Don’t be. I’m sorry I wasn’t here for you.” He paused and Ianto could hear him tapping his fingers against a whisky tumbler, the glass singing with every press of his fingers. “I’m sorry we didn’t get our date.”

“Were we going to go?”

Jack sucked in a breath. “Of course we were.” He sounded hurt.

“I only meant – Torchwood isn’t very forgiving of private lives. Perhaps I was wrong to want that.”

“No. You should want that. You deserve it Ianto.”

He found himself nodding along with the conviction in Jack’s voice. “Rain check?”

Jack laughed. “In a few months Tosh will have cleared all your charges from the records and have altered their pictures of you.” Ianto thought he could hear tears in Jack’s voice. “And when that’s done I’m going to call this phone and you are going to come back. You are going to answer that phone and get the Doctor to bring you back to me and we are going to have our date. And then we’ll spend a whole weekend in bed – the Rift be damned! Do you understand me Ianto?”

Ianto nodded.

“It’s an order.”

“Yes sir,” he said hoarsely.

“And in the meantime, you are going to see the Universe.” The awe in his voice caused Ianto’s breath to catch and his heart to race. “And you are going to love it.”

“I’m going to miss you.” There were tears dripped into his voice.

Jack’s voice was choked. “Oh, Jones, Ianto Jones, you are the one that’s going to be missed.”

He hung up the phone and leaned back against the TARDIS.

“So?” Ianto looked up to see the Doctor, rocking on the balls of his feet. “Where to then?”