



ALSO BY BETH MCCOMBS

COLLECTIVE DREAMING

Perchance to Dream
Deflections of Loneliness
Away With the Fairy
Home for the Holidays
Primal Instincts
The Course of Love

HOUSE OF TORCHWOOD

Bloodlines
A Kind of Magic
Where the Road Diverges
Arcanum 101

COMING SOON

Harmonic Convergence
The Warp and Weft of Time
Child of the Warrior Star
Nightmares and Dreamscapes

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PROLOGUE

A soft scared little whimper caught Neville's attention. He looked away from the group he was supposed to escape from the castle with trying to find the source of the noise. His initial thought of it being a lost frightened kitten vanished as he caught sight of a first year, a Hufflepuff from the look of her, huddled in an alcove off the stairs. Still crouching down in hopes of not being spotted by any Death Eaters nearby, he ran across the staircase landing to slip into the alcove. "Hey," he said softly. "Why are you still here?"

"I didn't have anywhere else to go." The Hufflepuff looked up at him and sniffled a bit before wiping her face on her sleeve. "No one asked about me after the Headmaster died."

Without thinking of any of the potential consequences or complications, Neville reached out and hugged the girl. A Hufflepuff first year with no place to go as the castle emptied. He couldn't think of why she wouldn't have a place to go, even the muggleborn orphans had been invited to their friends homes for the holidays, so why. Well, right now the whys didn't matter, they could figure all that out later. For

ARCANUM 101

now, he needed to get her out of here and down to the car he was leaving in.

Before he could move though, the distinctive sound of an engine starting interrupted him. A soft curse escaped him. Neville shook his head as he listened to the car roaring away down the Hogwarts driveway. Their entire group, Harry's personal army as Neville often thought of them all, knew what that car sounded like. Ianto had insisted on the wizardfolk being comfortable with it in case they needed to use it for an event like this. "Shit, fuck, damn," he muttered.

"Sir?"

"No need for that," he said. "Neville Longbottom... and you are?"

"Alesia Goyle."

Only in his mind did Neville let loose the string of curses her name invoked. If Neville recalled correctly, the Goyles had all perished in the collapse of the Malfoy Manor. Gathering himself, he racked his brain trying to recall the various ways to get out of the castle he'd seen on Harry's map. Rolling his eyes at his own stupidity, he rose to his feet and offered Alesia a hand. "Come on then," he said. "We need to go down to Slytherin prior to getting out of here."

Keeping a firm grip on her hand, Neville led Alesia through the many corridors of the castle using the speedy routes he'd perfected in escaping from the school bullies. Reaching the dungeon, he spat the password at the wall, ignored her complaining and pulled Alesia into the common room with him. He all but dragged her after him to Harry and Draco's room, only releasing her hand when he had to use his to open Harry's trunk to retrieve the Marauder's Map. Pulling it out, he slammed the trunk closed, laid the map on top and opened it with a soft whisper of the password.

"What's that?" Alesia asked.

"Something of Harry's," Neville absently replied. "Also, our way out of here." He scanned the map looking for the nearest secret

ARCANUM 101

passageway leading out of the castle. He frowned a bit at his options. He could either go back up to the great hall or sneak down by Snape's potions stores. The stores were closer; however, the mere thought of being where Snape might come looking for things chilled him to the core. Yet, with the number of people he knew to be Death Eaters gathering in the great hall around Tom Riddle, Neville knew he had no choice but to chance running into Snape. Nodding to himself, he closed the map, tucked it inside his shirt and reached for Alesia's hand again. "Ready?"

"No," she replied. She took his hand anyway. "Just..."

"I know," he said. "I won't let them hurt you." Neville led the way through the Slytherin rooms and out into the dungeon hallway beyond it. He heard and saw no one outside the common room. Pasting on a 'I'm meant to be here and you know it' look, he began to stalk confidently down the hallway toward the potions storage room. They'd nearly made it to the alcove which concealed the entrance to the passageway when their luck ran out. Bellatrix Lestrange stepped out of Snape's potions stores. Before she could look at them, Neville shoved Alesia into the alcove they were headed toward, hissing, "Stay here and be quiet."

"Lookie, lookie," Bellatrix said. Her voice was almost sickeningly sweet as she spoke. "It's ickle Neville Longbottom." Her wand came up to point at him. Before he could even attempt to defend himself, she snapped a disarming spell and sent his wand flying down the corridor out of reach. "Poor little Nevi," she taunted. "I'd tell you to give my regards to your parents but you won't be around to see them again and they probably wouldn't understand it anyway. Does ickle Nevi wipe his mommy's drool when he goes to visit her?" She took a step toward him using one hand to twirl a lock of her hair around her forefinger while giggling insanely at him. "I'm going to kill you slowly, Nevi," she singsonged. "Leave a message for my traitorous son."

ARCANUM 101

Bellatrix continued her taunts in that syrupy childlike voice of hers. Fed up and worried other Death Eaters would come down in response to her voice and cut off his and Alesia's escape, he eased his hand behind his back to close his fingers around the butt of his pistol. He refocused on her taunts just as she once again threatened to kill him slowly.

"So, what do you think, lickle Nevi," she teased. "Exsanguination? Avada? Or shall I be more creative?"

Neville rolled his eyes, sighed and pulled the gun out and around. A bare moment to aim and he fired several shots at her, popped the now spent clip and slapped a new one into place. "I think if you're going to kill someone, do it." He stalked down the hallway to stand over the dying Bellatrix. "Don't stand around talking about it." He fired one more shot to finish her off before snatching her wand from the floor, summoning his own and running back to where he'd hidden the young Hufflepuff. "We need to go, Alesia."

CHAPTER ONE

Ianto slowly set the phone back in the cradle. He dropped his head into his hand and rubbed at his forehead before he rose to his feet again. He headed for Jack's office door, leant against the frame and stared unseeing out at the group gathered below on the main floor of the Hub. After a moment, and a faint noise from Harry, he refocused on them and shook his head. "That was Owen," he said. "He's headed for RAF Kinloss where he and his 'team' will be catching a UNIT flight back down to join us. They won't be here until morning at the earliest."

"And the others?" Hermione asked.

A sigh slipped from Ianto. "Gwen's on her way down now with her bunch. She should be here by midnight if not sooner." He shoved a hand through his hair and swallowed. "Everyone's accounted for save for Neville, Jack, Draco and Mica." His hand clenched by his side as he spoke his younger daughter's name. "I can't get a hold of Jack."

A chorus of curses answered his softly spoken statement. He did his best to remain calm, not wanting Martha all over him for raising his blood pressure and stared blindly off into the distance. A screeching cry from Myfanwy echoed by a pure white owl now flying with her told

ARCANUM 101

him his familiar at least was feeling the rising tension. Ianto lowered his gaze to the base of the fountain, blinked, and then blinked again. He couldn't be seeing what he was seeing. It was his imagination. It had to be. No, that all too familiar white blonde head rose, looking intently about, while still keeping a smaller body between his own and the slumped form of the Captain.

"Jack!" Ianto cried. Shoving away from the door frame, he raced across the main floor of the Hub. He shoved Martha out of his way when she attempted to get him to slow down and leapt up the handful of steps to the platform overlooking the invisible lift. Ianto smiled at the kids and shifted Jack away from Draco. "Are you two hurt?" he asked.

"No," Draco replied. "We're fine. Dad kept them off us but got hit with a cutting curse. He's..."

"I know," Ianto said. He shifted about to sit on the platform and cradled Jack in his lap. "Martha, take Mica to..." he paused and laughed when Lizzie, Mica's Nanny Elf, popped in and took the girl's hand quietly urging her away from the scene. "Never mind," Ianto began again. "Draco?"

"I told you I'm fine." The Slytherin glared at Ianto for a moment before shaking his head. "I think you should let Mica stay. She needs to know Jack's okay."

"He was 'Dad' a minute ago," Ianto said quietly. He thought for a moment on what Draco said and then called Lizzie back with Mica. "You hold her. Jack tends to flail about when he revives."

"If he does that, then you hold Mica and I'll hold Jack," Draco said. He suited action to words and tugged Jack off Ianto's lap and sent Mica to sit her Tad's lap. "If he hits you the wrong way when he comes back..." Draco trailed off with a speaking glance at Ianto's stomach. "And he hasn't told me I can call him Dad, so I won't."

ARCANUM 101

“I thought he had,” Ianto said. He gave his adopted son a glare but settled Mica into his lap. “Don’t tell me you’re going to start coddling me too. I am a trained field agent. Don’t go wrapping me in cotton wool.”

“You’re also carrying what could potentially be the heirs to several of the major wizarding houses,” Draco retorted. He shifted Jack so he could hold him a bit more firmly and gave Ianto ‘Malfoy glare #3 – I know better than you’ – and half-smiled. “So you’re just going to have to put up with everyone wrapping you in cotton wool, notice-me-not charms and whatever else we can think of to protect you.”

“He’s right,” Martha interjected from where she watched the scene closely. “Plus, I’m officially pulling you from field duty as the supplementary medical officer.”

“Martha!”

“Don’t you ‘Martha’ me, Ianto Jones,” she retorted. A stern finger pointed from Jack to him. “He will never forgive me or himself if anything happens to you or those babies. So, lots of coddling from now until you deliver. Just accept it graciously now.”

“Why don’t you all just lock me in a cell next to Janet while you’re at it?” Ianto snarked.

“Personally, I’d rather lock you in my bunker,” Jack’s tired voice slipped into the lull of conversation. “Preferably with me inside with you.”

“Jack,” Ianto gasped. He shifted Mica over to Martha, crawled the short distance between him and his lover, and kissed Jack deeply before pulling back to smile at him. “Welcome back, but how long were you...”

“From about the time you yelled at Martha,” Jack said. He smiled a thank you up at Draco before pulling away to sit up. “I have the perfect way for you to take a break for a bit.”

“Do you now?”

ARCANUM 101

“Yep.” Jack grinned as Ianto rolled his eyes playfully at him. He knew just what Ianto was thinking. What pretty much everyone in the room was thinking. Hell, Hermione even muttered about insatiable parents, but he just gave Ianto a pout and pulled off his coat. “Those bastards damaged my coat!”

Ianto blinked, shook his head at Jack’s mock pout and finally gave in and laughed. “Only you, Jack,” he said. He leant close and buried his face in Jack’s neck for a moment breathing deeply of Jack’s unique scent. Pressing his nose beneath Jack’s ear, he whispered, “I hope what I was thinking you were thinking is being saved for later?”

“Oh, you know it,” Jack replied in a soft whisper of his own. “Just as soon as everyone’s sorted out, settled, and asleep.”

A small body squirmed between them. Ianto shifted back to let Mica hug Jack herself. He smiled at the sight of Jack softly reassuring Mica that he was fine. Ianto reached out, stroked Mica’s hair then Jack’s and gave a reassuring smile to the rest of the group gathered about the platform.

Harry had edged his way around until he could reassure himself of Draco’s continued good health. Hermione clung to Pansy while trying to explain the Hub to Percy and Pansy. Martha watched him with the proverbial eagle eye after waving Andy back to watching the Rift monitor. He looked over all of them to catch Minerva and Alys’s eyes where the two older women watched everything with the semi-indulgent looks of matriarchs. Ianto knew the exact moment when Jack caught sight of Alys in the back of the watching group. The older man tensed, slowly set Mica on her feet and pushed her gently toward Ianto.

“Just who the hell are you and what are you doing in my base?” Jack demanded as he rose to his feet with one hand on his gun.

“Alys Cole, *Cymru Archdewines*,” she replied. “It’s lovely to finally meet you, Father.”

CHAPTER TWO

“But...” Jack’s hand slowly fell away from his gun as he stared at Alys. As he raked his eyes over the middle aged woman standing in front of him, he saw the similarities to Estelle. She had the same dark hair as Estelle did before hers went white. She even had the same features. He swallowed hard but managed a faint smile. “How?”

“If you don’t know how,” Andy interrupted before Alys could say anything in response to Jack’s question. “Ianto’s really got a problem.”

There were soft snickers from everyone in the room which became full blown laughter as a faint blush painted Jack’s cheeks. Hermione freed herself from Pansy’s tight hold, crossed the Hub in the same determined strides Jack would occasionally have, and held her hand out to Alys.

“Hello, I’m your sister Hermione Harkness-Jones,” she said brightly. “I guess Dad tends to produce girls.”

“Hermione!” Jack protested. He shook a finger at her when she turned his own bright grin on him.

“What, Dad? So far as we know, you’re four for four.”

ARCANUM 101

Jack pouted at her. He reached down and pulled a smirking Ianto up from the floor. Keeping an arm around his fiancé, he started down from the platform with Draco following them. He playfully smacked the back of Hermione's head. "You don't have to sound so..."

"I'm the only boy in this menagerie?" Draco interrupted.

"Yep," Jack said over his shoulder with a grin. "You have a nephew, but unless Ianto knows something different. You're the only boy so far."

"Wonderful, just wonderful," Draco snarked. "A family full of annoying..." he trailed off with a soft yelp as Mica stomped on his foot. He looked up from glaring down at her to catch glares from Alys, Hermione and, oddly enough, Pansy. "Wonderful. I mean wonderful women."

Ianto snickered softly. "Good save, son," he said. He reached back and patted Draco's head. He shifted his attention to Jack and waved a hand toward Alys. "Anyway, Jack, Alys is our contact with the Welsh wizards. She and Minerva are making arrangements for the children to continue their magical education though we're going to have to enroll them in standard schools as well."

"Good," he replied, "but we'll need to continue their military training." He gave everyone in the room a stern hard look. "Voldemort isn't going away just because we escaped."

"He'll come after us," Harry interjected. "If only to find me."

"Exactly," Jack agreed. He looked at Alys, tilted his head a bit to one side and gave her a half-smile. "I'll understand if you want nothing to do with this, Alys. Your mother hated the War even as she supported the troops by working in the countryside."

"The Dark Lord is a threat to everyone, Captain," she said. "The *Eisteddfod* has long known this war was coming. We just weren't expecting you to bring the war here."

ARCANUM 101

“Sorry,” Jack muttered. Without thinking, he reached out with his free arm to hug Alys to his side. He pressed a kiss to the top of her head. “Alright, it’s getting late. Ianto, status? And we need to figure out who’s sleeping where.”

Ianto straightened away from Jack, brushed his hand over Hermione’s shoulder and crouched down to pick up Mica only to have Draco immediately take the toddler from his arms with a hard look. Sighing, Ianto conceded to the coddling for the moment and turned his attention to Jack. “Gwen and those with her are on their way down now. She anticipates being in by midnight. I reserved a suite of rooms for her and that batch over at St. Davids.” Ianto half shrugged. “There’s no real room for the couple and the three kids in their apartment.”

“Not a problem,” Jack agreed. “Charged it to the expense account?” At Ianto’s nod, he grinned and accepted a folder handed to him. He signed off on the forms without even looking at them. “And Owen?”

“On his way to RAF Kinross to catch a flight down with UNIT,” Ianto reported. “The SUV however is a total loss. Good thing it was the backup.”

“Get us another one?”

“Already working on it,” Ianto said. “Oh, *she* gave me a message for you when I went to meet Alys. Said...”

“Tell me later,” Jack interrupted before Ianto could say anything more. “What about Neville? Do we know anything about him? I know he wasn’t with Owen when Owen ran.”

“Nothing,” Ianto said. He held up a hand as Minerva started to speak. “We’ve heard nothing yet. Owen isn’t even certain how he lost him as Tosh says Neville was right beside her at the top of the main stairs. Either Voldemort found him or he’s getting out on his own. We just don’t know.”

ARCANUM 101

Jack hissed in a breath. He stared intently at Ianto trying to convey a million questions in a single look and released a relieved sigh when Ianto merely nodded in response to the long look. Shifting his coat a bit, he reached for his gun and began reloading it. "I'll head up and see if I can..."

There was a distinctive loud pop behind Jack. The pop was immediately followed by all the Hubs intruder alarms going off simultaneously. He whirled about automatically shoving Draco and Mica behind him and stepping to one side in front of Ianto. Jack scanned the Hub looking for anything out of place. "What's going on?" he demanded. "Andy, shut off the alarms!"

The silence as Andy deactivated the alarms echoed hollowly. Jack, flanked by Hermione and Alys, both holding their wands at the ready, started toward the fountain to check the other side. He used hand signals to send the others in the Hub to go looking for any intruders. A hard look at Ianto sent Ianto, Mica and Draco to his office. Before anyone could really get far, a familiar voice echoed from the far side of the fountain where the base slab for the invisible lift rested.

"Hell, yes, I did it." There was a momentary pause before the voice continued as its owner came around the fountain. "Now all we need to do is find the Professors," Neville said as he led Alesia around the fountain. He still held his gun in one hand while leading her by the other. "I know they're here somewhere."

Jack could only stare in shock as Neville came around the fountain with a younger girl's hand in his. The young man was clearly exhausted but determined not to give in until he was certain as to his situation. Absently, Jack reached over and closed his daughter's mouth before refocusing on Neville. He was all set to demand answers when his younger daughter shrieked in his ear.

"Neville!" Hermione screamed. "How did you get here?"

ARCANUM 101

“Apparated,” Neville replied. He gave her this look which clearly said ‘what did you think I did’ before shifting his attention to Jack. “Sir, is Professor Jones with you?”

“I’m here, Neville,” Ianto replied. “You apparated into the Hub?”

“Yes, sir,” he said. “This is Alesia Goyle. She was still in the castle when we started the plan. I...” Neville trailed off for a moment. His eyes closed for a moment. He swayed in place. The exhaustion of a side-along apparition to an unfamiliar location clearly caught up with him, but then he straightened up, opened his eyes and met Ianto’s directly. “I’m sorry, sir, but I...” He paused and swallowed hard before finishing, “I killed Mrs. Lestrage, sir. I’m sorry, but she was going to kill us both.”

CHAPTER THREE

Briskly rubbing a towel over his hair, Jack stepped from the ensuite into the bedroom. “I don’t even want to contemplate the tales being told about me at Alys’s home,” he complained. “All the kids are there and you just know they’re talking about me.” He twisted, balled up the towel and lobbed it toward the hamper in the bath. “Score,” he hissed. He turned back to Ianto with a grin. “Between tales from Alys, Hermione, and likely Gwen when she joins them later tonight,” Jack continued. “I’m not going to be able to look any of the kids in the eye tomorrow.”

A soft distracted hum came from the bed where Ianto lay. Jack tilted his head to one side to consider his lover. Ianto was rubbing his hand back and forth over the soft swell of his stomach. He was too quiet. Normally, when they were alone like this, Ianto would be flirting or enticing him into bed with him. Reaching over to flip off the overhead lights, leaving the room cast in soft shadows from the small table lamp by the bed, Jack crossed the room to crouch by the bed.

ARCANUM 101

“Ianto?” he said softly. When he didn’t receive a response, he reached across the bed to gently catch his lover’s hand in his. “Are you okay?”

“Is it wrong of me to only feel relief?” Ianto whispered. “For so long, I thought I would have to kill her. No matter how much I tried not to think of it, I knew it was going to come down to her and me.” He slowly lifted his gaze from the bedding to meet Jack’s. “It was so hard to think about it, killing my mother, but all I can feel now is relief that she’s dead.” He swallowed, the sound almost a sob to Jack’s keen hearing, and looked away again. “I’m even more relieved that I wasn’t the one to do it. Even considering that it was one of the kids we were trying so hard to protect from killing, I’m just relieved I didn’t have to do it.” He looked up again at Jack. “How could I tell my kids I killed their grandmother? Is there something wrong with me?”

“No, love,” Jack murmured. He shifted up to sit on the bed before stretching out beside Ianto. He pulled his lover into his arms and stroked his hands over Ianto’s back. “There’s nothing wrong with you. Like you said when Mica was missing, Bellatrix Lestrange hadn’t been your mother for years. You’d already mourned her as a child.”

“It still hurts,” Ianto protested. “She was my mother.”

“And the woman you remember singing lullabies to you always will be,” Jack reassured. “The woman Neville killed was an insane terrorist determined to murder children to advance her twisted cause.” He waited for Ianto to answer him. He was unsurprised at the nod which eventually came from his lover, his evening stubble scraped over Jack’s bare chest. He chuckled softly and gently tugged on Ianto’s hair. “Don’t do that,” he murmured. “I’m trying very hard to be good right now.”

“For which I thank you,” Ianto replied. He lifted his head from Jack’s chest and shifted up in the bed to be able to face his lover. “Any other time, I’d be all over you right now reassuring myself that you

ARCANUM 101

were alive, whole and with me..." he trailed off. "I can't even cry over her. And that hurts, Jack. It hurts so much to know I can't cry over her."

Jack bent his head and kissed Ianto. "Shh," he said. "Remember what I said. You already mourned her years ago as a child. You don't need to do so again." He ran his hand down Ianto's side to rest over his stomach. "Be relieved we don't have to worry about her potentially harming our babies."

Ianto hummed softly, but nodded. He covered Jack's hand with his and pressed it closer to his skin. "Remember I told you it was twins?" he asked. At Jack's nod, he smiled widely. "Well, in about seven months or so, Draco won't be the only son in the family."

"I'm finally having a son," Jack said. He couldn't believe what he just heard. "After more than a century, I won't be having another daughter?"

Ianto threw his head back with a laugh. It felt good to laugh. Yes, he was still upset over the loss of his mother, but as Jack had said he'd already done his mourning of her. He reached up and cupped Jack's cheek in his hand, pulled him down for a gentle kiss, and smiled as he pulled away again. "Yes, Jack," he said. "You're finally having a son." His smile morphed into a smirk. "And you have just proved to me that despite being from the fifty-first century, you've been here long enough for our backward customs to start influencing you."

"Hey." Jack tapped Ianto's nose with a finger but grinned widely. "In all the years I've lived on Earth, every child I've had has been a girl. Hermione, Alice, Monica, Alys and Jodi, every one of them was a girl. I've never had a son," he said. "So, forgive me if I'm excited to finally have one."

"I think it's great that you're so excited," Ianto replied. "I love you, Jack. You keep me sane in the insanity that is our world."

ARCANUM 101

“I always will,” Jack vowed. “I may drive you insane myself with the urge to wrap you up in cotton wool for the next seven months, but I will keep you as sane as possible.”

Ianto frowned and muttered a soft curse. “I know why you want to do it,” he said. “There are so many potential problems with a male pregnancy, but I’m going to hate every minute of it.” He shifted on the bed until he was comfortable and reached down for the covers. Pulling them up, he dragged in a breath and released it on a sigh. “I promise you, Jack, I won’t do anything to hurt our babies.”

“I know, love,” Jack murmured. “I know.” He pressed a kiss to Ianto’s temple. “Sleep now. Tomorrow we need to reassure Neville that neither of us is angry with him for doing what was necessary to save himself and Alesia.”

A tiny laugh escaped from Ianto. “And figure out how he managed to apparate to Cardiff,” Ianto looked up with a smile before settling down again. “I think he just topped Hermione for pure power with that move.”

CHAPTER FOUR

Bored out of his mind, Harry drifted into the glassed walled office which dominated one end of the Hub. He still wasn't certain why the headquarters of this top secret organization was called the Hub or why it was hidden underground, but he assumed that it was better than what wizards called their properties. He rested his back against the glass and sighed. He jumped when his sigh was echoed from in front of him.

"Don't tell me," Ianto said softly. "You're bored too."

Harry laughed. "Exceedingly," he said. He crossed the room and considered the stuff on the desk. The strange, slightly glowing thing beneath one lamp caught his eye. He very gently touched it with his fingers only to find himself stroking the object. It seemed to hum and purr as he caressed it. "Is this alien?"

"I don't know what it is," Ianto said. "It's Jack's that's all I know."

"Does he know it hums?" Harry asked. He shook his head. "I have to be imagining that." He shrugged one shoulder and gave Ianto a sheepish smile. "I probably sound crazy."

"No," Ianto shook his head. "So, why are you hiding in here?"

ARCANUM 101

Harry pointed over his shoulder. “They won’t let me do anything. The Captain took Neville off to talk to him. The girls are all talking about shopping. And the house elves are cleaning.” Harry sighed again and dropped into the empty chair on his side of the desk. “I’m bored.”

“Join the club.” Ianto laughed. He held up one hand toward Harry. “Mipsy smacked me for even thinking of cleaning. I’m not allowed coffee. And Percy’s already halfway to complete knowledge of my archiving system. I think I’m starting to understand why the Victorians always called it ‘confinement’.” Ianto leaned back in the chair he was sitting in, considered Harry, and then waved him toward him. “Bring the chair around, Harry,” he said. “I’ll teach you how to do the admin paperwork and forge Jack’s signature.”

“You forge your husband’s signature?” Harry asked. He stood, picked up his chair, and came around the desk to sit beside Ianto. “Isn’t that a bit...”

“Illegal? Immoral? Slightly unorthodox?”

“All of the above?”

Ianto laughed again. “If we want any of the paperwork done on time, I need to do it.” He grinned over at Harry. “Jack knows I do it. Mostly on the mundane things like requisitions. The reports for the government, I leave for him to read and sign.”

“Ah,” Harry nodded. “I’ve done something similar when I was younger. My uncle didn’t like dealing with me, so I learned to fake his name on papers for school.”

Ianto gave him another smile and pulled over a folder. Flipping it open, he started going over the contents with Harry. Soon, they were deep in paperwork, even pulling Percy in when the older Gryffindor returned from the archives to ask Ianto a question. Time passed; Percy would occasionally get up and leave the room in order to take something down to the archives for filing.

ARCANUM 101

“Taaad,” Gwen’s voice called from just beyond the office doorway. “Can we borrow your place?”

Ianto looked up from the paperwork and half-sighed, half-growled. “Gwen Elizabeth Cooper Harkness!” he snapped. “Don’t ever call me that again.” He shook his head at her. “Why do you want to borrow our place?”

“But you’re Dad’s husband, so that makes you Tad,” she teased with a wide grin. “And don’t you roll your eyes at me, Ianto. It’s Christmas, so let’s throw a party.”

“I’ll let you have a party if you stop calling me Tad.” Ianto gave her a stern glare. “You’re older than me.”

“I know, but I’m having so much fun!” Her grin fell away as she looked back out onto the Hub. When she looked back at Ianto, she was suddenly very serious. “We need to keep their spirits up, Ianto. They might be soldiers, but they’re still kids.”

“I know, Gwen, I know.” Ianto rose to his feet, circled the desk and hugged Gwen for a moment. “But honestly, the townhouse isn’t really big enough for all of us. I wish...”

“And our flat is out. Rhys’s spending most of today trying to find a four-bedroom somewhere decent. On our budget, that’s not easy.”

“Don’t say that too loudly. You never know what your dad will give you for a present.” He sighed, glanced back at a watching Harry, and then shook his head at Gwen. “I wish I could get into Afalglyn. There’s more than enough room there for everyone.”

“Afalglyn?”

“The house I grew up in,” Ianto explained. “At least until I was ten. It’s the LeStrange estate. Without the family ring, I can’t get access through the wards.” He shoved a hand through his hair. Mentioning the estate wards reminded him he needed to ward the Hub before they were found by the enemy.

ARCANUM 101

“Ginny’s mentioned those to me,” Gwen said. “Your family’s home defenses are keyed to a ring?”

“They’re usually keyed to people, but also to objects. The manor is called Afalglyn.” Ianto smiled at her. “Because it’s the family manor, the wards are keyed to the family signet ring. The holder of the ring is the acknowledged head of the family and can reset the wards to allow in whoever he wishes.” Ianto sighed softly as Gwen pouted at him. “My father has the ring at the moment, so I have no access to the estate. I haven’t since I was adopted by the Joneses.”

Before he could say anything, an arm was rested on his shoulder. It’s mate wrapped around Gwen’s. Jack’s scent enveloped him and Ianto relaxed back against Jack’s body. “So, what are you two so intently talking about over here?”

Gwen turned her most woebegone puppy-dog look on Jack. “We want to have a little Christmas party for the kids, just to keep their spirits up, but we figure both your townhouse and our flat are way too small for this army.”

“Army’s a good way of putting it,” Jack conceded. “Why didn’t you tell her about the Hall, Ianto?”

“The Hall?” Gwen squeaked the question at Jack and Ianto.

“Harkness Hall,” Jack said. His trademark grin appeared as he spoke. “My wizarding estate.”

“I forgot about that place,” Ianto said. “From the little I saw, it would work for a Christmas celebration.”

“You have a Hall?” Gwen demanded. “Like an Earl or something?”

“Or something,” Jack said. “Nothing like the Manors Draco and Ianto grew up in, but it’s big enough.”

“Great!” Gwen clapped her hands together. “Ianto, can you give me directions? I’ll take the girls shopping for everything we’ll need, and then we’ll go and see what kind of shape it’s in. I’ll call Alys too, and see if she can make it.....”

ARCANUM 101

Ianto found himself unable to do more than stare at Gwen as she ran off with plans for the Christmas party he and Jack hadn't even agreed to yet. He glanced around the room and discovered he wasn't the only one just staring at the woman. He brought a hand up, attempted to catch her arm, missed, and then tried talking to her but couldn't manage to get a word in edgewise. Finally, Ginny took pity on him, pulled out her wand, and pointed it at Gwen.

"Silencio!" Ginny cried. Then she turned a bright grin of her own on Jack and Ianto. "You can talk now, sir."

"Not sir, if Gwen's so insistent on my being Tad, I'm Tad-cu to you," Ianto said absently. He shifted his attention to Gwen, once again opened his mouth to speak, and found himself cut off by the older woman.

"Ginevra Molly Cooper-Williams!" Gwen turned and glared at her adopted daughter. "Casting hexes on your mother is not acceptable behavior."

"But... but..." Ginny looked from Gwen to her wand and over to Ianto before returning her gaze to Gwen. "But, Mum!"

"Don't you 'but mum' me, young lady," Gwen snapped. "Now, I expect an apology."

"Gwen!" Ianto snapped. He reached over and caught her arm. He shook her just a bit to get her attention off the still shocked Ginny. "How did you break the spell? You're not supposed to be able to do that."

"I didn't," Gwen said. She gave him and Ginny a surprised look. "I..." she paused and thought for a moment. "I felt it pass me, but I guess it didn't take."

"We'll look into that later," Jack said. He did not want to get into a discussion of magic without more experienced practitioners around to help mediate the conversation. "At least you've stopped listing things."

ARCANUM 101

He gave her a cheeky grin in response to her outraged yelp. “You can’t drive to Harkness Hall, Gwen. It’s a wizarding estate.”

“Actually...” A British accented voice interrupted. “If you take the M4 Link Road to...”

“Oi!” Jack shook a finger at Percy. “Percy!” A muffled laugh had him glancing over at the watching Toshiko. He just shook his head at both of them.

“I’ve been working with Miss Sato since she arrived back, sir,” Percy said. “She’s been teaching me a bit about how to use the computers and I thought, well, wondered if there was a way to use magic for computing purposes. She thought it would be worth trying and...” he trailed off but waved at hand at the monitor in front of him which was displaying a satellite photograph of Harkness Hall. “Mainframe will need extensive work,” he continued after a moment. “Or so Miss Sato says.”

“And she would know,” Ianto said. He flashed a smile at Tosh wondering when she’d arrived and how he’d missed her coming into the Hub. “Has she told you how to send information to the SatNav in the SUV yet?” At Percy’s negative headshake, Ianto waved Tosh toward the computer with an encouraging smile while turning to Jack. “Don’t even try, *cariad*,” he said. “Gwen’s got an idea and you know how she gets. Why don’t you go call Alys? Tell her how to get to the estate. She and Minerva went off to interview teachers for the kids.”

CHAPTER FIVE

Jack leant against the side of the chimney of the living room fireplace to survey the grand conservatory of Harkness Hall. Between them, the witches and the muggles had transformed the empty space once used as a formal ballroom into a Victorian Christmas fantasy. Everyone had found a room, even if some of the rooming decisions had put Minerva's nose completely out of joint. It truly was a good thing she'd decided to stay with Alys for the duration of their 'exile' from Hogwarts especially since he himself had no intention of forcing the children to room with others of their own sex. He'd been a teenager once; he wasn't going to have his and Ianto's sleep disturbed by all the kids trying to sneak down the halls to get to their boyfriends or girlfriends. He smiled at Ianto as his fiancé, husband, lover, or whatever they'd decided to call each other this week, returned to his side from putting Mica to bed upstairs. "She asleep finally?" he asked,

"Finally," Ianto agreed. "I worried if she'd ever settle down." He shrugged one shoulder and nodded to the tree. "My cousins and Remus sent presents but won't be joining us tomorrow. Something about there

still being rooms to christen.” He leant against Jack and chuckled softly. “I really didn’t need to know that about the three of them.”

“What about the others we haven’t heard from?”

“No word from Severus, but honestly that’s not a surprise,” Ianto said. “It’s the holidays and Voldemort will likely want to revel in the chaos his taking of Hogwarts caused.”

“So we’re not likely to hear from him at least until New Year’s,” Jack said. “Has Ginevra heard from the Weasleys?”

Ianto shifted a bit to be more comfortable. “The twins used the Floo network while you were out with Rhys, Neville and Blaise. They’re back in their shop in the Alley and will keep us posted from that end.”

“I know it’s hard to just sit and wait, but we have to,” Jack said. He took a step back, dropped in the armchair in the fireplace nook and tugged Ianto down into his lap. “We really don’t have a choice at this point.”

“It’s not the waiting that bothers me, Jack,” Ianto said. He settled comfortably in the chair. He watched as Owen shook the presents and pouted at Toshiko who was refusing to give him clues about his gift. Blaise, for once, didn’t have a mobile in hand while he cuddled with Luna on the floor. Percy and Ron were bent over a chess set deadlocked over their next moves while Lavender was scratching notes into her well-worn copy of the Anarchist Bible. Harry and Hermione were both teasing a blushing Draco while nearby Gwen and Rhys chaperoned the whole group. All in all, a quiet domestic moment which meant any minute now something would happen to ruin it. “It’s the knowledge that while we wait for the proper moment to attack him, he’s free to send his death eaters out to kill muggleborns who don’t know that they’re witches and wizards.”

“I know,” Jack said. “I’ve been thinking about that. Is there a way to identify them?”

ARCANUM 101

"The easiest way is now in Voldemort's hands." He yawned and looked up at Jack before returning his head to his lover's shoulder. "There's a book at Hogwarts which records every child born with sufficient power to be invited to the school."

"A big one?" Jack asked. "Kept with the hat?"

"Yep."

"Do you think Minerva would leave it behind?" Doubt laced Jack's question.

"If she was able to get to it before we left, then no," Ianto said after a moment's thought. "I know she didn't have it when we left for me to show her Torchwood."

"Aren't you able to shrink things very small?"

"Yes..." Ianto nodded. He started to say something but stayed quiet instead. After a long moment, he hit himself in the forehead. "She likely has it with her now."

"She's going to pitch a hissy if we ask her for it," Jack said. He laughed softly at the excited squeal from the group by the tree. The girls were now chasing the boys around the room in a wild game which seemed a cross between tag and a tickle fight.

"Better we ask and protect the likely targets," Ianto said. "Else she'll have no students to teach at all." Ianto took his gaze off the kids to smirk up at Jack. "Besides, after the fit she threw over you allowing co-ed rooming here..."

Jack snickered. He'd not been dressed down so inventively since his last stint in the military. "Maybe we should talk to Alys," he finally said after he'd calmed again.

"She might have better luck speaking to Minerva than we would."

"Exactly," Jack said. "And she's not fogbound by Hogwart's traditions."

"Very true," Ianto said. A well muffled noise interrupted them. Ianto shifted a bit, blinked, and then shook his head at Jack. "You have

ARCANUM 101

a call. Either that or you're trying to tell me something." At Jack's confused look, he chuckled. "Your pocket is vibrating."

"Who the hell could that be?" Jack muttered. He twisted a bit, tugged out his mobile and looked at it. The number on the phone shocked him. He keyed the phone as soon as he read it. "Alice?" he half-asked, half-demanded. "What's going on?" Jack listened and immediately rose to his feet nearly tumbling Ianto down onto the floor. "I'm on my way, honey. Stay out of sight and call me if you suspect anything, okay."

CHAPTER SIX

The next person who told him to sit down and relax was getting thrown into a cell with Janet. How was he supposed to relax when his lover was off playing dashing hero without him? Much less when Jack decided to take two of the kids and Owen with him! Ianto growled softly in his throat before flinging himself into a chair before the living room fireplace. He may trust Owen to watch Jack's back, but not Draco and Neville. They had no real world experience so how could they manage to help with this?

"You need to calm down, Tad," Hermione said. "Have some tea." She offered him a cup which he took automatically before setting it aside on the table next to the chair.

"If you offer me tea again," Ianto snarled. "I'm throwing you in with Janet." He knew he was acting childish; however, he didn't care. Jack had been gone for far too long for a simple pick up. "And don't even tell me I need to relax!"

"You do," Pansy interjected. "If you don't calm down, you'll lose that baby."

ARCANUM 101

Ianto snarled at her. He started to get up from the chair, the urge to pace rising again, and rattled off a long string of Welsh curses when both girls pushed him back into the chair. Before he could shove either of the girls away again, Lavender flopped down in the chair beside him, snatched up his cup of tea and shoved her book at him. “You’re the logistics expert, right?”

“Yep.” Ianto automatically took the book from her and flipped to the marked page. A glance down at it had him raising an eyebrow at her in query. “What are you thinking?”

“The Captain promised to find someone to teach me how to be something called an ‘agent provocateur,’” she said. “He also said that he could find me a proper potions master to learn from.”

“Knowing him, he likely could,” Ianto said. He scanned the marked page, flipped back to look at her other notes, and smiled at her. “I think I know exactly who he was planning on getting a hold of. I may not like him. He’s far too unpredictable.” Ianto closed his eyes for a moment. Captain John Hart might be unpredictable as hell, too flirtatious for anyone’s good, but as a con man and infiltrator the man was the best Ianto had ever seen and that included some of the special ops people within Torchwood London before it fell to the Daleks. “So, why are you showing me this?”

“Well, if I’m going to start working on those,” Lavender said. “I need you to find me a space to work in and the supplies to do so.”

“You’re distracting me,” he replied but smiled to soften the comment. “I know of a space in the Hub you can work in. It’s a secure bunker which will contain any explosion if anything goes wrong.”

“And the teacher?”

“I can’t find you a potions master, but I do know where that man likely is,” Ianto said. “I don’t personally like him, but I do know he’s damned good at what he does.” He considered for a moment, pulled out his mobile, and stared at it for a very long time. He looked from the

ARCANUM 101

phone to Lavender and back before nodding to himself. “If I call him and he does agree to teach you, you may not want to settle for being a potions mistress.”

“So?”

“So, I’ll talk Jack into hiring you for Torchwood. We’re going to need more people.” He gave a soft laugh. “Of course, that’s assuming that your teacher doesn’t recruit you for the people he likely still works for, regardless of what he told Jack when he was here last.”

“Call him?” she asked. Lavender folded her hands in front of her and gave him a beseeching look so reminiscent of Jack’s begging for coffee he broke up laughing. “Please.”

Ianto rolled his eyes, still chuckling, and scrolled through his contact list to find the number he’d acquired for Hart. Taking a deep breath, he punched the button and put the phone to his ear. He listened to it ring, and smirked when the call was finally picked up. “Captain,” he said. “I know you can track this call with your wrist strap, so why don’t you just come here. My request is easier made in person.” He listened for a moment, laughed, and then nodded. “Just come,” he said before disconnecting the call. Ianto looked at the kids in the room, considered them all and nodded. “Out. I don’t want you here while I talk to this man. You can stay nearby if you must but everyone save Lavender out.”

“Tad!” Hermione protested, but fell silent and blushed when Pansy whispered in her ear. “I think we’ll head up to bed.”

Ianto chuckled and nodded. He knew that the girls weren’t really going to bed just stepping out of the room into the great hall outside. Until they were certain any danger had passed, none of the kids with him would leave him alone. He caught Harry’s eye, nodded to him, and watched as Harry took a chair and slipped into the conservatory to sit in the shadows cast by the doors between the rooms. Harry put his gun in his lap while keeping his wand in hand. Only because Ianto was

looking right at him as Harry cast the ‘notice-me-not’ charm on himself did Ianto know where the boy was sitting.

He looked through Lavender’s book again before handing it back to her. Ianto considered Lavender for a bit, nodded and made a note to start marshalling his arguments for hiring the girl when this war with Voldemort was over. He knew what it was like to have your eyes opened to a new world. She’d never be willing to go back to the position of ‘pampered pureblood’ after truly living her life on her own.

“Eye Candy!”

The shout of that hated nickname announced Captain John Hart’s arrival in the room. Ianto smiled as the man strode into the room from the fading rift he’d used to travel to the Hall. He rose to his feet and nodded to Hart. His jaw clenched as Hart’s gaze lazily slid over him before settling on his stomach.

“You’re pregnant!” Hart exclaimed.

“John,” Ianto said. He rested his hands on his hips as he glared at the other man. “Keep your eyes on my face.”

“But... But...” Hart lifted his gaze from Ianto’s stomach. His shock was evident as he repeated his greeting. “You’re pregnant!”

“No? Really?” Ianto rolled his eyes. As much as he was enjoying carrying Jack’s child, he was coming to hate the way everyone seemed to notice his stomach first. “And I thought I’d swallowed a footie ball.”

“This just shouldn’t be...” Hart trailed off. He waved his hand at Ianto’s stomach. It was an expressive, if silent, statement of his shock. “Right,” he said. “I can deal. Really, I can.” He took a few steps forward and gently shoved Ianto down into his chair. “Sit,” Hart ordered. “Put your feet up.”

“Oh, dear God,” Ianto muttered. He rubbed at his face before blinking in shock at Hart as the man pulled over the ottoman, lifted his feet and set them on it. “I’ve got another one on my hands.”

ARCANUM 101

“Yes,” Hart said. He crouched in front of the ottoman and nodded to Ianto’s stomach. “You don’t strike me as the type to cheat, so you’re now pregnant with Jack’s spawn.” Hart stared intently at Ianto. “Despite what you saw before, do you really think I’d be anything other than protective of his kid?” He glared, but then sighed softly. “I know you have no reason to trust me, but I would never do anything to hurt Jack’s kid. Call it cultural conditioning, Eye Candy,” he said quietly. “But do you know what you’ve gotten yourself into? Where Jack and I come from, having a child together is a high level of commitment.” He dropped his gaze to the floor, sighed softly, and then looked up again at Ianto. “So, why did you ask me over?”

Ianto tilted his head and considered Hart. To his surprise, there was a change in the man’s demeanor now that he’d seen the pregnancy. He made a mental note to discuss the situation with Jack when his lover returned. He smiled at Hart, nodding, and said, “I want to hire you.”

“Hire me?” Shock laced Hart’s voice. “As what?”

“Dirty tricks instructor.”

“I am the best,” Hart said. “So who’s the student?”

Ianto waved his hand toward the chair beside him where Lavender was watching everything intently yet silently. “Lavender Brown,” he said softly. “This is Captain John Hart who, as you heard, is the best dirty tricks instructor Jack knows.”

“A blonde?” Hart asked. He grinned merrily. “You finally got a blonde.” He rose to his feet and prowled around the chair Lavender was sitting in before returning to stare down at her. “Limits?”

“Lavender?” Ianto asked. “Would you demonstrate your...” he trailed off to think of the best phrasing. “Natural abilities for Captain Hart?”

Lavender tilted her head and then nodded. She tugged out her wand and silently cast a disarming curse on Hart, flinging him into the wall across the room, and afterwards quickly turned the wand on herself to

ARCANUM 101

cast a glamour charm. Now a pretty curvy redhead sat in the chair smiling at Hart as he levered himself up from the floor. “Good enough, Professor?” she asked.

“Perfect, Lavender,” Ianto said. “Thank you.”

Lavender nodded and canceled the charms on herself. Hart began dusting himself off and pointed at Lavender. “You want me to teach her?” he demanded. “When she’s already got those skills?”

“That’s not a skill,” Ianto said. “It’s what she was born with.” He smirked at Hart. “Brace yourself for some information, John. There really are witches.”

“Carrionites, I know.” Hart nodded to Ianto. He looked Lavender over again. “Though she’s too pretty for a Carrionite.”

“No, not Carrionites,” Ianto snapped. “Focus here. Witches. Real honest to goodness witches.”

Lavender giggled a bit from her chair. Ianto saw both Hermione and Pansy easing into the room to settle onto the sofa while Harry shifted to lean on the doorframe to the conservatory. “Should I curse him again, sir?” Lavender asked.

“No, Lavender,” Ianto said. “Captain Hart is a very fast learner.” He looked over at Hart. “Right, John?”

Hart nodded again. “Definitely,” he agreed. “So, this is a subject best taught one on one.” He shifted to stare intently at Ianto again. “Are you limiting my teaching methods, Eye Candy?”

“You can’t kill anybody or blow up anything of importance,” Ianto said. “Other than that, you’re on your own. We’ll work out payment details tomorrow as it’s getting late.”

“Deal,” Hart said. He rubbed his hands together. “So, where am I staying? And where’s Jack?”

CHAPTER SEVEN

Giving proof to Ianto's long held supposition that Jack had a natural 'dramatic entrance' gene, Jack stalked into the room before the echoes Hart's question died away. All the girls giggled while Harry groaned from his still mostly hidden spot. A child, roughly seven from the look of him, was cradled asleep in Jack's arms. He was followed by a middle-aged woman whose appearance clearly told who she was related to. Ianto smiled a welcome to both of them.

"What is he doing here?" Jack demanded.

"He's our new dirty tricks instructor," Ianto said calmly. "And he's just as annoying about the boys as you are!"

"I was going to call him when we had a free moment." He chuckled softly when Ianto complained. "Ianto, you should have known he'd be like that." He shifted his attention to Hart for a moment. "He hates being coddled. We're going to have all kinds of trouble seeing him through this."

"And I will now ignore you both," Ianto said. He rose to his feet to offer the woman a hand. "Hello," he murmured. "You must be Alice."

ARCANUM 101

“Yes,” she nodded and shook his hand. “I’m sorry to barge in like this, but these soldiers stormed my house looking for Stephen. I managed to get us away before they got completely inside, but once we were out of the house...”

“Don’t be silly,” Jack said. “You’re always welcome in any of our houses.” Jack smiled at Alice. “You’re always welcome in our life.” He freed a hand to reach out and stroke her cheek. “I’m so happy you called me for help.”

“Jack’s right, Alice,” Ianto said. “You’re always welcome.”

“You’re... ah...” She looked from his face to his stomach and back again. A faint blush colored her cheeks. “Sorry, none of my business.”

“Yes, I’m pregnant,” Ianto snapped. “Yes, it’s Jack’s. Yes, I’ll relax.” He pouted when Lavender giggled at him. “Sorry about that.”

“Mom once told me he drove her spare when she carried me,” Alice said hesitantly. “Oh, God, I’m talking to a pregnant man like it’s... it’s normal.” She blinked at Ianto before smiling at him. “Are you all right? There won’t be any trouble with the delivery?”

“I’ve got at least sixteen people hovering over me all the time,” Ianto said. He chuckled softly and shook his head. “You’ll be in good company if you start up too, but no, everything’s fine so far.”

A soft answering chuckle came from Alice. Ianto knew he’d like her once she was over her shock. Her smile deepened as she shook her head. “No, I think sixteen are enough.” There was something in her expression which said she’d be aiding and abetting Ianto’s attempts to escape the coddling. “Dad, where do we put Stephen?”

“Ianto’s right, Alice,” Jack said. “You’re always welcome. Let me show you a room...” he trailed off and looked helplessly over at Ianto. “Um...”

He thought for a moment. “The room next to our suite is empty,” Ianto said. “It’s large enough for Alice to share with Stephen. Or if she wants to be alone, you could put Stephen in the nursery with Mica.”

ARCANUM 101

"I'd like to keep him with me until he gets used to... well... everything," Alice said. "The attack scared him."

Both men nodded. Ianto inclined his head. He was the same way with Mica which was why the nursery suite currently had a door connecting it to the Master Suite even though the rooms were actually on different levels of the house. "Of course," Ianto said. "I'm that way about Mica sometimes."

"Or Mica's like that about you," Jack interrupted. "Since Stephen's already asleep, I'll take you up." He pointed a finger at Hart. "You stay put," he ordered. "I'll be right back."

As the trio turned toward the hall, Ianto thought for a moment and then nodded more to himself than anyone else. "Alice?" he called. When she looked back at him, he smiled again. "Would you like something to eat before you settle in for the night? We can also have some milk ready for Stephen if he wakes up in the middle of the night."

"Only if it's not too much trouble."

"No trouble at all," Ianto said. "I'll have Hermione and Pansy bring a tray up in a few minutes."

"Thank you then," Alice nodded. "Good night."

A chorus of good nights echoed in their wake as the trio left the room. Ianto returned to his chair and sighed softly. In the morning, he needed to talk to Pommy about the pregnancy. His back was killing him. A soft noise from in front of him had him looking up to see Hermione all but glaring down at him.

"Not that I mind doing it," she said. "She's one of my sisters after all but why aren't you just sending Mipsy?"

Before Ianto could reply, Pansy's hand reached out and smacked the back of Hermione's head causing his daughter to yelp in shock. "Probably because it would scare her," Pansy said. "She's already frightened enough by whatever had her calling Professor Harkness in a panic. Use that overly large brain of yours sometimes, Mione."

ARCANUM 101

“Exactly,” Ianto added. “We don’t know how much she knows about this world. Or which of us is related to Jack so we start as normal as possible until we can talk to her and get her comfortable with us.”

“Makes sense,” Hermione said. “I’ll go find the kitchen and get Mipsy to put together a tray.”

“Thank you, Hermione,” Ianto said. He smiled, held up his arms and accepted a hug from each of the girls. “You can head to bed afterwards, if you want. You really don’t want to be around when Jack, John and I talk.” He glanced at the other kids. “That goes for all of you. Go on, get some sleep.”

“Tad!” Hermione said with a laugh. “You know I’m always trying to learn new swear words.”

“You’re going to learn a lot in more languages than you can dream up now that John’s here.”

“I’m sure I will, but you’re right. Not tonight.” Hermione stifled a yawn behind her hand. “I’m too tired.” Pansy leant over, whispered to Hermione who blushed deeply but murmured, “Not that tired.” Grabbing her girlfriend’s hand, she started for the hall.

“Go, rest,” Ianto ordered. He pointed imperiously toward the hall door. “We’re going to have a nice quiet Christmas tomorrow even if I have to send anyone causing problems on a visit with the weevils!”

CHAPTER EIGHT

Ianto returned to his chair and grimaced as he sat down again. He absently reached back to rub at his lower back before looking up to wave Hart to Lavender's abandoned chair. "You can sit," he said quietly. "Harry," he called. "Go on up. I'm certain Draco's in your room waiting for you." A soft chuckle escaped Harry as he crossed the room to the hall entrance. He nodded a good night, slipped out, and Ianto shifted his attention to Hart again. "Will you...?" he snapped. He couldn't finish because Hart's hand slapped over his mouth.

"Hush, Eye Candy," Hart said. "You need to relax. Don't think I didn't catch you rubbing at your back just now." He lowered his hand. "Now, where's your room? You need to get to bed, relax and loosen up those muscles."

Ianto blinked up at Hart from the chair. "What...?" he asked. "All right, who are you and what have you done with John Hart?"

"What? I'm not allowed to be human?"

"It's unexpected," Ianto replied. He levered himself up from the chair. He swayed a bit and yelped when Hart calmly caught him before he could fall. "Thank you," he whispered. He leant on Hart until he was

ARCANUM 101

certain of his balance, but before he could straighten, Hart actually made him like the other man by kneading the muscles of his lower back until all Ianto could do was purr softly as the pain eased.

“What the hell are you doing, John?”

Ianto jumped, whimpered, and then moaned in pain at Jack’s demand from the doorway. Before he could move, Hart pressed his head down onto his shoulder and steadied him again.

“I’m doing what you should be,” Hart snarled. “Your co-parent is in pain and you’re yelling at me. Now, we should get him into bed.”

“You are not putting Ianto to bed!” Jack snapped. “If anyone puts Ianto to bed, it’s me! Now give him here.”

“Will you both stop it?” Ianto yelled. He was sore, tired, and a bit dizzy. All he wanted was for it to all stop but instead he had to put up with these two acting like dogs fighting over their favorite bone. “Just stop it!”

“Calm down!” both men shouted back at him. “You need to relax, Ianto,” Jack added at a bit lower volume.”

“What is going on here?” Alice’s voice echoed from the hall door. “I could hear you yelling all the way upstairs.” There was a moment of silence before she suddenly appeared next to Ianto and wrapped a hand around his wrist. “Hmm... Right, everyone out,” she suddenly ordered. “Dad, if you can’t settle down, you’re out, too. Now, Ianto...” she said. Her hands reached out, gently tugged Ianto from Hart’s hold and led him over to the nearby sofa. “Lay down here for a minute.”

“Alice!” Jack protested. “You can’t go kicking me out.”

“I’m the only qualified medical person in this room at the moment and what I say goes,” Alice retorted. She crouched down beside Ianto. “And don’t whine I’m not kicking you out. Just keep quiet and let me talk to Ianto.”

Ianto shook his head as Jack pouted at the back of Alice’s head. He sighed tiredly around a bit of a yawn. “Alice... I...” he trailed off for a

moment, shook his head and reached beneath himself to rub at his back again.

A sympathetic smile graced Alice's face. It transformed her from a moderately plain woman to a very pretty one. "It's twins, isn't it?" she said more than asked.

"Yeah," Ianto nodded. "Twin boys." He glared at Jack over Alice's shoulder. "Who are amazingly more trouble to carry than Mica was."

"Twins often are," Alice replied. "You're carrying two independent bodies so you get pressure in eight times as many places." She again wrapped her hand around his wrist. He gave her a bit of a raised eyebrow look but she glared him into silence. "And your body is trying to accommodate stresses a male body was not designed to do." She silently counted, shook her head, and then reached out to smooth his hair back. "Who's your doctor?"

"Depends on who you ask when," Ianto replied. He liked Alice. She was calming, sympathetic and she was talking to him not about him. "Owen Harper, Martha Jones and Poppy Pomfrey. They're still trying to decide who's actually in charge." He stared intently at her before deciding to throw all caution to the winds. "Madam Pomfrey is a wizarding healer. The others are muggle doctors." He whimpered softly and shifted about on the sofa until his back eased up again. "I swear I never hurt like this when I carried Mica. This pain didn't happen until much later with her."

"Wizarding? Muggles?" Alice asked. She quickly shook her head at him. "Never mind, I'll expect explanations later. Of course you didn't hurt as much when you carried one." She gave him a soft smile. "If I were dealing with a female pregnancy, I would say everything is going perfectly normally."

Ianto thought for a brief moment. He really, really liked Alice. She knew what she was doing, treated him like a human being, and explained things to him. He definitely liked the last. He pulled out his

ARCANUM 101

wand and conjured up a small medical kit for her. “Could you check? Make certain everything’s okay?” He dropped his gaze from hers before lifting it again. “Because, to be blunt about it, right now you’re at least telling me things rather than making lots of humming noises before telling me to ‘relax, Teaboy’.”

“How the hell did you do that?” Alice demanded. She stared at the kit even as she reached out to open it and check out the contents.

Ianto chuckled softly at her shock. “I’m a wizard,” he said. “It’s how I ended up pregnant.” He nodded to the kit she was looking at so intently. “I wanted it for you, so I conjured it up.” He smiled and offered her his wand. “Here, hold this and say ‘lumos’,” he said.

Alice leant back a bit. Her expression was a mix of equal parts fear and curiosity. “Don’t be daft,” she protested. “I don’t know how to use one of those things.”

“Indulge me, please?” he said. Ianto gave her an encouraging smile. “Every one of your living siblings who were fathered by Jack are wizards so you likely are too. You may not have a lot of talent, but if it’s there, there’s a chance Stephen’s a wizard.” He paused for a moment, glanced at Jack, and then nodded. “It could be why you were attacked earlier tonight.”

“I should have known it had something to do with Dad,” she said. “All right.” She took the wand, held it cautiously, and idly waved it. “Lumos!”

Ianto chuckles for a moment only to turn the laughter into a grin when she produced a tiny soft light. “Welcome to the club,” he murmured. “We’ll talk about it in detail later, but if you have any medical training, I’m now commandeering you to be in charge.” He pouted at Jack behind her where the older man was staring in shock at Alice. “I’m so sick of not knowing what’s going on with me!”

“Oh my God,” Alice muttered. She quickly handed the wand back to Ianto. “I’m a... Stephen...” She sat abruptly on the floor by the sofa.

“I can’t deal with this right now,” she muttered. She shook her head before nodding to Ianto. “Yes, I do have medical training. In both obstetrics and emergency care.” She tilted her head at him. “You want me as your own personal medical buffer?”

Ianto nodded vigorously. “We’ll deal with all the explanations later,” he said. “Just translate the humming, hawing and ‘you must relax’ into something logical.” He looked past her at the still hovering Jack and John. He dropped his voice to a near whisper. “And tell me why I’m getting sick and dizzy all the time.”

“We’ll start by making sure you eat and drink properly,” Alice said. “A lot of pregnant women have stress issues and end up shortchanging themselves on that front. I’m going to assume that goes for you as well especially when I factor in Torchwood.”

Ianto nodded and blushed. “They took away my coffee,” he complained. “I hate tea which they are constantly foisting on me now. And I haven’t been able to find anything else to drink regularly yet.”

Alice hummed softly while she worked on taking Ianto’s blood pressure, checked his heart, and listened gently to his stomach. “I’ll have Dad find you a number of beverages. Sports drinks, flavored waters, that sort of thing,” she said. “We’ll try everything until we find something you like. Now, as to food, what have you been eating for breakfast?”

“Toast... occasionally eggs. Why?”

“Because many pregnant women don’t like to eat in the morning and end up doing what you’re doing,” Alice explained. “We’ll need to work out a proper diet. You need fruit, vegetables and good protein as well as the odd piece of toast and egg.”

“I’m in for it now,” Ianto said with a soft chuckle. “So you know, for all intents and purposes, this pregnancy can be managed just like a woman’s high risk multiples pregnancy.” He smiled at her. “I just hate

ARCANUM 101

being wrapped in cotton wool by everyone and not allowed to do anything.”

“Look at it from their point of view,” Alice snapped. “You’re not a woman. That would make any proper doctor twitchy, but I’ll bet my savings account you’re not exactly a model patient either.”

“I haven’t exactly been cooperating,” Ianto admitted. He could feel himself blushing in response to her tart comments. “But unlike you, they don’t tell me anything. It’s constantly ‘don’t do that’ or ‘sit down and relax’.”

“Doctors can be very high-handed. That’s why God invented nurses,” Alice replied with a grin. “Now, let’s get you to bed. I’ll massage your back a little and show Jack how to do it properly.”

“Thank you,” Ianto said. He struggled up from the sofa and nodded to her. “I didn’t want to complain about the back ache as they’d all do it again.” He gave her a beseeching look. “I am so bored!”

Alice looked over at Jack who nodded in response. “We’ll need to find something to keep you busy then.”

“I know you’ll keep them in line,” he said. Then he yawned. “Okay... bed... the kids will all be up early tomorrow.” He considered for a moment then tentatively hugged Alice, murmuring, “Thank you.”

It took a moment or two for Alice to respond, but soon she was hugging him in return. “I’ll need your help, too,” she whispered. “I don’t know what’s happening or what I’m doing here. And Stephen... I need to protect Stephen.”

“I’ll explain it all tomorrow,” Ianto said. “I promise.” He pulled back to look at her. “And we’ll all protect Stephen. He’s family, Alice. So are you.”

“I suppose so,” she said. “All right, bed it is.” She looked back over her shoulder at Jack. “Come on, Dad, massage lessons for you.”

“But I know how to do that already,” Jack protested. He automatically caught the pillow Ianto threw at him in protest.

ARCANUM 101

“Not this kind,” she replied. “This is for medical reasons.”

Jack nodded, stepped around Alice, and picked up Ianto. He gave John a long look and a head tilt toward the door. “Come on then,” he said.

CHAPTER NINE

When Gwen Cooper descended from her luxury suite early on Christmas morning, she received three shocks. One, Ianto was eating without protest at the dining room table. Two, Jack wasn't hovering over Ianto. And three, John Hart was taking a glass, which he'd carefully sniffed first, to Ianto before glowering at the young man until he started to drink from it. "What in the hell is he doing here?" she demanded while pointing a finger at Hart.

John, Jack and an unfamiliar woman all turned on her and shouted, "Quiet down!" They then gave each other rueful looks before Jack continued, "Ianto hired him to teach Lavender all the dirty tricks in the book."

Gwen considered the group for several minutes while using the cover of surveying the buffet set up on the sideboard to watch the others in the room. The children who were up were anxiously waiting for the chance to attack the party room. Owen was apparently nursing a hangover again. Tosh was speaking quietly to Alys and Professor Flitwick while Minerva watched over that conversation intently. At the other end of the table, Jack and Ianto were being disturbingly domestic

ARCANUM 101

while Hart watched them both indulgently, if a bit sadly, from the nearby corner. “So,” Gwen said. “Why’d you take the job, Hart?”

“Teaching Lavender?” He never took his eyes off the scene in front of him. It disturbed Gwen on some deep level. “Because I was getting paid for it,” he said. “Plus, it’s nice to pass on those skills.” He crossed the room to stand beside her, picked up a pitcher, sniffed at it and poured another glassful. Gwen watched as he carted the glass over and handed it to Ianto. He then hovered until Ianto sipped from it with a resigned look before returning to Gwen’s side of the room. “Why?”

Gwen considered for a moment. She could see both Jack and the stranger covertly watching her grill Hart. That would make things more difficult. He’d be more likely to say what he thought Jack wanted to hear while in the same room with the Captain. “Why don’t you and I go to the kitchen and make Ianto something to snack on?” She grabbed Hart by the arm and dragged him behind her into the kitchen. She all but flung him into the island in the center of the room. “What are you up to, Hart?” she demanded.

John crossed his arms over his chest, leant back against the island and crossed his ankles. “Who says I’m up to anything?” he asked back.

“Says the nightmares I have from you poisoning me, mister,” she retorted. “You’ve always been obsessed with Jack. Now you want me to believe you’re happy with the situation?”

John straightened away from the island. He looked about the room before crossing over to rummage in the fridge. He glared at her over the door. “What I feel doesn’t matter, Jack’s made his choice.” He gave her a somewhat bitter smile. “I do not interfere in a truly committed relationship especially when there are kids involved.” He pointed a finger over the door at her. “Which means you are off the hook as well, Ms. Cooper,” he said. “Ianto introduced me to your daughter this morning.”

“Say that again and mean it,” she retorted.

ARCANUM 101

“I do not interfere in a truly committed relationship,” John snapped. He bit off each word as he spoke. “Especially one where there are children involved.” He closed the fridge but continued to glare at her. “Look I wouldn’t be any kind of partner or friend if I didn’t see Jack’s children born safely. It’s my duty, Gwen Cooper,” he said. “I’m to protect Jack’s chosen companion and his children if he’s unable to do so for any reason.” He sighed softly. “This is a war or so he says. He can concentrate better on his job as general if he knows Ianto’s protected.”

“And I’m supposed to believe it, just like that?” Gwen shook her head at him. “Convince me, Hart. Tell me why it is your duty.” She fixed him with her ‘don’t try to bullshit me’ glare. “And don’t give me that crap about partner. I know a bit about the Time Agency now and it worked on a free-for-all principle.”

John snarled incoherently at her. He shifted, reopened the fridge and started pulling things out to set on the nearby island. “It’s conditioning, Ms. Cooper.” He gave her a resigned look. “Yeah, I was and likely still am a bit obsessed with Jack. Five years in a time loop will do that to you, but even I know what the limits are.” He stared at her over the door and then slammed it shut. He looked down at Mipsy and asked her for a knife. “I doubt I could explain it to you at all. You don’t have the same frames of reference as I do.”

Gwen sat on a stool at the island, crossed her arms over her chest, and glowered back at him. “Try me,” she snarled.

“Goddess, you are demanding, aren’t you?” John considered her while he washed various fruits in the island sink. A half smile graced his lips as he looked down at Mipsy to take the knife from her. He started peeling the fruit he’d chosen. “I really can’t think of a twenty-first century comparison to work from. This era’s history was always Jack’s strong suit.”

ARCANUM 101

“Hart, you’re starting to piss me off and these days that’s a dangerous thing. I’m fairly well educated nowadays, so just say your piece.”

John sighed. He accepted a bowl from Mipsy and started cutting up and tossing the fruit into it. “Jack is and was my commanding officer regardless of how I behaved when I was here before.”

“Which is all well and good,” Gwen retorted. “And I would believe you if you were talking about battle conditions, but we’re talking about the man you loved, Hart. The man you tried to seduce into going away with you. So this is not about commanding officers.” She stared at him, and then softer and more gently said, “You want him to be happy.”

“He is happy.” John nodded to the doorway to the dining room. “Look at him, Gwen, and tell me you can’t see it.” He sighed softly. “Ianto makes him happy. Those kids make him happy. And I’ll do whatever I have to in order to keep him happy.” He chuckled and returned to his work. “But there’s also a culture thing to it which I cannot explain at all. It’s what I grew up with... there’s...” he trailed off and gave her a helpless shrug.

“All right,” Gwen conceded. “Maybe someday we’ll sit down and take all the time you need to explain it.”

“I wouldn’t expect anything less,” he said. He laughed softly. “As bad a comparison as it is, the role I’ve assigned to myself is a cross between that of the *Kızlar Ağası* and ‘Captain of the Guard’. It’s my job to be certain that all of Jack’s children and his spouse are safe from any harm. If Jack falls in battle and it looks like Ianto could be taken, I will do anything up to and including sacrificing myself to get Ianto, Mica and the babies Ianto’s carrying out of harm’s way.” John considered her for a long moment. “Does that make better sense?”

“Explain the term... Kiz... whatever...”

“Do I have to?”

“Yes, dammit!”

ARCANUM 101

“Fine!” John snapped. “It’s the title of the chief eunuch. He who guards the mates and children of a ruler,” he snarled. He frowned deeply at her. “Thank the goddess that isn’t done anymore!”

“You... you...” Gwen pointed a finger at Hart and started laughing hysterically. When she developed the hiccups, Hart rummaged about until he found a glass, filled it with water and shoved it into her hand. “All right, John,” she said after she calmed again. “You’re Jack’s paladin. Got it.” She tilted her head a bit. “Although come to think of it, you’re more like Ianto’s paladin,” she said before going off into more laughter.

“What?”

“His knight protector... his sworn guardian,” she explained. “You know!”

“Oh,” John nodded. “Yes, that’s it.” He smiled at her. “I told you Earth history isn’t my strong suit.”

“I suppose it fits,” Gwen said. “My daughter, Ginevra, has been telling Rhys and I about wizarding genealogy. Ianto’s descended from three great families – the Malfoys, the Blacks and the Lestranges.” She stared at Hart as the older man dropped the knife he was holding. “John? What’s wrong?”

“Say that again?”

“What?” she asked. “That Ianto is descended from the Malfoys, the Blacks and the Lestranges?”

“You’re not bullshitting me?” John demanded. He snatched the knife up from the island counter and pointed it at her. “Those exact families.”

“Why would I take the piss about that?” Gwen retorted. “Ginevra is also related to some of those families. And Draco, you’ve met him – Jack and Ianto’s adopted son – is the last of the direct Malfoys.”

“The boy with the white blonde hair muttering about hair dye?” John asked. “That’s Draco, right?” He shoved a hand through his hair. “This is important. Exactly how is Ianto related to those families?”

“Ah,” Gwen started before trailing off to think. “He’s a Lestrangle through his birth father and a Black through his mother. The Malfoys, that’s a collateral thing although I think he has a Malfoy great-grandmother. I don’t know exactly.” She shook her head a bit. “It’s all a bit of a jumble in my head actually.” She looked up to find Hart staring at her. “John, what the hell is wrong?”

“Ianto’s not Eye Candy’s birth name, is it?” He shook his head. “I know about the girl. The Lovegood chit, but please, please tell me Ianto’s name really is Ianto Jones.”

“That’s the name his adoptive parents gave him, yes,” Gwen said. “But his birth name is Sarin Lestrangle.”

John muttered curses in ever language he knew and a few he was certain he made up on the spot. “This is The Great Welsh War, isn’t it?” he muttered more to himself than her. “The second war with Voldemort.” He muttered a few more curses. “He cannot be...”

“All right,” Gwen said. She watched him intently. “You’re scaring me, John. What do you know about this and are you supposed to tell us anything? Jack’s told us about what happens when you screw up the timelines.”

“Everyone knows about this,” John said. “It’s standard children’s history. We all learn it in school. I just...” he trailed off for a moment. “I never expected to be in the middle of it.”

“I don’t think any of us expected to be in the middle of it,” Gwen said tiredly. She sighed softly. “Less than a month ago, I was planning my wedding. A simple family thing in a nice country hotel and I would be Mrs. Rhys Williams. Now...” she broke off as she realized John was staring at her again. “John, why are you looking at me like that?”

ARCANUM 101

“Gwen Cooper-Williams?” he said rather than asked. “Ginvera Cooper-Williams?” He shook his head before she could answer. “Jack Harkness!” he yelled.

“What do you want, John?” Jack yelled back from the dining room.

“Get that gorgeous arse of yours in here,” John screamed back. “We need to talk!”

CHAPTER TEN

With his ever familiar grin firmly in place, Jack strolled into the kitchen a few minutes later. “Ianto asked me to tell you that if you lay a single finger on my gorgeous arse, he’ll cut it off with rusty cuticle scissors.” He grinned even more broadly after delivering the threat. “Now, what’s the problem?”

“There’s no way in hell I’ll be laying a finger on your arse anymore unless I need to shove you out of the way of a dangerous item,” John snapped in response. He again pointed the knife at Gwen. “Why the hell didn’t you tell me she was Gwen Cooper-Williams!”

Jack stared at a confused Gwen, a furious Hart and back at Gwen. “She’s not that yet,” he said. “Oh... oh, shit.” He grabbed a stool and dropped down onto it.

“Exactly,” John said. “Have you figured out who your spouse is yet? Or is that still a surprise?”

Before Jack could answer, Gwen jumped into the conversation. “All right, you two, stop it.” She glared at both of them as they stared at her in a mix of shock and confusion. “What is going on?”

ARCANUM 101

“John,” Jack said slowly. “Maybe we shouldn’t be talking about this in front of Gwen. We could change the future just by doing that.”

“We already have and you know it.” John leant forward to stare into Jack’s eyes for a long moment. He saw no real recognition of the situation they were both in. “You don’t remember, do you?”

“No.”

“Fucking hell, Jack,” John muttered. “At least tell me you remember who the Lovegood chit is.”

“Of course I do,” Jack snarled. “She started talking about Snorkacks and she looks just like...” he broke off abruptly with a significant look at Gwen. He watched her jaw set, that obstinate look light her eyes, and sighed deeply. “Knowing you, you won’t be still until you understand. Give me your word that you’ll keep your mouth shut no matter what.” He paused for a moment and sighed. “You can tell Rhys, I guess, but nobody else. No one at all, Gwen.”

“Wait a minute, Gwen,” John interrupted as she opened her mouth to reply. He reached over and wrapped a hand around her wrist, punched a button on his own wriststrap and nodded to her. “Now give him your word.”

“Of course,” she said. “You have my word. I won’t tell anyone.”

“Thank you,” John replied. He shifted his attention to Jack and smiled. “Go for it. You can explain this one.”

“I think you remember more than I do,” Jack said. “You start and I’ll fill in.”

“I only know my end of it,” John said. “Imagine my shock to discover I’m sitting across from one of the heroines of the Welsh War, that you’re currently guarding your many times great grandmother and you’ve decided to throw me into the middle of it.”

“What did you just say?” Gwen demanded.

“I said I’m sitting across a kitchen island from an intergalactic heroine. That Jack is guarding his many times great grandmother. He’s

ARCANUM 101

descended from Luna Lovegood and Blaise Zambini. I sure as hell didn't..." he trailed off and stared at Jack in shock. "Fucking hell, Jack."

"If either one of you stops now," Gwen said. "You're dead."

"Sorry, Gwen, I can't tell you without mucking up the timelines." John glared Jack into silence before he could even demand answers. "Nor am I telling you for the same reason." He looked between two nearly identical glares and sighed. "I'll tell you what I can, Gwen," he said finally. "In our time, we call this The Great Welsh War. This war will define the human race for millennia. If we muck it up and lose..." he trailed off. "Well, we can't, that's all." He dragged in a breath and stared into the dining room where Ianto was holding court over the kids. "Many people in the Rim Worlds are descended from those kids out there, including your Ginevra, and the kids Ianto is carrying. The kids you'll have in the future. I can't tell you much more than that without bringing the Reapers down on us."

"You know that title you gave me, Gwen?" Jack asked. "I'm starting to think you were having a bit of precognition."

"It fit though," Gwen replied.

"Dammit, Jack," John snarled. He stared at his friend, once lover, and apparent distant ancestor. "The Agency wiped you, didn't it? Because I have a really big problem at the moment and it has everything to do with Ianto."

"I thought you knew!"

"I suspected when you disappeared, but I wasn't certain." John shook his head and returned to his work on the fruit. "You just left!" He looked over at Gwen and sighed tiredly. "What little I have left of my honor is demanding I do something which could open a really large can of worms and puts me permanently in the center of this war."

"Think about it carefully," Gwen said. "Should Jack know about it at this point?"

ARCANUM 101

“Does he know the name of Ianto’s childhood home yet?”

“He told me,” Jack said. He reached over and snatched a piece of fruit from the bowl. “It’s Afalglyn.”

“If that didn’t trigger his memories,” John said. “Then I honestly don’t know. I’m going to go a bit insane trying to wait until I can’t wait any longer.”

“Jack?” Gwen asked. “Let me talk to John alone. Please?”

Jack looked between them for a moment before he snatched up a handful of fruit and nodded. “Don’t be long,” he said. “The kids are waiting on you before descending on that tree you insisted on yesterday.”

Gwen watched Jack leave the room. She stared after him for a long while before turning back to John. “What you did with the wriststrap? That keeps me from telling anyone other than Rhys?”

“Yes,” John nodded. “Why?”

“Because I can be the person you can talk to,” she said. “We can make decisions about what to tell Jack and Ianto as we go.” She shook her head and sighed herself. “I have a feeling this is going to get complicated.”

“That’s putting it mildly,” he said. “You’re actually Welsh. You can’t tell me you can’t figure out what Ianto’s ancestral title is when you translate the name of his childhood home.”

“Afalglyn?” she said. At his nod, she thought for a moment before her jaw dropped in shock. “Valley of Apples, but that... that’s impossible.”

“The ancient title for the wizard who resides there,” John said with a brisk nod. “Descended from ‘the stranger’, ‘the bad fairy’ and ‘the black’,” he explained. “Exactly. It’s taking everything I have to ignore the demands of blood and honor and wait... just wait...”

“So who are you descended from, John Hart?”

ARCANUM 101

"I can't tell you, Gwen," he said. "And I just realized that now that I'm in this, I can't leave. I won't ever leave this planet again."

"Why not?" she asked. "And what do you mean by 'resides'? I thought Ianto's home was empty."

"It's empty now," he said. "If I leave, I'll cause a paradox." He tossed the last of the fruit into the bowl and tossed the knife he'd been using into the sink. "It's a hard thing to realize that you're famous under a different name."

"Well, tell me that at least," Gwen ordered. "Who will you be known as?"

He looked over at Gwen, considering her for several minutes, and nodded. He circled the island to lean against it just inches from where she sat. He waved a hand toward the dining room. "See that little blonde I'm supposed to teach? If things fall out the way I was taught at the academy... what they erased from Jack's memory... then in about three years, after we've destroyed Voldemort of course, I marry her." He chuckled softly and shook his head. "I'm recorded in the history books as 'John H. Brown.'"

"She's a child!" Gwen immediately held up a hand. "Don't even say it. I know that was stupid of me." She looked at the kids and shook her head. "None of them are children anymore, are they?" She drummed her nails on the island. That bothered her. These kids should be having a chance to be kids, not training to lead a guerrilla war because their elders were cowards. "One other thing, Jack, does he have to stay too?"

"Jack stays," John said. He watched Jack feeding Ianto bits of fruit and smiled sadly. "You really haven't put it together yet, have you?" He twisted about a bit to look at her. "Pretty little Gwen in the middle of what becomes a fairy tale for children and history lessons for adults who travel in time." He shoved a hand through his hair. "He will leave occasionally, but he'll always return to Ianto's side."

ARCANUM 101

“If I believe what you’re suggesting, you’re telling me that the story travels back in time as well as forward. That’s impossible, John!”

“It’s a self contained loop, Gwen.” He shifted about to lean an elbow on the island. He stared at her and wondered if she did understand just what he was saying to her. “Jack and I have to be here or the tale won’t end the way it needs to. This world could fall to Voldemort.” He looked over at Jack again. “The original tale... I think that’s about Ianto’s many times distant ancestor but the tale Jack and I learnt as students. Well, we’re living it now.” He smiled and smirked at her. “You’re going to marry Rhys tonight, Gwen. And you two will play house parents to the group of kids left here...”

“What!”

“You’re going to get married later tonight because you do something silly and Rhys demands it,” John said. “Or so the history books say.”

“Oh, Lord,” Gwen muttered. “Just stop right there. Let’s just let it happen. But the kids, why would we leave them here?”

“Too many to keep in the Hub,” John explained. “Plus, splitting them up keeps Voldemort from killing them all off.” He laughed softly at her affronted look. “No, Gwen, they don’t die. At least not all of them. We will lose a couple here and there, but that’s war.” He considered for a moment. “I’m saying too much, aren’t I?”

“I think so,” Gwen muttered. “But I think you’ll need to talk to someone from time to time or all that stuff in your head will drive you crazy. Just remember I’m here,” she said.

John nodded. “I’ll remember,” he said. He held out a hand to Gwen and smiled. “Come’n, Gwen, the kids are waiting on us.”

She giggled, but took his hand, letting him pull her up to her feet. “It’s never a good thing to keep kids waiting,” she said. Gwen let out a breath and shook her head. “Am I crazy for wanting to give them a bit of ‘normal’ in the middle of this mess?”

ARCANUM 101

“No. They’ll need it, Gwen, in the days to come.” John looked at her and shook his head. “We all will need the memory of this party.”

INTERLUDE

Deep in the bowels of Hogwarts Castle, Severus Snape bent his head over the cauldron in front of him and slowly stirred the simmering potion with a fine metal stirring rod. He kept his focus on the potion, a modified headache remedy of his own devising, which he desperately needed after two days confined to the Great Hall while muggles and muggleborns screamed as entertainment for Voldemort. The majority of his fellow Death Eaters may take pleasure in torture for torture's sake; however, he had better things to do than kill off the future of the wizarding world.

A silencing spell muffled the sounds of the ongoing revel several stories above his personal potions lab. With a final stir, Severus used his wand to modify the height of the flame so the potion could simmer gently for the next hour. Only then would it reach full potency. He moved on to the next potion on his list, an antihallucinogenic for Voldemort, and pulled out a silver cauldron to set on the trivet. A soft spell started the fire beneath to heat the water he slowly swirled around the container.

ARCANUM 101

While he waited for the water to come to a boil, Snape leant back and arched his back. He ached from crouching over the table. A soft chuckle escaped him. He knew his back pain paled in comparison to what Ianto Jones was likely suffering wherever he was holed up now with Captain Harkness. Snape reached for his quill and made a note to work up a set of potions suitable for the pregnant man to ease any cramps he might develop.

A quick rap on the door brought his head up in time to watch Rodolphus Lestrangle calmly stroll into his lab as if he owned the place. He quirked an eyebrow at the other man in question. There was no denying who Rodolphus was related to. Both he and Sarin had the same natural fastidiousness which seemed to be bred into all the Lestranges. Looking at Voldemort's senior torturer was looking at Sarin in twenty or thirty years, both men had the same dark hair and storm blue eyes. While Sarin cultivated a fine muggle appearance, his father was the epitome of wizarding pureblood. "To what do I owe the pleasure?" Snape asked.

"I needed a break," Rodolphus replied. He flung himself onto one of the stools in the lab, tilted it back on two legs and rested his elbows on the counter behind him. "I never thought I'd see the day when Rabastan would be as insane as my late wife." A soft disparaging sound slipped from the man. "Were any of Bella's rants about Sarin true?"

"Since I never heard her rants, I couldn't tell you," Snape replied. He wandered around the lab and gathered up the ingredients for the potion. Setting them out on the table, he smiled at his fellow Death Eater. "Sarin is... unique."

A hum of agreement came from Rodolphus. "And that little girl Bella and Lucius were enjoying torturing so much at the initiations," he said. "Was she my grandchild?"

Snape considered the man for a moment. Of all the questions about Sarin he expected from Rodolphus, that was not one of them. He tilted

ARCANUM 101

his head and thought for a moment. Carefully, cautiously, he extended his senses and used his occlumency to read the other man's thoughts. To his surprise, there was no attempt to keep him out, keep him from reading anything Rodolphus was thinking about Sarin, Voldemort, and life in general. "And if she was?" Snape asked.

"Then she was a very brave little girl." Rodolphus said.

"You have no idea," Snape said. Now he knew the answer to one of his questions about the head of the Lestrange family – how long would it be before the man knew their 'master' was insane? It seemed he'd known all along but joined up to please his father and his wife. "So, why'd you come down now?"

"I told you," he said. "I needed a break from that." He pointed at the ceiling. "Our Master is planning a raid. One which if I understand some of the information from the Patel sisters will upset my son when it occurs," he said. He sent a folded bit of parchment, neatly sealed with the Lestrange crest, and tapped his fingers on it. "You know both of us will be asked along."

"We always are," Snape said. He set aside the ingredients for his current project in favor of bottling the headache potion. He nodded toward the parchment but received no answer to his silent question. Instead, to his shock, Rodolphus slipped off his heavy ornate signet ring to set it on top of the parchment.

"We aren't going to win this war," he murmured. "And those thoughts will lead to my death." Rodolphus snorted a bitter laugh and started turning the ring in circles with the tip of one finger. "The only question now is how and when that will occur – at the hands of the Dark Lord before my son and his lover win this war, or afterwards at the hands of the aurors," he said. He rose to his feet, patted the table, and smiled. "I'll see you upstairs, Severus. We're supposed to leave on this raid in twenty minutes."

ARCANUM 101

“I’ll be there,” Snape replied. He glanced down, saw Sarin’s name on the parchment and slid it across the table toward him. The abandoned ring came with it. In a single swift motion, he tucked both pieces into an inner pocket of his robes. “Are you...?”

“I’ve made my decision, Severus,” Rodolphus said. He gave a final nod and slipped back out of the lab leaving Snape to attempt to figure out the new dynamics amongst the Death Eaters if the senior torturer was now doubting the mission.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Exhausted, Ianto eased his way out of the armchair he'd been ensconced in for most of the day and slipped from the ballroom. He timed his escape for when John and Jack were busy giving 'pointers' to Ron and Percy regarding the chess game. Catching Alice's eye, he tilted his head toward the door and smiled when she murmured to Stephen and followed him from the room. He led her to the study, closed the door and pulled out his wand to cast a silencing spell on the room. "Ah, quiet," he murmured and flung himself onto the sofa in the room.

"So," Alice said. "You wanted to see me?"

"I thought you wouldn't mind an escape from the chaos," he replied. "Plus, you wanted some answers so I found us a place to talk."

"Now that we're here, I don't know what to say," Alice replied. She wandered the room for a bit until her eye caught on the tapestry which dominated one wall of the room. "What's this?"

"That's the Harkness-Jones family tapestry," Ianto said. He rose to his feet and joined her next to it. "Essentially a wizarding genealogy, it records all the children in the family. Ours is done by relation to Jack,"

he explained. He scanned it for a moment until he found her and tapped the tapestry with his wand. “Here’s you and Stephen, then down here closer to Jack to show she’s older is your half-sister Alys Cole. Then comes your other half-sister, Monica,” he paused and tapped another spot on the tapestry. “She raised Hermione who’s actually up here to show she’s mine and Jack’s. Between Monica and Hermione is Gwen who Jack’s decided is his daughter.” Ianto shook his head a bit and sighed. “Of course, with Gwen is Rhys and Ginny. After Hermione comes Draco who, thanks to Mica, we adopted as well,” Ianto said. He glanced over at Alice and chuckled. “I know, it’s complicated.”

“Complicated is putting it mildly,” Alice replied. “It’s more like overwhelming.”

“Overwhelming is a good word,” Ianto said. He cast a sidelong glance at Alice. “You’ll get used to it,” he said softly. “That is if you want to remain a part of the family.”

“I...” Alice started and then paused for a moment. “I don’t know. Stephen jumped right in and made himself at home. Aunts, cousins, he didn’t even blink an eye when he saw your stomach, but I’m not so sure I can fit.”

“Kids are adaptable,” Ianto said. “I think you’ll fit right in once you get to know us, but I really need to know if I need to be ready to comfort Jack if you cut him off like Monica has and Hermione had for a while.”

A soft sigh slipped from Alice. “No, I won’t do that,” she finally said. “If only because of Stephen. He was over the moon when I explained who Jack really was. And I have to admit that maybe getting most of my information from my mother may have been...” she trailed off for a moment before giving Ianto a rueful smile. “A bit one-sided.”

“Thank you,” Ianto said. He was relieved to know he wouldn’t have to comfort Jack through an estrangement with one of his daughters. “Jack’s missed you. He’s missed all his kids. He wasn’t allowed to be

around you growing up.” He shook his head at Alice with a tired smile. “It’s why he’s so focused on Mica and the twins. He doesn’t want to miss a thing.”

“When you think about it,” Alice said. “He hasn’t had much luck in relationships. Until you came along,” she paused and turned to consider Ianto. “You make him happy.”

“I just let him be himself,” he said. “Well, most of the time.” He shook his head, rubbed at his lower back and wandered back over to the sofa to sprawl on it. “Now that he’s smothering me in cotton wool and refusing to let me do much of anything, well, I may have to kill him.”

“You two are like a bad comedy skit at times,” Alice replied. A soft, almost girlish giggle escaped her. She settled in the armchair near the sofa and smiled over at Ianto. “It’s nice to see.”

“I don’t know if that’s a compliment or not,” Ianto said. He knew he was blushing, but couldn’t help it. From the moment, he’d learned about Alice he’d wondered if his stepdaughter would accept him in Jack’s life. Her calm acceptance of him and the pregnancy was very reassuring. “But thank you.”

“It is,” she said. “The way you two are together.” She paused and almost shrugged. “It gives me an idea what it must have been like in the good times between my father and my mother. They must have loved each other very much at one time.”

Ianto nodded and smiled. He shifted a bit on the sofa to be more comfortable. “I believe they did,” he said. “Jack has good memories of Lucia, but...” he paused and shrugged. “I’m certain his ‘condition’ didn’t help the relationship.”

Alice laughed. It was a wonderful sound to hear and so very reminiscent of Jack on the rare occasions when Jack truly relaxed and laughed. “You should have heard mother on that topic!” Another laugh escaped Alice before she sobered and became more serious. “And yet, towards the end, she told me she’d been a fool. Don’t misunderstand,

ARCANUM 101

she ran because she was terrified of Torchwood and what it would do and would have done again, but she said she'd come to believe that Jack would have stayed with her no matter what she looked like."

"It is disturbing, what he is, but when he gives his heart, he does so completely," Ianto said. He gave her a small smile. "I just don't want to say something and upset you."

"Don't worry, you won't. It's not..." she hesitated for a moment. She started again after a minute or two of silence. "I can't promise you there won't be days when I go back to the anger and resentment, but I think I've started to grow up." A rueful smile was shared between them. "Finally."

"I'll remember that," Ianto said. "It takes some of us longer than others." He chuckled softly before becoming serious. "Alice, we're in the middle of a war. A war which makes you and Stephen a target because of your relationship to Jack." He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I'd like you to manage this pregnancy. You know that, but I don't know if you want to come back to the Hub with us. Doing so puts you directly into the line of fire again."

"Ianto, as long as you and Jack are fighting this war, everyone around you will be in the line of fire," Alice said. She started to say more but her eyes went wide and unfocused. Her voice, when she spoke again, had a strange resonance and undertone to it. "An evil is coming from the past and the future. The sisters must stand together behind the father or all is lost."

Ianto stared, unable to believe what he was seeing, and struggled off the sofa to kneel in front of Alice. He reached out and gently touched her hand. Alice blinked, but her eyes still remained on whatever vision she was seeing in the distance.

"An evil is coming from the past and the future," she repeated. Her voice still held that strange resonance. "The daughters of the Vortex

ARCANUM 101

must stand behind the father.” There was a momentary pause before she spoke one final time. “The six must awaken the storm or all is lost.”

Silence fell, unbroken save for Alice’s heavy breathing. Ianto gently pressed a hand to her cheek, murmuring, “Alice? *Cariad?*” She blinked, swayed and collapsed against him. Pulling his wand, Ianto quickly canceled the silencing spell on the room. Then, while cradling Alice against his chest, he screamed, “Jack!”

CHAPTER TWELVE

The echoes of his yell had barely died away before Ianto heard several sets of pounding feet head for the study. He stroked Alice's back and summoned up a cup of tea. Handing it to her, he quietly urged her to drink the overly sweet brew. "Trust me, it'll help," he said softly. A crash from the direction of the study doors caused Ianto to look over in time to see Jack and John both attempt to enter the room at the same time. They tumbled to the floor in a tangle of limbs which Hermione crashed into when she tried to follow them without looking where she was going. Finally, Mica just merrily ran over all three as she jumped into the room on a dead run for Ianto.

Alice reached out and caught Mica before she could run into Ianto and knock him to the floor. He smiled at her in thanks and tilted his head toward the door. Both of them struggled to maintain a serious expression only to fall over in hysterics when Draco's attempt to enter the room collided forcefully with the original trios attempt to untangle themselves in order to get up.

"This happen often?" Alice asked. She helped Ianto up from the floor and urged him into the chair she'd been sitting in. She settled on

ARCANUM 101

the floor and settled Mica in her lap, quietly reminding the little girl that her Tad shouldn't be run into right now.

"Thankfully, no," Ianto said. He shook his head at the doorway and shared a resigned smile with Harry before turning back to Alice. "Drink some more of the tea, Alice. You're still too pale."

Taking a few deep breaths to calm down again, Ianto again shook his head at the group in the doorway. "Harry, could you...?" he trailed off when he realized Harry was already assisting in detangling the foursome on the floor. Instead, he shifted his attention to Alice and silently assessed her appearance. She wasn't as pale as before and her eyes were better focused. Ianto brushed a bit of Alice's hair back and looked up at Jack as the other man joined them by the armchair. "Thank you for the laugh," he murmured. "I needed it after..."

"After what?" Jack asked. He waved the rest of the group to seats around the room. "Ianto?"

"Seems that Hermione was right," Ianto said. "All of your daughters are witches, though in Alice's case, she's a seer, too."

A chorus of 'whats?' answered his statement. Ianto just shook his head again and waited until silence fell in the room. "I said Alice is a seer." He took a deep breath and focused his attention directly on Jack. "I'm not certain if you'll understand this but she said 'An evil is coming from the past and the future. The sisters must stand together behind the father or all is lost. An evil is coming from the past and the future. The daughters of the Vortex must stand behind the father. The six must awaken the storm or all is lost.' And, unlike Hermione, I studied divination, so I know how seers act. It's a true prophecy."

Jack blinked, mumbled the words to himself, and whipped about to stare at Hermione. "Call your mother," he snapped at the stunned girl. Shifting his attention to Alice, he reached out to hug her and Mica who was still in Alice's lap. "Alice, I would prefer you don't bite my head off for asking a silly question, but are you all right?"

ARCANUM 101

"I'm fine, Dad," Alice said. She chuckled softly, but nodded to him and returned the hug. "Overwhelmed, shocked, and a bit dazed, but I'm okay."

Jack smiled at her while reaching out to clasp Ianto's hand in his own. He started to question, demand answers as he always did, when Hermione's voice interrupted the conversation.

"Tad? Dad?" Both men looked over at the girl. Alice shifted Mica out of her lap to the floor and went to Hermione, silently stroking her back, and gave Jack a hard look as she did so. Hermione swallowed hard and offered Jack the phone. "It's the police," she said. "They say Mom and Daddy are..." she broke off with a sob.

Jack snatched the held out phone from Hermione's hand while smiling a thank you at Alice as she pulled her younger sister to her as the girl sobbed. He glanced down at Ianto who was now being checked over by John and snapped into the phone, "Captain Jack Harkness..."

Ianto tilted his head to one side, listening to Jack's voice as his lover paced and spoke on Hermoine's phone. Testing a personal theory, he lifted Mica and handed her to John. She accepted the transfer to the other man with a soft little sigh. Ianto chuckled as he watched John awkwardly hold the toddler. With a smile at John, Ianto rose to his feet. He joined Jack, resting a hand on his lover's back in silent support, and smiled as he saw Harry dash from the room only to come running back with Pansy in tow.

The very distinctive sounds of Wagner echoed through the room. Ianto rolled his eyes, slipped a hand into Jack's pocket and pulled out his cell phone. He flipped it open while shaking his head at Jack's grin. "Captain Harkness's phone, Ianto Jones speaking," he said.

"Mr. Jones, this is Detective Kathy Swanson, Cardiff Police," Kathy's voice echoed through the phone.

ARCANUM 101

Ianto reached out and rested a hand on Jack's arm. The light touch stilled the other man's restless pacing. "Detective, how can I help you?"

I just received a call from the London Metro Police," she said. "They wanted information on contacting the Captain. I asked why but the answers, well, they left me with the impression it wasn't a friendly call," she paused and Ianto could hear her talking to someone in the background. He thought it sounded like Andy Davidson, but he couldn't be certain. *"Anyway, I wasn't given much, but I was able to learn that Daniel and Monica Granger were discovered deceased tonight. Their daughter is missing. The Captain's name was found scrawled in several places in their home."*

"We know, Detective," Ianto sighed softly. He took a step away from Jack to brush his fingers over Hermione's hair. "Monica is... was... a relative of the Captain. Hermione's staying with us for the holidays. Captain Harkness is on the phone with Scotland Yard now." He sighed softly. "I do thank you for calling though."

"Mr. Jones, just because I don't say much about Torchwood, doesn't mean I don't know what you all do." Again there was a lengthy pause with a conversation going on in the background. This time Ianto definitely recognized the voice as PC Davidson. *"I don't talk, but that doesn't mean I don't notice things. Something very strange is happening, even for Cardiff,"* she said. *"I think we need to talk."*

Ianto tugged the phone from his ear, looked at it, and then brought it back to speak again. "We do," he conceded. "But I'll contact you."

"We'll be waiting," she said and hung up.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

What should have been a fun Christmas celebration was quiet and subdued; Ianto would pace if he was able, but one glare from Alice settled him at the large writing desk in a corner of the living room. In a nearby armchair, Jack was cuddling Hermione and Mica in his lap. Occasionally, he'd hear a soft whisper from Jack – clear enough to hear the actual words being said – but for the most part Jack's voice was merely a murmur of sound where he focused on comforting their daughters.

In front of him, Gwen paced as she demanded answers from various police agencies. She would pace back and forth, her voice crisp, and occasionally pause to make notes on a pad on the desk. Every time she stopped by the desk, she'd smile reassuringly at Ianto. As she paced by Hermione, a hand would brush over the girl's hair in reassurance.

Ianto leant over to look at what Percy was doing on Tosh's laptop. The Gryffindor had all the makings of a future technician as well as archivist. As much as Ianto wanted to apprentice the boy, if he preferred to work with Tosh he'd have to let him. Percy seemed to have an instinctive grasp of how to use the mainframe and interconnected

ARCANUM 101

laptops. Still it was frustrating to lose the closest thing Ianto had found to a replacement for himself.

On the screen, Harry was staring about himself, muttering softly, while Tosh scanned things. Draco, apparently behind the camera was providing them with a detailed running commentary of everything in the room. Draco's attention to detail was amazing. Another move of the camera showed John leaning against the frame of the door into the room, watching both the room where the other team members were and the hallway beyond. Ianto watched as Draco panned back to Tosh again, his commentary ending, and the camera microphone now picking up the conversation between Harry and Tosh where they stood over a thick pool of blood. Ianto was very glad neither Jack nor Hermione was looking at the laptop with him.

"I'm finding some kind of energy here," Tosh was saying to Harry. *"Could you run a scan here, Harry?"*

"I can try, but..." Harry trailed off. He waved his wand, shrugged one shoulder, and shook his head. *"It's not magic. I know it from somewhere, but it's not any kind of magic."* As Ianto watched, Harry gave Tosh and John a confused look. *"Whatever it is, it makes my skin itch a bit and a little nauseous, like when the Captain zapped us to his sitting room at the castle."*

To Ianto's surprise, John flipped open his wriststrap to conduct a scan of his own. A curse slipped from John's lips as the scan completed. *"You got everything you need, Toshiko?"* he asked. After Toshiko nodded, John waved them all over to him. *"Then let's get out of here now."*

Draco shut down the video connection as the team gathered around John. As the video died away, Ianto saw Toshiko's expression. There was shock and surprise on her face. Ianto rose to his feet and headed for the hall to meet the group on their return, leaving Gwen to commandeer Percy and the laptop for scanning police files. He leant against the

ARCANUM 101

wall, arms crossed over his chest, and waited as patiently as possible. The pop announced their arrival in the hall. Draco reaching out to steady Harry and John nodded in answer to whatever Tosh was pointing out to John.

“What did you find, John?” Ianto demanded.

“Let’s get Jack in here,” John replied. “We can debrief everyone at the same time.” He grinned at Ianto. “And do we have anything to eat? I’m starving.”

“I wondered if any of you were going to eat this dinner I’ve been slaving over,” Rhys said. He stood in the doorway to the dining room. A soft oof escaped him when the back of Ginny’s hand slapped him in the stomach.

“Tad!” she protested. “Don’t you mean Mipsy and I were slaving over while you ‘supervised’?”

“You can all argue over the bragging rights to the meal,” John said. He waved a hand toward the group with him. “Come on, guys.”

As they trooped off, Ianto returned to the sitting room. He smiled at the people gathered there. “Dinner’s ready. John’s said we can debrief over the meal. He seems to have found something interesting on the scene.”

Jack hummed, shifted Hermione in his lap, and, to Ianto’s amazement, picked up both Hermione and Mica, who was in Hermione’s lap, at the same time. As Jack passed Ianto, he leant over and kissed Jack’s cheek. He offered Gwen an arm as she joined him and escorted her into the dining room. As they entered the room, Mipsy crossed in front of them with a huge platter of baked ham. The smell made Ianto’s stomach growl; however, before he could seat Gwen in order to have any, she made a soft noise, swayed and started to fall to the floor, pulling him down with her. Only a timely catch by Owen kept them both from landing in a heap.

ARCANUM 101

Ianto took a step back to let Owen settle Gwen on the floor. Rhys now hovered by Owen's elbow, asking questions so rapidly no one could keep up, while Pommy knelt down and scanned Gwen with her wand. Rounding out the group was Alice who was checking Gwen over in a more traditional manner while speaking what Ianto was privately referring to as medical-ese to the two doctors. John reached over, grabbed Ianto, and tugged him to a chair.

"Let them check her out," John said. "I heard your stomach growl. You need to eat. Don't tell me you forgot."

"Alice didn't let me," Ianto said. "She made me pause for a snack." He looked up at John from the chair he'd been rather forcefully seated in and chuckled. "Could you make another batch of that fruit salad tomorrow? I..." he broke off embarrassed.

"You what?"

"I devoured it," Ianto said softly. "It's been hard for me to find things to eat that I like. It was good."

"It's an old family recipe," John said. "Dad swore mother went through tons of it while pregnant with me." John blushed a little. "I'll make sure there's always some in the fridge."

Ianto was about to reply when Rhys's inarticulate shout drowned him out. Even as he craned to look at his fellow Welshman, he couldn't resist a smile as a plate was passed over to be set in front of him. Automatically, he started eating what was given to him.

"She's what?" Rhys demanded. "Gwen, why didn't you say anything?"

"I didn't know..." Gwen said. "I can't be," she protested to Owen and Pommy.

"We're never wrong," Pommy and Owen chorused. "You're pregnant."

"You're marrying me right now," Rhys ordered. "And that's all there's to it!"

ARCANUM 101

“Rhys!” Gwen shouted. She struggled away from the medical people to get up and glare at her boyfriend. “I can’t get married!”

“Don’t you ‘Rhys’ me, Gwen,” Rhys retorted. “We’re getting married just as soon as it may be.”

Ianto watched the argument which had slid into harsh Welsh and wild gestures. Hermione had bounced out of Jack’s lap, grinning merrily, and grabbed Gwen’s arm. “Dad can marry you,” she shouted.

He laughed at her, shaking his head, and called to her: “He can’t, Hermione. That’s Navy Captain’s not Air Force.”

“How about Minerva?” Hermione said. “Come on a wedding would be a cheery thing. I need something happy.”

“Minerva can’t,” Ianto said with a quick nod to the older witch. “But Alys can. She’s head of her own coven.” He looked over at his future stepdaughter with a smile. “Aren’t you?”

“Yes, I am,” Alys said. “What are you thinking, Ianto Jones?” She smirked at him. “If anyone should be getting married, it’s you.”

“I’m thinking that would settle Hermione down and make Rhys happy,” he replied. “As to my marital status, take it up with your father.”

“Excuse me?” Jack protested. “I’ve asked, haven’t I?”

“I agreed,” Ianto snapped. “But with everyone telling me to relax, how can I arrange a wedding?” He cast a look over at Gwen but the woman was still arguing in Welsh with Rhys and paying no attention at all to the conversation at the table.

“Ianto Jones!” Alys scolded him. Her tone made him feel like a child again being scolded by his adoptive mother. “I’ve heard better excuses from a nine-year-old with his hand in the biscuit jar.”

Ianto dropped his gaze to the table. He could feel himself blushing in response to those words. It was strange sometimes to realize two of his ‘children’ were actually years older than him. He looked over at Jack and then smiled at Alys. “If Gwen doesn’t mind sharing the

ARCANUM 101

occasion,” he said. “And Jack doesn’t mind a traditional wedding, then go for it.”

“Pansy, Draco, Harry, come on!” Hermione cried. She flung her hands up in the air before grabbing Pansy’s and bouncing a bit in place. “We’ll decorate the conservatory while the grooms and the bride are getting ready. We’ll set up near the Christmas tree. It’ll look beautiful with the white and red poinsettias and some holly and...”

Pansy rolled her eyes and dragged her off. Hermione babbled away even as she was dragged from the room. Harry shook his head, chuckling, and grabbed Draco’s hand. He led Draco out after Hermione, murmuring, “Better to just go along with her, love.”

Ianto shook his head at the whole situation. He looked down the table at Alys. For a very long moment, he stared at her in silence. Then slowly he smiled at her as he understood her motives. He shifted a bit to look over at Jack. “Is it okay, Jack?” he asked.

“I’ll take you any way I can get you, *cariad*,” Jack replied.

The suggestive tone to the response caused Ianto to blush. He bit back the automatic retort and nodded. “Alys, what do you need?” he asked. “It’s been some time since I was around a traditional coven.”

“Depends on how formal you want it,” Alys replied. “It’s really all about your intention and your choice. Let’s see what Hermione comes up with.”

Ianto nodded. He considered everyone in the room and chuckled at the sight of Mica occasionally bouncing in Jack’s lap causing his lover to grunt in response to the motion. He thought a bit more and decided that Mica would be okay with Jack. He rose to his feet, walked over and grabbed Gwen’s arm. “Come on, Gwen,” he said. “You and I have a bit of work to do.” He smiled at her. “Seeing as Hermione’s taken on the setup of the room.”

“What?” Gwen said. She was bewildered by Ianto’s comment. She’d been so focused on her argument with Rhys she’d missed

ARCANUM 101

everything going on around her. Ianto's quick explanation, given in their native Welsh, had her staring about wildly. "Tosh... I need Tosh to help me," she said. "What am I doing?"

"You and I need to go change," Ianto explained. "It seems we're getting married tonight."

"Come on, you two," Tosh said with a grin. "Let's get this wedding started." She looked back at the room. "Owen, John, you're in charge of Jack and Rhys. Presentable by this time's standards, boys, unless you want a houseful of women howling for your skin," she ordered.

"Of course, Toshiko," John said. "We'll get them there on time."

"Owen," Ianto interjected. He waited for the medic to look up at him. "Jack should wear his RAF Uniform. It's in the blue garment bag in our closet."

"Understood," Owen replied. "Get to it, Teaboy."

"So," Alice laughed. She smiled over at Alys. "We're getting a stepfather tonight?"

"We are," Alys replied. She offered a hand to her sister. She nodded toward the door where Ianto was starting out firmly tugging Gwen along with him. "Let me show you how traditional Welsh magic works."

"Stephen?" Alice asked. Before she could get her son to join him, Stephen shook his head and bounced off to join Ianto in the hall.

"I'm going with Grandtad, Mom!" he said. "He needs a boy, too."

"Quite right," Ianto said. He offered Stephen a hand. "I need a bit of male support." He looked back at Jack and raised an eyebrow in question. Jack just nodded to him and, in return, Ianto nodded toward the unusually silent Mica still ensconced in Jack's lap. Jack nodded again and waved a hand at Ianto who continued toward the stairs.

"Are you okay, sweetheart?" Jack asked Mica. He stroked her hair and tilted her up to look at her face. "Mica?"

ARCANUM 101

Mica shook her head at him. “I’m confused,” she mumbled. She pointed a finger at the door. “Why is Mione all happy now when she was sad and crying just a bit ago?”

“She’s still sad inside, sweetie,” Jack said. “It’s just that sometimes when people are sad they like to forget it for a while.”

“Oh,” Mica said. She sat very still and seemed, to Jack at least, to think about his words for a bit. “Okay, Daddy.”

“Why don’t you come with us, Mica?” Alys asked. She crouched down in front of the chair and smiled at Jack. “Help get things set up for the wedding.”

“Is that okay, Daddy?” Mica asked.

Jack thought for a moment, looked at Alys and then nodded. He pressed a kiss to Mica’s temple and nudged her toward Alys. “I think it would be very okay.”

She scrambled up, causing Jack to grunt softly in pain as her foot slipped off his thigh, and kissed his cheek. “Okay, Daddy!” she squealed. She scrambled down to the floor and then held her hands up to Alice to be picked up. As his three daughters left the room, Mica craned back over Alice’s shoulder to call: “Don’t be long!”

“I won’t!” he called back. Grinning happily, he rose to his feet. He reached out and caught Ginny’s hand. He kissed the back and murmured, “Stasis spell for dinner, please?” Her happy smile and nod reassured him that the meal would be saved. He circled the table, gathering up John along the way, and threw an arm around Rhys’s shoulders. “Come on, Rhys,” he said. “Let’s go get ready. In an hour or so, you’ll be my son-in-law.” He laughed gaily at the other man’s stunned expression.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Holding Stephen's hand in one of his, Ianto led Gwen from the dining room. They reached the main stairs and he looked back to be certain Tosh was coming. Shaking his head at Gwen's newest rant, this one about what she could possibly wear, Ianto just led the way up two flights of stairs, past her suite and to the smaller hidden staircase which led up into the attics. Dropping Gwen and Stephen's hands, he pulled out his wand and cast a soft *lumos* spell. He grinned down at Stephen when the boy murmured 'cool' at him.

"Ianto?" Gwen asked. "What's this?"

"The attic stairs," Ianto replied. "If I'm right, and I usually am, we'll find something suitable for you to wear up here." He started up the stairs and grinned back at her. "You'll find that almost all of the old blood wizarding families have a bit of pack rat in them. Playing in the attics amongst all the stuff my ancestors left behind was one of the highlights of my early childhood." He grinned at the two women before letting the grin fade to a conspiratorial smile. "The Parkinsons were and are very rich, Gwen. I can almost guarantee we'll find things by Chanel and Mainbocher up here among others."

"Well, what are we waiting on then?" Gwen started up the stairs and was soon squeezing past him only to call back. "Hey, where are the lights?"

ARCANUM 101

“It’s a wizarding house, Gwen,” Ianto called back. He shared a laughing look with Tosh who surprised him by pulling a small, but powerful torch out of her trouser pocket and flicking it on. Shaking his head, he again offered Stephen a hand and headed up the last of the stairs to join Gwen on the attic landing. Silently, he strengthened his *lumos* spell and scanned the attic looking for the usual wardrobes and trunks which would most likely have women’s clothing packed in them. He stood there looking for a while, sighed, and muttered, “Dammit.” He looked down at Stephen, considered and shrugged a bit before calling “Mipsy!” The house elf popped into the massive attic before him with a soft pop. He chuckled at Stephen’s softly muttered “cool” and squeezed his shoulder in acknowledgement.

“Yes, Master Ianto?” Mipsy asked.

“I need a favor, Mipsy,” Ianto said. “Somewhere in this attic I’m certain there is a dress suitable for Gwen to wear for her wedding,” he explained. “And one for Tosh to wear as her attendant. Could you find them something for me, make certain it’s clean and bring it down to Gwen’s room, please?”

“Of course, sir,” Mipsy said. She snapped her fingers and several other elves appeared in the room, including Dobby who got whapped with Mipsy’s wooden spoon. “You don’t belong here, Dobby. This is a job for women elves,” she ordered decisively. He popped away, rubbing his head as he went and she nodded firmly before speaking rapidly in house elf to her companions. They ran off into the attics while Mipsy pointed firmly at the stairs. “You go get ready, sir. We’ll have things for the Mistresses soon.”

Ianto nodded and waved to Gwen who was staring intently at a mirror. He shook his head at her, went over and grabbed her arm again. “Come’n, Gwen, you need a bath before the elves bring you a dress to wear,” he said. He watched her eyes widen before she took off at an almost run for the stairs while calling madly for Tosh to come help her.

ARCANUM 101

He shook his head again and looked down at Mipsy. “One more thing, Mipsy, could you be certain that Captain Hart gets cleaned up and presentable before attending the wedding?”

“Yes, sir,” she replied before tilting her head, shaking it, and taking off deeper into the attics. “You go on, sir. We’ve got it.”

“Well, grandtad, she certainly knows how to manage you,” Stephen said. He grinned up at Ianto who just shook his head in response.

“Actually, if you want the proper Welsh, it’s tad-cu,” Ianto explained. “And yes, she does. I grew up with house elves. Just like Mica and the new babies will. They always know how to manage their wizards.” He waved a hand toward the staircase. “So, do you want to wear a suit for the wedding or wizarding robes?”

“What are you wearing?” Stephen asked.

Ianto descended the stairs and turned toward Gwen’s suite of rooms. He paused for a moment, leant back against a wall, and shrugged. “To be honest, I don’t know yet,” he said. He considered for a long moment. “I’ve lived in both worlds, Stephen,” he said. “So I could do it either way.”

“Can you wear both?”

Ianto blinked at the kid and then laughed. “You are a genius,” he said softly. “Yes, I can. And I never would have thought of doing so either. I think I’ll wear Jack’s favorite suit with a formal robe over top. So, what do you want to wear?”

Stephen shrugged. Ianto wasn’t the least bit surprised by that. The poor kid had been tossed into a strange new world without many explanations. He squeezed Stephen’s shoulder in sympathy. “I’m certain Mipsy can come up with something suitable,” he said. “Let’s go see.”

They walked the rest of the way to the suite. Ianto knocked once and, receiving no answer, eased the door open to look inside. Seeing no one but hearing giggles from the direction of the bath, he pushed the

door open and led Stephen into the room. Before he could call for Mipsy, a soft startled sound from Stephen had him turning about to face the boy. He watched, a soft proud smile on his face, as Stephen talked to a young house elf and let the elf dress him in a combination of standard formal wear topped with a wizarding dress robe.

“Do I look okay?” Stephen asked. There was a slight nervous shake in his voice. “Can I show Mom?”

“You look great,” Ianto said. “Go on and show her.”

“Thanks Tad-cu!”

Stephen ran out the door, robe billowing behind him and Ianto barely refrained from rolling his eyes as he left. A sharp tug to his waistcoat made him look down to see the young elf giving him an expectant look. “Yes?”

“Mipsy says you should get dressed here, sir,” the elf said. “Then come talk to the ladies... she left something suitable for you to give Missy Gwen as a gift from the Heads of House.”

“Of course,” Ianto said. He swiftly changed clothes from his original suit into a dark tone on tone stripe Armani suit paired with a deep raspberry silk shirt. A few deft twists and the tie was knotted and smoothed into place, the waistcoat and jacket shrugged on and settled. With a final tug of the coat, he accepted the small box from the elf who’d been helping him, cracked it open and grinned before heading for the door to the dressing room where he could hear the girls giggling. “Ladies,” he called as he knocked. “You decent? I have presents.”

“Come in, Ianto,” Gwen called.

Ianto stepped into the dressing room and smiled at the two women sharing conspiratorial giggles by the dressing table. Where Tosh was already fully dressed, in a exquisite lilac satin Edith Head gown, Gwen wore a slip and robe while her dress, a gorgeous ruby creation by Balenciaga, lay nearby waiting for her to don it. As he watched, Mipsy

ARCANUM 101

worked on Gwen's hair while Libby worked on her makeup. He crossed the room, conjured up a chair, and sat nearby.

"I have a present for you," he said softly. He took her hand and set the box he carried in it. "Gwen, as you're the first daughter in the House to marry," he paused and swallowed. It was still hard for him to believe he had two, no three stepdaughters who were all older than him. "Well, this is from Jack and I..."

Gwen grinned at him. She looked like one of the kids when they'd seen all the presents earlier that morning. She took the box and used it to wave at first her clothes and then the dress. "I thought all this other stuff was from you, too?"

"Well, that too, but this is different," Ianto conceded. "Every daughter of the House gets a piece of the family jewelry to mark the ancient traditional occasions. Most commonly that's coming of age, marriage and childbirth," he explained.

"You must have a great deal put away," Tosh said. She was smiling her rare truly happy smile. It lit her up. Ianto hoped they'd see it more often now that she was with Owen. "Four daughters and," she paused and pointed at his stomach. "Maybe more on the way."

"Between the Lestrangle and Black inheritances, I've got plenty," Ianto said. "I don't know for certain what Jack has though. Those," he paused and nodded to the box Gwen was holding. "Well, the bracelet is from Jack's inheritance. The earrings are from mine." He gave her an encouraging smile and nodded to the box. "Go on..."

Gwen stared at him for a moment before dropping her gaze to the box. She cracked it open, closed it, and then opened it again to stare at the contents. "Oh, God, oh, God... Tosh, look at these..." she stuttered. "Oh, God, Ianto, I... Oh God..."

"What?" Ianto asked.

"They look so old and real," she murmured. "Beautiful."

ARCANUM 101

“Of course they look real,” Tosh said. She lifted the box a bit to get more light on the contents. “They are real. Eighteenth century cameo work though the earrings are French and the bracelet most probably English.”

“Oh my God, Ianto, I can’t...” Gwen trailed off for a moment. “I don’t...”

“Hush,” Ianto murmured. He closed her hand around the box. “You can and you will. It’s tradition, Gwen.”

“You know, I’ve handled aliens, Rifts, and a secret underground base pretty well,” she said. “I’ve even managed the magic, the moving staircases and the pteranodon who shapeshifts, but this...” she trailed off again and waved a hand around the room. “Being adopted by Jack, getting myself a daughter, getting married... it’s scary and wonderful at the same time.” She shook her head at him. “I’m not making sense.”

“You’re making perfect sense.” Ianto chuckled softly at her. “Imagine how I’m feeling... I have three stepdaughters who are all older than me. I’m pregnant. I’m getting married to Jack. And... well, I seem to have acquired a bodyguard from the future.” All the women, even the elves, snickered at him and he pouted back which just made them giggle all the more.

“Knowing Jack, it’s been one hell of an experience,” Tosh said when she’d finally calmed again.

“You have no idea,” he replied. He considered her for a moment, shifting in his chair to be more comfortable, and twirled a finger at her. She laughed gaily, stepping away from the dressing table to first turn about and then, with an elegant sweep of her skirts, curtsied to him. He smiled, thought for a moment and then reached into a pocket to pull out another box which he silently offered her. He watched intently as she opened it and gasped. He didn’t need to look to know that the box contained a perfectly matched East Indian pearl necklace with a sapphire drop and matching earrings.

ARCANUM 101

"Ianto..." she murmured. "You should save this for one of your daughters."

He shook his head. "You're my best friend, Tosh, and the closest thing I have to a sister," he replied. "Please, don't protest."

"Thank you," Tosh said. As Gwen stood up to don her dress, Tosh took her place in the vanity stool in order to don the jewelry. Ianto stood to help her clasp the necklace.

"Ianto, I thought wizarding families tended to be big, but you don't seem to have any uncles or aunts on the Lestrangle side," Gwen said. Her voice was somewhat muffled by the fabric.

"I have one. Uncle Rastaban is my father's younger brother," Ianto said. "On my mother's side I have, had, two aunts, Narcissa, Draco's mother, and Andromeda, Tonk's mother."

"I wondered, because Ginevra was talking about all her great-uncles and great-aunts and it sounded like a legion!" Gwen said. She laughed a bit as she said it before stepping into her shoes.

"The Weasleys always seemed to breed like rabbits," Ianto replied. He shook his head and laughed. He kissed Tosh's cheek and resettled in his chair. "There are lots of them, but the rest of the pureblood families stopped having children when they had an heir to the name."

"That sounds very aristocratic, the whole male heir thing," Gwen said. Ianto wondered where she was going with this conversation. "But of yours, you are an aristocrat, aren't you? Title and all?"

Ianto stared intently at her for a long moment. She couldn't possibly know about the family title. Next to no one knew because none of the family had actually 'taken' the title in three generations. The last holder had been his great-grandfather. "Just how do you know about that?" he demanded.

"Well, Ginevra said some of the pureblood families actually had titles, though it was the family name that counted. And then there's all

ARCANUM 101

this,” Gwen said. She waved a hand to encompass the house around them. “Everyday folk don't live in places like this!”

Ianto sighed, a bit relieved, and nodded. “The Malfoy's do, did. If Draco hadn't done what he did, he'd be Lord Malfoy now... roughly the equal of an earl.” He thought for a bit. “No one in my family has used the title since my great-grandfather passed. The castle wouldn't let them.”

“The castle?” Tosh asked. “You mean the building itself?”

Ianto nodded. “Afalglyn consists of the manor house and the castle. All the Lestranges have access to the manor... at least if you're keyed to the wards which I'm not at the moment. But you have to be accepted by the castle. My grandfather, father and uncle are all practioners of the Dark Arts, so the castle wouldn't let them in. Actually, it's not so much as castle as a...” He broke off and sighed. “It's too complicated to explain now.”

“I understand complicated,” she said. Gwen chuckled softly. “So, does Jack have a title?”

“Subtle you are not, Gwen,” Ianto said. “I outrank Jack, if I use the title. I believe the Parkinsons are the equals of Barons.” He thought for a moment, rose from his chair and took a step closer to her. “If I'm ever allowed there again and the estate gives me access, I'd outrank everyone in the wizarding world,” he said quietly. “As my daughter, you'd be a princess.”

Ianto watched the two women. Gwen stared at him in shock, but Tosh was giving him a deeply speculative look. He saw the exact moment Tosh realized what he was saying but not saying.

“Ianto, there are no Welsh lineages left in existence. Except...” Tosh stopped. Her eyes widened just a bit before she dropped into a deep curtsy. “Your Royal Highness,” she said softly.

Ianto blushed, reached out and tugged Tosh up. “Don't...,” he said. “Unless and until I have access to the full extent of the estate, the title

ARCANUM 101

doesn't matter." He smiled at Gwen. "I know you know what my title is, Gwen. I just wish I knew for certain how you know it."

"I wish I could tell you, but I think I'm..." Gwen drifted off for a moment. "The secret keeper for this family. Does that make sense in your terms?"

Ianto tilted his head and nodded "It does," he said. "Answer me this then, if you can, is John Hart my 'knight errant'?" She said nothing, but did nod to him. He nodded back and offered her an arm. "Let's get you married. If I ever get the family ring, I promise to take you both out to see Afalglyn." He offered his other arm to a watching Toshiko.

Both women laughed and took his arm. Gwen grinned up at him. "Let's get you married, too," she said.

"Not without his proper robes!" Mipsy protested. She raised her wooden spoon threateningly at him.

"I just need to put the outer robe on," Ianto said. He dropped his head and whimpered softly. "There's no need to attack me with the spoon."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Jack considered his reflection in the full length mirror. He hadn't worn this uniform since the present Queen's coronation, yet it still fit perfectly. He brushed his hands down the material, tugging a bit on the coat to settle it into place, and smiled. The mere fact that his full dress uniform was freshly and sharply pressed told him Ianto had planned for their wedding to occur soon. Knowing Ianto as he did, he suspected his lover of plotting to have them married on New Years. A new year, a new start for them and their family, it was a very Ianto plan. He turned from the mirror to speak to Owen and Rhys when Draco stalked into the room; all affronted dignity and flung himself on a sofa in the sitting area of the master suite.

"No offense, sir," he said. Draco draped an arm over his eyes and shook his head. "But she's a maniac!" He lifted his arm to peer over at the others and sighed dramatically.

"Which one?" Owen demanded. He looked over from where he was helping Rhys with his tie. He'd decided it was in his best interests not to question where the suits for him and Rhys had come from; he probably wouldn't like the answer. He was a bit jealous of Hart. The

ARCANUM 101

Captain was still wearing his uniform, though it had been thoroughly cleaned by the house elves when Mipsy all but threw him into a shower. “There are four of them.”

“The mudblood, of course,” Draco snarled. He was so frustrated with the situation downstairs. “Hermione. She’s a menace!”

Jack frowned. Three months at Hogwarts taught him all the implications of that word, Mudblood, and he would not allow his son to refer to his sister by it. Hermione was, in all honesty, as pureblooded as Draco. “Do not ever refer to your sister again by that name,” he said. He kept his voice even but imbued it with all his authority as head of the family. “She’s trying to put a little distance between her and what she will have to deal with starting tomorrow. We need to help her do that,” he said.

Draco blinked in surprise. It was the first time outside of a classroom that the captain had disciplined him like this. It was unexpected; however, it also seemed to warm some cold place within him. “Yes, sir,” he said. “But she did tell me if I stopped calling her that she’d worry something was wrong with me.”

“To her face, yes,” Jack agreed. “It’s a sign she accepts and trusts you.” He crossed the room and briefly clasped Draco’s shoulder in his hand. “To others, no,” he said. “They wouldn’t understand what it implies and would consider it an insult.”

Draco looked up at Jack. He thought for a moment and then nodded by way of reply. “Yes, sir,” he said. “Understood.” He frowned a bit at all the men in the room. “But she’s still a menace. I am not three people. We have house elves for a reason.”

“When women are thinking of weddings, kiddo, we might as well be house elves,” Owen said. “Do not get yourself between a woman and a wedding or you’ll wish you hadn’t been born. Just fetch and carry and keep your mouth shut.”

ARCANUM 101

Slowly, Draco sat up and shook his head. “No offense, sir, but I refuse to play house elf.” He looked up at Jack before looking at the others again. “Harry can. The rest of the boys can, but me,” he said. “No.”

“Do you want to be a part of this family or not?” Rhys asked.

“Mica helped me escape,” Draco said with a smug grin. “I think I’m in.”

“Not quite,” Rhys replied. “You’re in with Mica. You’re in with us because of her but you’ve got to earn a place for yourself.” He smiled reassuringly. “And part of being family means understanding and helping when one of your sisters is having a hard time of it.”

Draco sighed softly. “There’s helping, sir, and then there’s being treated like a slave. ‘No Draco! Do it like this! Now get to it!’” He sighed again and shoved a hand through his hair. “I get that she’s upset because of her parents, but a little respect would go a long way with me right now. I tried to help, but nothing I did was good enough to suit her.”

“Her whole life just spun out of control, Draco,” Rhys said. “Her parents are dead. Tomorrow she’ll have to face a police inquiry, funeral arrangements, and *Duw* knows what else. This is her way of being in control.” He tilted his head to the boy, nodding in thanks as Draco used a spell to tie the recalcitrant tie for him, and smiled gently. “Look at the others. I’ll bet none of them is making a fuss.”

“She cast a silencing spell on Weasley,” Draco said. “He couldn’t protest if he wanted to. Harry and the rest are just doing what she orders, but I can only take so much of being called ‘Ferret’ by her after months of being ‘Draco’.” He held up a hand to silence Rhys before his future brother-in-law could protest. “I know, sir. She’s hurting, burying it and trying to get back in control. She doesn’t handle not being in control well. I saw that a few years ago during the incident with the Chamber of Secrets. I had a choice: yell at her for calling me ferret

ARCANUM 101

again or leave the room. I left,” he said. Draco looked up at Jack in a silent request for reassurance that he did the right thing.

“Well, thank God for your common sense, at least,” Jack said. He smiled at Draco and squeezed his shoulder. “Just be aware that sometime between tomorrow and the next day she’ll probably be bawling her eyes out on your shoulder.”

“I’m already expecting it,” Draco said with a tired chuckle. “I have a stash of handkerchiefs and her favorite chocolate already ready. I went through it with Pansy just after we arrived for the school year. Different catalyst, but the same reaction.”

“That’s my boy,” Jack said. “Now, if I know Hermione, she’ll want the whole family gathered to meet the bride and grooms as we file in.” He shook his head with a laugh while sharing a look with the amazingly silent John. “That sounds a bit *avant garde*, doesn’t it? So, go downstairs. The worst is probably over.”

“I hope so, sir,” Draco said. “I really hope so.”

Draco rose, nodded to the gathered men, and swept from the room. Those left behind looked at each other and snickered.

“If I didn’t know his history,” Rhys said. “I’d swear you’d raised him, Jack.”

The snickers in the room became full blown laughter led by Jack. He nodded to Rhys, grinning widely, and said, “He’s very much my son even if I only adopted him.” He calmed and sobered. “He didn’t have the best childhood, Rhys, but he’s a good kid. Though I don’t know why he’s calling me ‘sir’ again.”

“Captain?” Harry’s voice interrupted them from the doorway Draco had just swept through. “Hermione wants you downstairs.”

“All right, what is with you two?” Jack demanded. “First, Draco’s calling me ‘sir’ and now you called me ‘captain.’”

“Now that we aren’t at school, it is your title, sir,” Harry said. “It’s not like I’m related to you.” He shook his head and chuckled. “Draco

ARCANUM 101

called his father that. Ianto told him to call you dad, but he's waiting on you to tell him it's okay."

"Oh," Jack said weakly. "Thanks for the heads-up, Harry." He waved a hand toward the door. Nothing surprised him more than John quietly stepping into Ianto's spot behind his right shoulder. "Let's go, gentlemen. We have a wedding to attend."

"No problem, Captain," Harry replied. "I need to go fetch Ianto and Gwen. You go on ahead."

"Let's go," Owen ordered. He stepped around John to shove both Jack and Rhys out the doors toward the stairs. "I want out of this suit."

The men trooped through the upstairs of the house. They parted company with Harry at the central staircase. Harry headed deeper into the house to Gwen's room on the upper floor while Jack and his companions descended to the conservatory. Taking a deep breath to settle his nerves, Jack gently pushed open the door. He stepped inside, scanned the room and smiled to see all of his currently living children gathered by the fireplace. His gaze swept over them, from Alys and Alice by the mantle, to Hermione just in front of them, on over to Mica bouncing up and down beside Hermione. Mica's exuberance was barely tamed by Draco's hands on her shoulders. All of his children wore formal wizarding robes, even little Mica, and for the first time he saw them as the formidable people they were and would become; a soft sound escaped him as he realized three weren't there. Two were lost to them forever and the third was upstairs readying herself for the wedding to come.

A tiny sound, not quite a sob but definitely not words, pulled Jack from his introspection to smile at Alys as she stepped forward to gently smooth his lapels down again. "You look like you did in Mom's pictures," she said softly.

Jack half-shrugged, shifting one shoulder just a bit beneath his uniform, and gave her a sad smile. He still missed Estelle. She'd been a

ARCANUM 101

lovely woman who deserved better than what he'd done to her. "That's what I hate about what happened to me," he said. "I don't regret any of you, but I wish..."

"We know, Dad," Alice said into the almost awkward silence. He cast her a grateful smile.

"Really, we understand as much as we can," Hermione said. "But this is a happy moment for all of us because we know Ianto will make you very, very happy." She paused and a grin suddenly lit her face. "And hey, my little brothers or sisters will be legitimate when they are born."

Draco rolled his eyes. He valiantly kept his mouth shut until the moment Mica stomped on his foot. Then he yelped, a soft French curse slipping from him, and released Mica who took off running for Jack. "Little brat," he called after the girl.

Mica looked over her shoulder to grin at Draco before running right into Jack's legs with a screamed, "Daddy!"

"We know what the babies are," Jack said. He smiled smugly at Hermione while bending down to pick up Mica. "I wish Jodi and Monica were her for this," he said softly.

"So do we, Father," Alys said softly. "But we have family and friends aplenty."

Before Jack could reply, the sound of a Bach concerto drifted through the room. He craned about to find the source of the music and smiled at Pansy and Lavender playing harp and piano respectively. Pansy nodded toward the door, a smug smile on her lips, and Jack turned to look. He stared, unable to look away, as Ianto stepped into the room in his favorite dark Armani suit paired with a deep burgundy shirt topped with a deep black formal wizarding robe. On Ianto's arm, Gwen wore a vintage gown by Balenciaga in burgundy with gold trim with a small matching hat perched on her head. A hand slapped his arm as Mica squealed in fright. He spared thirty seconds to see Draco deftly

ARCANUM 101

catch his daughter, who he'd nearly dropped in his state of shock, before going back to staring at Ianto and Gwen.

Dragging in a steadying breath, he took the few steps necessary to meet his newest daughter. He bent to kiss her cheek. "You look amazing," he murmured. He tucked her hand into his arm and shifted his attention to Ianto. "You on the other hand..." The rest of his sentence was muffled behind both Ianto and Gwen's hands which covered his mouth at the same time. Shaking his head, he offered Ianto his other arm. "Shall we then?" A laugh escaped him at their eager nods, but before he could move, Harry appeared in front of them from somewhere to offer Gwen a small bouquet of cream roses in an antique gold tussy mussy holder.

"Gwen needed flowers... Draco arranged for those," Harry said. "Now, we can get you married, Captain."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Jack turned about to face his oldest daughter and nodded his head to her. He recalled, vaguely, some of the things Estelle had done at certain times of the year and knew by Welsh tradition that it was up to Alys when and how they joined her. Thus, he was shocked when Ianto took another step, ending up between him and Alys, and gave her what was almost a formal nod of his head.

“May I?” Ianto asked softly. He shifted a hand about in front of him. He watched his future stepdaughter carefully but she only smiled and gave him a questioning look back. Taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes and gathered his magic together. He used it to gently call one of the Lestrange family artifacts to him. A deep smile settled on his lips as he deftly caught the sword as it shimmered into existence in front of him. Unsheathing the blade, he flipped it about and offered it to her. “For the casting, milady,” he murmured.

She closed her fingers around the hilt. Her eyes widened in surprise but he quickly shook his head before she could speak her thoughts. She nodded again to him and he stepped back to stand beside Jack again.

ARCANUM 101

Ianto rested a hand on Jack's arm to silence him and watched Alys as she held the ancient blade before her.

Light shimmered along the surface of the sword. It seemed to glow with an inner light all its own. Alys silently nodded; the lights in the room were dimmed until they seemed little more than candle glow. The brightest illumination coming from the fireplace and the blade Alys held before her. Her smile was nearly as incandescent as she lowered the blade and began to cast the formal working circle in the space before the fireplace. Finished, Alys set the blade on the table which was now centered in the space she'd created.

Ianto felt Gwen stir beside him and stilled her with a gentle hand. When she peered up at him, he shook his head and pressed a finger to her lips to keep her silent. He then returned his focus to the events happening in front of him. A happy smile settled on his lips as the small group within the formal circle shifted about – Alys remained in the center by what would become the altar for the ceremony while Draco stood to the south, no surprise as he was the only male in the group and traditionally males took on that position; Alice, after a noticeably deep breath, stood north opposite him; Hermione was closest to them at the west while his tiny daughter, with a bit of encouragement from Alys, took the final spot. It was Mica's childish treble which broke the expectant silence in the room.

“Lords and Ladies of the Watchtower of the East, thou gentle sprites and airy sylphs, soaring eagle and sweet butterfly,” she nearly sang the words. Ianto was certain she was being prompted by Alys whenever she paused; however, he was so damned proud of her for doing this at her age. “Eurus master of the Eastern wind, be with us in laughter and in thought, bring us the bracing dawn wind and memories of fragrant Spring. I do summon, stir and call you up,” she paused, turned and, stretching up on her toes, cupped her hands over the candle behind her. A whisper of power seemed to flow through the room as

ARCANUM 101

the candle lit beneath her hands. "Come! Be welcome in this our rite. Blessed be," she finished. Mica then turned to watch Draco.

Where Mica had been all childish joy and happiness, Draco spoke with a warrior's calm sense of purpose. His tenor rang across the circle as he spoke. "Lords and Ladies of the Watchtower of the South, thou leaping salamanders and fiery ones, lion in passion and dragon in power, phoenix arising pure and whole from the flame," he said. "Notus, master of the South wind, be with us in passion and in truth, bring us the warmth of the hearthfire and the summer sun, and the clear sight of noonday. I do summon, stir and call you up," Draco said. As Mica had before him, he turned and cupped his hands over the candle resting behind him. Immediately, flame leapt from the wick. "Come! Be welcome in this our rite. Blessed be," he concluded.

Draco's words had no sooner finished then Hermione began her call. Her normal soft soprano now bordered on a contralto. "Lords and Ladies of the Watchtower of the West, thou deep-dwelling undines and swift-flowing naiads, loving dolphin and hidden eel," she half-spoke, half-sang. "Zephyrus master of the Western wind, be with us in feeling and in vision, in the evening tide's mystery and the upwelling autumn dreams. I do summon, stir and call you up," she said. She turned to face the watchers outside the circle. The barest hint of a smile on her face as she too called a flame into being on the candlewick behind her spot. "Come! Be welcome in this our rite. Blessed be," she said.

All the participants and watchers turned, nearly as one, to watch Alice begin her portion of the summoning. "Lords and Ladies of the Watchtower of the North, thou Gnomes within the earth and oreads of the mountain forest, bear slow and sure and bull of great strength, and tunneling worms whose work insures life," she chanted. Her voice was unusually solemn. "Boreas master of the north wind and ruler of the winds, here at the dwelling place of the gods be with us in solid strength and permanence, giving us sure knowledge of nature's ever-

ARCANUM 101

renewed cycles, the safe womb of night and the slow movement of winter. I do summon, stir and call you up," she said. "Come! Be welcome here in this our rite," she cried as she turned to light her candle. "Blessed be."

Finished, all turned their attention to Alys in the center of the circle. She raised her arms to encompass the entire space as she spoke. "We stand outside of time, in a place not of earth," she said. "As our ancestors before us bade, we join together and are one." Finished the final invocation, she lifted the sword from the table, crossed the now sacred space and stopped between where Draco and Hermione stood. Ianto watched as she carefully sketched a doorway in that space and smiled when she held a hand out toward him.

"Watch closely, then do what I do and what you think fits, okay?" he murmured to Gwen and Jack. Giving them both a long look, he stepped around them and walked about to stand in front of Alys. He froze in place when she pressed the tip of the blade against his throat.

"Who comes?" she demanded.

"Sarin Emrys Lestrage, called Ianto Jones, Heir of Afalglyn and to the Morgaine," Ianto paused for a long moment before finishing the traditional statement. A chorus of strangled sounds echoed around him. "A friend of the old ones, duly sworn."

The sword swung away. She offered a hand which he took and tugged him lightly into the circle. She kissed him lightly as she stepped away, murmuring, "Enter and be welcome, Sarin." Alys then turned back to the others waiting to enter.

Ianto went to the center of the circle and bowed his head for a moment. He'd done it now; the truth of his heritage was out. Forcing aside all thoughts of the reactions of their children and the wizards in the room, he straightened, turned and watched to see who would follow him into this sacred space. He expected Jack to come next; he was surprised to find Rhys stepping up to where Alys waited.

ARCANUM 101

Ianto watched Rhys. The man seemed oblivious to the blade resting against his throat as tradition demanded. Instead, he was watching Ianto intently. There was a question in Rhys's eyes, something which stirred a long dormant part of Ianto's psyche, and without thinking of the whys, wheres or the potential consequences, he nodded in silent answer. Only then did Rhys answer Alys' demand for his name.

"Rhys Alun Williams, *distain*," he said. To Ianto's surprise, he left of the rest of the traditional phrase of entrance in favor of inclining his head to Alys. "No oaths yet given, Lady."

"Enter and be welcome in this company, Rhys," Alys replied. She kissed him in greeting as well. She murmured something to the Welshman which made him blush as he passed her to join Ianto in the center of the circle.

Next to the small entrance space was Gwen. She pressed a hand to Jack's chest when he moved forward a bit. He looked down at her; she murmured quickly to him. To Ianto's immense surprise, Jack nodded and backed up a step to let her go before him. She stopped in front of Alys and sucked in a breath as the blade came up to touch her throat. She looked from Jack to Ianto and back again before focusing her attention on Alys. "Gwen Elizabeth Cooper," she said. "Second in Command of Torchwood Cardiff and adopted daughter of Jack Harkness and Ianto Jones."

Ianto barely heard the ritual words of admittance spoken though he did chuckle softly when Gwen let out a startled squeak when Alys kissed her as she passed her into the circle. His focus was on Jack. His lover was having a softly whispered conversation with John which ended with an almost formal leave taking and clasping of wrists between them. Jack, followed by closely by John stepped up to the entrance.

"My Lady," Jack said softly as he nodded to her.

ARCANUM 101

“Who comes?” Alys replied. There was laughter in her voice as she spoke. Ianto was certain she thought they would all finally learn Jack’s birthname; however, it seemed someone had taught Jack the old traditions as his response was perfectly fitting to the man he was now.

“Captain Jack Harkness,” he said. His baritone perfectly pitched to carry though the large space of the conservatory. “Companion of the Doctor, Director of the Torchwood Institute, Child of the Vortex, Immortal, Defender of the Earth, Guardian of the Rift, Time Agent, Royal Air Force Group Captain, Head of the House of Harkness and Regent of the House of Parkinson,” he listed. “Friend of the Old Ones, duly sworn,” he finished with a tiny smile at Alys.

Ianto rolled his eyes a bit, but smiled at his lover. He was very glad Jack resisted trying to put all that on his business cards. As Alys passed Jack into the circle, Ianto held his hands out to him. Holding Jack’s hands in his own, Ianto watched as Alys resealed the circle. He actually felt the magic snap back into place as she finished; however, it was John’s actions on the other side of the barrier which caused him to raise an eyebrow in question. John pulled his sword, went down on one knee and rested the blade across his leg as he guarded the weak point in the circle.

“I’ll explain it later,” Jack murmured. “About Hart and my connection to this...”

“Oh, you definitely will,” Ianto whispered back. He watched Alys join them and lay the blade on the altar. He tugged Jack back with him and gently pushed Rhys and Gwen forward closer to the altar. At Alys’ questioning look, he shook his head and nodded to the other couple. Gwen looked back at him; he merely smiled and nodded to Alys. “My seneschal weds first, Lady,” he ordered softly. Ianto watched, silent, as Alys led the other couple through the traditional steps and vows of an old Welsh handfasting. He felt like a cross between a proud father and a benevolent king as he watched them.

ARCANUM 101

“Others would ask who gives this woman into commitment, but as a woman is not property to be bought or sold, given and taken, I simply ask if she comes of her own free will and if she has her family's blessings,” Alys said. She gave Ianto a hard look but subsided when he briefly shook his head at her. “Gwenllian, is it true that you come of your own free will and accord?” she asked.

“I do,” Gwen replied. There was a hint of confusion in her voice as she answered the other woman, but her voice was amazingly steady despite the confusion.

“And whose blessings accompany you?” Alys asked.

“Mine, her father and liege lord, and those of her other father,” Ianto said. He reached forward, took Gwen's free hand and offered it to Rhys with a soft smile. As Rhys' hand wrapped around Gwen's fingers, Ianto shifted his own hold so that his hand rested over their joined ones. “May the Lady and her Consort bless you with long life and happiness,” he murmured softly. Power, unnamed and unknowable, swept the room, a soft bell-like chime echoed in its wake. All three stared at each other in silence for several minutes before Ianto nodded once and stepped back to stand beside Jack. He felt a faint touch to the small of his back. Reaching behind himself, he felt a pair of rings drop into his hand. Since he knew Draco stood behind him, he made a mental note to thank his son for the forethought when this was all over. Stepping forward, he placed the rings on the altar where they waited as Alys began the statements of intent.

“Rhys, I have not the right to bind thee to Gwenllian, only you have this right. If it be your wish, say so at this time and place your ring of unity in her hand,” Alys said. She lifted up one of the plain rings from the table. Now, in the brighter light of the candles and glimmering sword, it could be seen to shine with that particular warmth only Welsh gold contained.

ARCANUM 101

“It is my wish,” Rhys said solemnly. He accepted the ring from Alys, placed it in Gwen’s hand and curled her fingers around it.

“Gwenllian, if it be your wish for Rhys to be bound to you, place his ring of unity on your finger,” Alys said. She waited for a moment while Gwen slipped the ring onto her hand. Mica darted forward, took the bouquet from Gwen’s unresisting fingers before it dropped to the floor and quickly resumed her place in the circle. “Gwenllian, I have not the right to bind thee to Rhys, only you have this right. If it be your wish, say so at this time and place your token of unity in his hand,” Alys said.

“It is my wish!” Gwen all but squealed the words before blushing in embarrassment. She took the ring Alys offered her and handed it to Rhys.

“Rhys, if it be your wish for Gwenllian to be bound to you, place this token of unity next to your heart, to be carried with you at all times,” Alys said. Again she paused while Rhys slipped on his ring. She smiled at them both before continuing with the ceremony. “Now, repeat after me,” she said as she led the couple through the vows themselves.

Ianto’s focus shifted a bit inward. Everything was slowly and not so subtly pushing him toward taking up a mantle his family had discarded in his grandfather’s time. He looked at his two bloodline daughters before curling his free hand over his stomach. Was he doing the right thing for his children by accepting his heritage? Did he really have a choice in the matter? Soon, far sooner than he was comfortable with, Alys finished the wedding of his adopted daughter and his apparent seneschal. After quietly escorting them from the circle, she turned her attention to him and Jack.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

“Blessed be those who attend this joyous celebration,” Alys said. Her words rang across the circle and into the room beyond. While the marriage of Rhys and Gwen was a joyous celebration as well, it didn’t quite have the meaning to the greater Welsh magical community as Ianto’s marriage to Jack. Her words told Ianto more than anything else that she knew the full truth of his heritage; she likely had from the moment he’d handed her the ancient sword for use in the ceremony. “Blessed be those united in the bonds of love,” she added.

At her summoning glance, Ianto took a deep breath to calm his nerves and, after releasing Jack’s hand, stepped closer to the altar. He felt more than heard Jack step up to his side.

“You stand before this company, before the Goddess and God, and seek to become one with each other,” she said solemnly. “If either of you or anyone present here today knows of any reason why these vows should not be made, speak now or keep silent for all time.” Alys paused for a moment. It seemed as if time itself stood still while she waited for any protests. None came and she reached for the ancient blade on the altar. Lifting it, she laid the sword across her palms and held it out

toward them. “Swear you now, on this ancient and sacred blade, that there is no reason known to you that this union should not proceed,” she ordered.

Jack’s hand came out to rest lightly on the flat of the blade. Ianto, his own hand trembling just a bit, covered Jack’s. He looked over at his lover and gave him a tiny bit of a smile before he looked back at Alys. In near unison, they answered her. “I do so swear,” they said.

Still holding the blade before them, Alys continued to speak. “I remind you now of your commitment to one another and to the Rede. ‘An it harm none, do as thou wilt.’ Thus says the Rede,” she said. “Such should be considered in your new life together. There will be times of hardship which you must endure and support one another through these trials with your love and strength and honesty. If you feel you are unable to fulfill your duties to your partner and your responsibility to uphold the Rede, now is the time to declare it,” she told them solemnly.

Neither of them spoke, only stared at each other for a long silent moment, before she gently tugged the blade away to return it to the altar. Ianto caught Jack’s hand in his as they lowered them to their sides. Ianto smiled shyly at Jack before focusing again on Alys. As they stared at one another, Draco slipped up to the altar. He rested his hand on the sword for a moment and chanted softly in archaic French. With a pleased smirk, he lifted his hand to expose another pair of rings. These were rare Welsh gold and equally rare platinum braided together to form a pair of matched bands. With a deep bow, Draco retired to his place leaving a slightly stunned Ianto staring after him.

“Ianto Sarin Emrys, I have not the right to bind thee to Jack, only you have this right. If it be your wish, say so at this time and place your ring of unity in his hand,” Alys said. There was something in her voice which clearly said she meant every word she spoke. Ianto resolved to tell her that she was indeed worthy to act as High Priestess for the

ARCANUM 101

family. Still, he took the ring she offered him, rolled it between his fingers and set it in Jack's offered hand.

"It is my wish," Ianto said.

"Jack, if it be your wish for Ianto Sarin Emrys to be bound to you, place his ring of unity on your finger," Alys said. She waited for a moment while Jack took the ring, kissed it, and then slipped it onto his finger. Alys smiled broadly before she continued the ceremony. "Jack, I have not the right to bind thee to Ianto Sarin Emrys, only you have this right. If it be your wish, say so at this time and place your token of unity in his hand," Alys said.

"I do so wish," Jack said. He took the ring offered him and silently offered it to Ianto. Ianto, in turn, took the ring, kissed it and slipped it on his finger before giving Alys an apologetic look for preempting her next set of lines.

Alys just shook her head with a bit of a laugh. "Ianto, please speak your vows to Jack," she ordered.

"I, Ianto Sarin Emrys LeStrange, do take you, Jack Harkness, as my partner, mate and consort. Never will I seek to do you harm. Always will I strive for your happiness and welfare. My love will be your treasure in the times when other riches fail to serve. My love will be your medicine in sickness as my hand tends your needs. My love will be your mirth when your heart is touched by sadness. My love will be your shining star through the darkest of nights. My love will be your banquet when life's table seems empty. All this do I promise you with all the love that is in my heart," Ianto said. He paused for a moment before taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly before he continued to speak to Jack. "My love, now do I make my promises to you. I promise to share laughter in times of joy and wonder; to share tears when sorrow touches our lives; to share my dreams and hopes, that our love and minds may grow; to share compassion and understanding during times of frustration and anger; to share all that I

ARCANUM 101

have, and all that I am, for as long as our love shall last. So mote it be," he said solemnly.

A soft sound came from Jack whose eyes were wet with what Ianto was certain were tears at the depth of what he'd promised his immortal lover. With a quick sidelong glance at Alys, which was answered with a silent, yet encouraging nod, Jack began to speak.

"I, Jack Harkness, in the name of the spirit of the Goddess and her Consort, that resides within us all, by the life that courses within my blood and the love that resides within my heart, take thee to my hand, my heart, and my spirit, to be my chosen one. To desire thee, and be desired by thee, to possess thee, and be possessed by thee, without sin or shame, for naught evil can exist in the purity of my love for thee. I promise to love thee wholly and completely without restraint in sickness and in health, in plenty and poverty, in life and beyond, where we shall meet, remember, and love again. I shall not seek to change thee in any way. I shall respect thee, thy beliefs, thy people, and thy ways as I respect myself," Jack said quietly.

Moved, Ianto used his light hold on Jack's hand to tug him closer to him. He reached out with his free hand and wrapped his hand around the back of Jack's neck to pull him closer still. Ianto pressed a gentle kiss on Jack's lips which quickly deepened into something more than a mere confirmation of their promises. Finally pulling away, he brushed his thumb over Jack's cheek. "I love you," he whispered softly.

"And I you," Jack murmured back.

A quiet cough interrupted them before they could go back to kissing. Both of them turned to Alys who gave them a very feminine version of Jack's playful grin. "Shall we finish the ceremony before we get to the celebration?" she teased.

Forcing himself to release Jack, Ianto nodded. "By all means," he said.

ARCANUM 101

“By the Winds that bring change, by the Fire of love, by the Seas of fortune and the strength of the Earth do I bless this union,” she said. Her voice carried a strange overtone to it, as if more than just their daughter was giving their blessing to their marriage. Both men exchanged a look before returning their gaze to Alys. In a more normal tone, she continued, “May the God and Goddess bless this union. May all who encounter it be blessed with love as well. May your lives be full while your hurts be few. So Mote It Be.”

Giving Alys a questioning look, Ianto waited semi-patiently for her to nod to him. Before he could move, Jack swept him up in a deep kiss. It buried all other actions and sounds beneath the rush of his blood in his veins. Ianto pulled away to drag in a breath before restarting the kiss only Rhys’s “Oi! What about dinner?” forced them apart in time to see Alys finish taking down the ritual circle.

Ianto shook his head and reached over for the sword. He closed his fingers around the hilt and slowly lifted the blade from the table to cradle the sword in his arm much the way one would cradle a baby. He stroked the flat of the blade for a moment and licked his lips as he stared from the naked blade to Jack and back again. Finally, Ianto lifted his gaze from the blade and scanned the room until he found Rhys standing with his arm around Gwen’s waist. “Rhys!” he called.

“My Lord?” Rhys answered. He stepped away from Gwen to cross the suddenly empty space separating him from Ianto. Ianto watched him come. Without conscious thought, he shifted his hold on the sword to offer one hand to Rhys as the Welshman went down on one knee before him. Rhys bowed his head for a moment to kiss the back of Ianto’s hand before releasing it and looking up in question.

Ianto sheathed the blade with a quick slice of metal on leather before flipping the sword to present the hilt to Rhys. “Hold this in trust and guard it well for soon it will be needed to defend Loegria from

ARCANUM 101

enemies both within and without,” he ordered. “Have it ready for when the champion has need of it.”

Rhys nodded and his hand closed around the hilt. With both their hands on the sword, Rhys looked up at Ianto, his eyes dark and solemn. “I, Rhys Alun Williams, am your liege man of life and limb and of earthly worship. I will protect your house and serve your heirs until my life leaves my body.”

At first Ianto thought the pop which echoed in the wake of Rhys’ oath was an echo of the magic which still swirled around the room from the wedding ceremony. It wasn’t until several shocked cries echoed in its wake that Ianto realized there was a body on the floor in front of him. It took a moment, and that body shifting a bit, for him to realize the body was the beaten mass of Severus Snape. Yet even his bloody broken body couldn’t hold his attention when compared to the ring which rolled from out of his robes to a circling halt by his feet. Compelled by something deep and undeniable echoing up from the core of his magic, Ianto crouched down to pick up the ring. He stared at it for a moment before sliding it into place on his right hand. No sooner had he settled where he knew it belonged than several people scattered around the room dropped to their knees; however, it was John Hart’s quiet words which scared the hell out of him.

“My King,” John said. “What are your orders?”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

It's amazing what one desperate look will spawn, Ianto thought. He rested a hand on the window wall of Jack's office. He stood there, watching the action on the main floor, from the relative silence of the office. He needed this silence to gather his thoughts and decide on what they did from here. His mind drifted back to the chaos which John's simple statement spawned at Harkness Hall. Within minutes, the kids were demanding answers; Owen was demanding help for Severus; and Mica was screaming in fear. Torn between the need to be in control and his youngest daughter's terror, Ianto sent a desperate look at Jack, silently begging his newly wedded husband to take command.

Within minutes, the entire group was on the move. Mica cradled in Ianto's arms as Jack moved them to the Hub with his vortex manipulator. Right behind them, John popped in with Owen, Alice and Snape. Both men insisted Ianto and Mica stay in the office itself while they went back to help the rest of the group migrate from the Hall to the Hub. By the time Ianto had calmed Mica down enough for her to settle at her Daddy's desk with some scrap paper to doodle on; all the kids were back thanks to either their own magic or John's manipulator. Jack,

ARCANUM 101

Rhys and Gwen were driving back in the SUVs. They were in constant voice contact with the Hub updating their position.

Ianto shook himself out of the memories of the chaos at the Hall to focus on the chaos below. The house elves were in their element, cleaning up the old dormitories for the influx of people about to bunk down here, while frantic motion and shouting from the direction of the autopsy bay told of the continuing efforts to heal Severus. None of it held Ianto's attention, though. His thoughts were focused on the crumpled bit of parchment clutched in his fingers. He didn't even have to read it again; he already had the words memorized.

Sarin,

This great crusade to maintain pure blood and status is a fool's errand. Our leader is unstable. One thing I do know, insane leaders do not win wars. Or if they do, they do not keep their throne for long. Already, there are fights for status, position and for who will take his place before he is even a carcass. The fighting would tear our world apart as surely as Alexander's empire was dismembered after his death.

So I'm sending you this.

One thing I task you with, open the safe in my study. Examine what is inside. Use it to stop this war.

I find that I am truly proud of you, my son. You are a man of conviction and honor.

Remember your mother and me fondly, if you can.

Rodolphus LeStrange

He tossed the parchment onto the desk and curled a hand over his stomach. His sons were reacting to his stress, even if they were too

ARCANUM 101

small to truly kick him, they certainly had ways of making their presence and opinions known to him. Ianto sighed, rubbed his belly, and looked back at Mica on the sofa. He took in another deep breath, reconfirmed his decision, and nodded once. “Libby!” he yelled.

The house elf in question popped into the room with a soft “Yes, sir?” He smiled at her and waved a hand toward Mica. “Keep a close eye on her for me,” he ordered. “Defend her if there’s an attack here, understood?”

“Yes, sir.”

Ianto watched as Libby conjured up a small stool and settled down next to his sleeping daughter. Reassured of Mica’s safety, Ianto absently rubbed his finger over his newly acquired wedding ring and stepped out of the office onto the small landing outside. He rested his hands on his hips, scanned the Hub, and finally gave up trying to catch anyone’s attention in favor of a shrill whistle which Myfanwy answered with a screech. The combined noises silenced everyone but the medical personnel working in the autopsy room.

“Now, that I have your attention,” he said with a small smirk. “John? Status on Jack and the others?”

“Five minutes out,” John replied. The man stood stiff, almost at attention, and nodded to Ianto as he reported to him. “Jack apparently drives surface as manically as he drives interstellar.”

“Thank you,” he said. “And you’ve not had to deal with Jack’s driving yet.” He scanned the expectant faces and inclined his head to Draco. “Draco? Have we heard back from Minerva yet?”

“A quick message, Tad,” his son replied. “She, Madam Pomfrey and Professor Sprout are going to ground in the *Na h-Eileanan Siar*. She says once she’s certain they’re secure, she’ll get in touch again but the mission was going well until we interrupted them.”

“That’s good,” Ianto nodded. The Outer Hebrides were almost as awash in magic and magical power as Wales though their power came

from a vastly different source. Another look took in the group and he turned about to head down to the autopsy bay. “Owen?” he called quietly. “Report?”

“Good news or bad news, Teaboy?” Owen called back. “Good news is that I can get him conscious for you and Jack to talk to...” he trailed off and looked up sadly. “Bad news, he ain’t going to make it. Nothing, not even this fancy healer Alys brought in to help, is going to keep him stable.”

“Fuck,” Ianto breathed the word. His voice drowned beneath the squeal of the door alarms. He leant back, using his grip on the railing to keep from falling over backwards and called, “Jack! Autopsy. We need to talk to Severus right now.” He looked about for Harry, found him and sighed, “Harry, send Hedwig to Grimauld Place. Tell them to come to the Plass. Not the Hub, but the Plass above. Hermione help with the note... we need them to come prepared to stay a while,” Ianto ordered.

He straightened up and sighed softly when Jack came to join him. A hand rested on his back for a moment, the warmth soothing his nerves, and he smiled up at Jack for a moment. Sobering, he looked down at the room below and sighed tiredly. “He’s not going to make it, Jack,” he murmured. “They can keep him stable enough for us to question, but that’s all.”

“It’s war, Ianto,” Jack murmured back. “We knew we were going to lose some along the way.”

“I know, but...” Ianto trailed off and shrugged eloquently. “So, you want to handle this?”

“Yes, but come along,” Jack said. Their fingers entwined where their hands rested on the railing. Ianto gave Jack a tiny smile and allowed Jack to lead him down the stairs to where Severus lay, semi-reclined, on the autopsy table. Alice, Owen and the new healer brought in by Alys, who Ianto hadn’t yet been introduced to, stood nearby

ARCANUM 101

keeping Severus as pain-free as possible. “Welcome back, Professor Snape,” Jack said.

“It’s him, Captain,” Severus said. He closed his eyes tightly for a moment. “He’s back... somehow...” He trailed off. Deep rasping breaths rattled his chest. The beeping of accompanying monitors drowned out all sound for several minutes.

“He doesn’t have long,” Owen murmured. Regret tinged his tone as he shook his head at Jack’s dark expression. “I’m sorry, Jack,”

“Who’s back?” Jack half-asked, half-demanded. “I need to know, Severus.”

“Voldemort...” Severus said. He coughed hard. Blood flecked his lips. “He is Voldemort...” Another rattling breath shook the potions master. He brought a hand up. Jack grabbed it. Severus clutched tightly. “Don’t let him win, Captain...” Severus’s hand tightened on Jack’s; the other flailed about for a bit before catching hold of Jack’s shirt collar and pulling him down close to his face. “The drums... Voldemort ... the drums...”

“What?” Jack cried. His shocked words nearly drowned beneath the steady beep and alarms of the monitors as they told of the potions master’s death. “He can’t be! He’s dead!” He reached out and shook Severus several times before Ianto managed to wrap his arms around Jack and still his frantic actions.

“Jack... Severus is dead,” Ianto said. He staggered back a step when Jack, wild-eyed and shaking, whirled about to face him. “What is it, *caraid?*”

Jack frantically shook his head. He all but shoved Ianto away and ran up the stairs to the main floor above. “Martha!” he shouted. “We need to call the Doctor!” His words echoed throughout the suddenly silent Hub. “The Master’s back!”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Ianto shared a confused glance with Owen before turning a smile on the healer who'd so expertly caught him. He tilted his head to one side as he considered the woman for a long moment; she looked amazingly familiar. Iron grey hair told of her years as did the wrinkles around her eyes, but the smile on her face was so damned familiar. He couldn't quite place from where. He shook his head a bit and smiled back at her. "I'm sorry," he said. "We weren't introduced."

"Judith," she said. "I was more concerned with my patient."

She turned dark melancholy eyes onto the remains of the professor where Owen was carefully preparing him for transfer to the morgue a few stories below. It was in that moment, as she stared at the professor's remains, Ianto recognized her. She had Hermione's dark eyes. As she turned back to face him, Ianto sucked in a startled breath. "Judith Harkness, right?"

"How did you...?"

"You and Hermione have the same eyes," Ianto replied. He offered a hand to her. "I have a very complicated name, but I prefer Ianto

Jon..." he trailed off for a moment. "Let me try that again," he said with a smile. "Ianto Harkness-Jones."

"So, he finally married again?"

"Just this evening," Ianto said. He ducked his head with a faint blush before shaking away the embarrassment. "He thinks you're dead."

"I thought he was, so..." she trailed off and shrugged one shoulder. A merry laugh rang through the autopsy bay when Ianto gave a rueful smile acknowledging the hit. "Alys asked me to come personally. How much of what's happening is because of him?"

"I don't know, Judith," Ianto said. He waved a hand toward the stairs and followed her up them. On reaching the main floor, he automatically scanned the space for Jack. His husband was holed up in his office with Martha, both of them frantically dialing mobiles. "Something in Severus's final message sent Jack into a complete panic." He sighed and shoved a hand through his hair. "Something happened to him, something very bad, which he hasn't shared with me..."

"Just like you haven't shared some things with him, Your Majesty," Judith replied. "And call me Jodi, everyone does."

"Jodi," Ianto acknowledged with a nod. "And I'm Ianto." He shook his head. "Until my father sent me the family ring, none of it mattered. So I didn't tell him. Then there wasn't enough time before all hell broke loose again." He thought for a moment. Who knew how long it would take for Jack to get hold of the Doctor? He thought again of the comment in his father's letter. What was in his father's safe? What impact could it have on the outcome of this war? Ianto leant his head back, staring blindly up into the rafters for a moment, and then lowered his head to smile at Jodi. "Want to see a castle?"

"*The* castle?" she asked. The grin he received in response to his nod more than showed her relationship to Jack. "Of course!"

ARCANUM 101

Ianto returned her grin with a smug smile of his own. He rubbed his wedding ring with his thumb while he thought. After a moment, he looked about and called “Tosh? Gwen?” When he had the women’s attention, he smiled. “Still want to see Afalglyn?”

By the time, he climbed the stairs to speak to Jack his initial small group had morphed into a semi large one. He was taking John, Gwen, Alys, Jodi and Tosh with him to the estate. All of them well armed at John’s insistence. Depending on the state of Afalglyn, they’d shift the non-combatants to the estate for the duration of the fight. This would leave a much more manageable group to house in the Hub. The only exceptions to the move of the non-combatants were himself and Mica. Ianto knew Jack wouldn’t be able to concentrate on the larger situation if they were out of his sight for too long.

A swift knock on the door was answered tersely snarled “Come in” from his husband. Not taking it personally, Ianto opened the door, entered and quickly summoned up two cups of coffee for Jack and Martha. He looked over at his youngest who appeared scared out of her wits by her Daddy’s anger. While Jack had a bit of coffee in order to calm himself again, Ianto walked over and picked up Mica. He set her on his hip and turned back to Jack.

“I’m taking a group of us out to Afalglyn,” he said. “According to my father, there’s something there which will help with end this war.”

“Unless he’s locked the Doctor up there, there isn’t,” Jack snapped. He shoved himself to his feet and circled the desk to join Ianto. “I’m going with you.” The words were short and brusque as his husband reached out to take his youngest daughter from Ianto’s hold. He set her on his own hip and brushed a kiss onto Ianto’s lips. “You shouldn’t be carrying her.”

“Jack,” Ianto hissed. The stern look he received in return caused him to roll his eyes. “Fine, I won’t carry her,” he conceded. Instead, he started back out the door to create the portkey which would take the

motley group out to his childhood home. As he left the office, he heard Jack order Martha to ‘keep trying, he has to answer sometime’.

A few taps of his wand to a spare bit of tech lying abandoned on Tosh’s desk yielded a portkey to the gates of Afalglyn. Ianto held it in his hand and waited for the rest of the group to gather around him. He raised a questioning eyebrow when both Hermione and Alice joined the group. The latter accompanied by Stephen. Shrugging, he held out the tech. “This isn’t the easiest way to travel, but is best for a group the size of ours. So, everyone grab hold...” he trailed off, waited for everyone to grasp the tech somehow, and smiled as he murmured the activation phrase, “*Coed, Maes, a Mynydd.*” Several startled gasps and Hermione’s shocked “Tad!” accompanied their movement from the Hub to the elaborate gates of the Lestrange estate.

Ianto gave his older daughter a little smile. “That’s the family motto, Hermione,” he said softly. He pushed his way through the group to reach the gates. He stared at them for a long moment before gently resting his hands on them. He no sooner touched the metal then the gates swung open. A glance back at the others summoned Jack to his side. He reached out for his husband’s hand, clutched it tightly in his own, and started to lead the way up the driveway. He closed his eyes as he crossed the wards, feeling them checking him over then welcoming him inside, and he opened his eyes to smile at the sight of his childhood home looming over the rolling lawns of Afalglyn.

“Eye Candy,” John said. “What are we supposed to be looking at?”

“Afalglyn,” Ianto replied. He half turned to look back at them and chuckled softly. “Let me guess, you see a falling into ruin manor house and the stubs of a castle wall?”

“Yep,” Jack said. “So what should we see?”

Ianto was a bit surprised to discover that Jack couldn’t see the house. He dropped his husband’s hand, took a few steps away from him, and held up a hand to keep the others from crowding him. He

ARCANUM 101

reached out with his magic, grasped the strands of power which made up the web of the wards, and manipulated them gently. Using only his magic, he told the wards concealing the estate of those with him, how they related to him, and slowly let the magic drift away. He turned back to the others in time to feel the magic examine each member of the party before accepting them into either the family or the Court. Ianto couldn't resist the smile as the girls's eyes widened and John gasped softly as they saw the house as it truly appeared.

He took Jack's hand again and led him towards the Georgian manor house. It was a massive red brick edifice grandly presiding over the lawns and formal gardens sweeping down to the river; however, he knew it wasn't the manor house that continually drew everyone's eyes. It was the castle high up the hill, and the massive orchards that made it seem as though it were floating in a golden sea.

It shimmered in and out of focus, the magic demanding one last test. It wasn't until they had reached the main doors that he understood its nature. Across the drive, the great fountain waited, its animal head spouts dry and lifeless. He pulled Jack towards it and walked around it until he found the dragon's head and placed their joined hands against its snout. He only had to wait a second. Water poured from all the spouts, soaring high before splashing back into the basin. Ianto laughed. He was home, and the house and castle welcomed him.

“Ianto...” Jack murmured. “That’s where you grew up?”

“Yep,” Ianto said. He chuckled softly and looked over at his husband. “I grew up in the manor house, which we called Afalglyn, but the name...” he trailed off and pointed at the castle beyond, now solid and clearly visible. “It was named for the castle which was our ultimate ancestor’s home.”

CHAPTER TWENTY

Ianto leant back against the desk. He watched Jack roll the silver cylinder they retrieved from the safe back and forth between his fingers. Outside the doors, their companions surprised cries as they explored the manor house echoed back to them. Ianto reached over and gently took the object from Jack. “You look like you’re about to cry,” he said quietly. He took a closer look at what he now held and drew in a startled breath. “Is this what I think it is?”

“It’s the sonic screwdriver,” Jack said. “The Doctor’s never without it. The only time I didn’t see him with it was when he had Rose use it to do something. For it to be here...”

“Jack?” Ianto asked. He leant forward and cupped his husband’s chin. He lifted his head up so they could look directly at each other. “Talk to me.”

“He’s likely dead, Ianto.” Jack closed his eyes for a moment. A shuddering breath escaped from the other man before he opened watery eyes. “We need him. We can’t fight the Master. He’s another Time Lord...”

ARCANUM 101

“He’s just a man, Jack,” Ianto said. He set the screwdriver down on the desk, slipped down and settled in Jack’s lap. He hugged his husband and pressed a kiss to his neck. “There’s always some way to kill someone. Might take us some work to find the method, but we will find it.”

“I should check with Martha, see if she’s gotten hold of him,” Jack said. He turned his head just a bit and pressed a gentle kiss to Ianto’s lips. “However, you wouldn’t have brought us out here without a reason. So what is it?”

“Sanctuary.” Ianto shifted a bit to rest his head on Jack’s shoulder. He needed to rest. This was comfortable. So he cuddled while he talked. “Afalglyn is unplottable as well as very well warded. No one can get here without my consent. After me, Hermione as she’s the Princess Royal and Heiress Presumptive.”

“Bring everyone who won’t be needed for the battle here?”

“Exactly,” Ianto said. “Bring everyone out here. Decide who exactly we need for the fight and those of us go back to the Hub to prepare for it.”

“I want you to stay here,” Jack said. He rested a hand on Ianto’s stomach. He rubbed circles around the young man’s navel with his thumb. “You and Mica,” he said. “I need you two to stay here. Safe. I couldn’t concentrate on a fight if I have to worry about you two being taken or killed by them.”

“Jack...”

A finger rested on his lips. “I’ll come back,” Jack said. “I always do... but you, our sons, our daughter... you won’t... I don’t want to miss a single moment with any of you. So, stay here...”

“On one condition,” Ianto said.

“What’s that?”

ARCANUM 101

“Contact UNIT.” Ianto chuckled softly at Jack’s perplexed look. “You’ll need the manpower. I’d feel much better if you had more trained troops with you when you go after Hogwarts.”

“How did you...?”

“I know you, Jack,” Ianto said. “I know you better than anyone. You won’t want to wait for Voldemort to come to us but will take the fight to him. So, contact UNIT in Cardiff, get them to help you. Most of their agents assigned to the area are familiar with magic...”

“And I can give you a contact.”

Ianto twisted about to smile at Jodi. He looked from her to Jack and back before waving her into the room. He started to get up but Jack tightened his hold so he resettled in his husband’s lap. “How long...?”

“Not very,” Jodi replied. She inclined her head to Ianto as he waved her into the room. “Just long enough to know that you wanted to get in touch with UNIT Cardiff.” She grinned that familiar grin before she finished. “My granddaughter and great-granddaughter work with them while my grandson works for the PD.”

“Do we know him?” Jack demanded. “Or them?”

“Yes, they complain about you all the time,” she replied.

Ianto rolled his eyes at her. He knew she was winding Jack up before telling them. Then it dawned on him who always complained about them in the Cardiff PD. “You are not telling me that Andy Davidson is related to you,” Ianto said. At her nod, he dropped his head onto Jack’s shoulder with a soft groan. “Great, just great...” he muttered before looking up at her again. “You haven’t told him.” He glared at her for a moment, shook his head, and pointed at Jack. “He’s going to be so pissed when he figures it out.”

“So you haven’t told him yet?” Jodi retorted.

“No,” Ianto said. “We were a bit distracted by what I came here to get.” He reached out and stroked Jack’s cheek for a moment. “Besides, it’s not that easy to introduce Jack to someone he’s long thought dead.”

ARCANUM 101

“What are you two talking about?” Jack demanded. He turned what Ianto privately thought of as ‘The Captain Glare’ first on him and then on Judith before refocusing on Ianto. “Ianto?”

Ianto gently disentangled himself from Jack and rose to his feet. He knew, just knew, if he didn’t get up he’d likely get dumped on the floor in a minute. He nodded his head toward Jodi and smiled. “Jack, the Healer Alys called in this, your oldest daughter, Judith. Judith, I’m certain you know this is your father, Jack.”

Just as Ianto expected, Jack leapt to his feet. “What!” he demanded. He didn’t wait for an explanation, but circled the desk to get closer to Jodi. He stared down at her for a long moment before reaching down and tugging her up to her feet. Ianto watched as he enveloped her in a tight hug. Jack murmured softly to her; his voice too soft for Ianto to understand. Finally, he pulled back and demanded, “How?”

“I am a witch, Papa,” she replied. She didn’t move from Jack’s hold. She just smiled up at him and tilted her head a bit to watch him. “Magical folk live a lot longer than most mortals. After a certain age, we just spend more time in the magical world than the mundane.”

“Still, you’re over a hundred years old,” Jack protested. “You should be long dead. I thought you were dead when I returned from the Great War...” he trailed off for a moment then hugged her tightly again. “Missed you, baby girl.”

“Missed you too, Papa,” she replied. “I wished...”

Ianto sniffled. He hated his hormones right now as both of them swung about to look at him. Pouting, he shoved his handkerchief into a pocket. “Hormones,” he muttered. Before he could take another breath, Ianto was smothered in hugs from Jack and Jodi. He tolerated it for a moment before gently pulling away from them. “We need to get the team moving here. Contact your grandchildren...” he trailed off for a moment. “I’m not old enough to have grandchildren!” he protested.

ARCANUM 101

“Especially one who spends a lot of time guarding Torchwood scenes for you,” Jodi retorted. “Still, it’s true.”

“Wait...” Jack interrupted. He pointed a finger at Jodi. “You are not saying that Andy Davidson... Gwen’s ex-partner... is my grandson.”

“Great-grandson, Papa.”

“No, no, no,” Jack muttered. He wandered toward the door and shouted for John and Hermione before looking back at his daughter. “That is just... disturbing.”

Ianto rolled his eyes, walked over and poked Jack in the chest. “No, disturbing is my realizing that I have great-grandchildren who are actually older than me!” he snapped. He glared at his husband. “It makes sense for you, but not me!”

Jack wrapped his arms around Ianto and pressed a kiss to his temple. “I’m sorry,” he whispered. “I didn’t even think of that when I...”

“Oh, no you don’t,” Ianto retorted. “I knew what I was getting into falling for you. It’s just having the proof of those thoughts appear before me is really disturbing.” He gave Jack a soft, chaste kiss before pulling away to look over at the study door where Hermione and John were just arriving. “Hermione, John, go back to the Hub and start bringing everyone there here. Send the house elves as well. Everyone’s safer here.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

It took some time to shift everyone from the Hub to the estate. The house elves arrived first, no surprise really, and Ianto set them to work preparing rooms for everyone who'd be staying at Afalglyn beginning with the Master's Suite. Additionally, he set Mipsy to work in the kitchens preparing a late luncheon so they could all talk about what had happened since Severus's death just that morning. When Mipsy informed him the meal was ready, Ianto took Jack's hand and led him toward the dining room. Jodi trailed along behind them. Stepping inside, Ianto led the way to his seat, settled and pulled Jack down beside him. He didn't give a damn about tradition and protocol at the moment. He wanted his husband near.

"Jack!" Martha's voice pierced the din of conversation in the room. "I can't reach him. I keep getting his... well, my voice mail."

Jack stared down the table toward Martha. He could do nothing but stare at her for several minutes. Then, silently, he held up the Sonic Screwdriver. He watched as she choked on a breath. Her hands coming up to briefly cover her mouth before she lowered them.

"No, Jack," Martha protested. "He can't be."

ARCANUM 101

“Why else would this be here?” Jack retorted. He knew how she felt. He felt just the same. “And us unable to reach him?”

“I don’t know,” Martha said. “But he’s not dead.” She shook her head and reached for her fiancé’s hand. She clung tightly to Tom as she continued, “We would know, Jack. We would *know!*”

Jack gave her a tired look. He’d lived through so many deaths. He understood denial so well. “Are you certain of that?”

“Yes,” Martha hissed. “The death of the last Time Lord would resonate, Jack.” She waved a hand between the two of them. “Especially for us.”

“All right,” Jack conceded. She did likely have a point. As close as both of them had been to the Doctor, they would likely know if he did die during their lifetime. “Assume you’re right,” he said. “Then we need to find him. For that we need the Tardis.”

“You can call her.”

“She ran away from me, Martha. I doubt she’d come if I suddenly started shouting for her,” he said. Jack gives her a disbelieving look. “I’m wrong, remember.”

“You can call her,” Martha repeated. She considered him for a moment and held up a hand to forestall his upcoming protest. “I know something you don’t.” She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “The reason you disturb the Tardis is because you’re like her.”

“Excuse me?” Jack didn’t even attempt to restrain his doubt.

“The Tardis is powered by the Vortex and, in a very real sense, so are you. She couldn’t understand it. But I will tell you one thing. After you left us, when the Doctor told her you wouldn’t be coming with them, she was grieving. Even I could feel it. That’s when the Doctor told me.”

“So, what...” Jack trailed off for a moment. “I just wave my hand and go... 'Hey Beautiful, be nice if you showed up'.”

ARCANUM 101

"I don't know!" She sounded near tears. "I just know that the Doctor said you were the only other being she would trust fully."

"Oh!" Jack yelped. "Don't cry. I hate it when women cry."

"We need him back, Jack!" Martha all but screamed. "You..." she paused for a moment, "used to talk to her, didn't you? I remember you were always stroking her and petting her..."

"I know, Martha. I know we need him back," Jack said. He rose to his feet and walked down the length of the table to hug his fellow Companion. "Yes, I worked on her, talked to her, petted her, but that was on board her. Not when I'm planet bound and she's off somewhere else."

"What is this Vortex thing?" Draco's confused voice cut across their conversation reminding Jack of their attentive audience.

"It's the source of everything, I suppose you could say," Jack said.

"I don't understand," Draco replied. "Like magic?"

"I don't know." Jack shrugged. "It's what keeps me alive apparently. It powers the Tardis. The Rift is connected to it."

"He's talking about the stuff of Creation, Draco," Alys said. "The power of the Universe made visible."

"And this Tardis," Draco paused to be certain he had the term correct. "It's in tune with it?"

Jack nodded. "She's a part of it. Or it's a part of her. It's how she travels through time and space by using the Vortex." He looked over at Ianto. "Remember that golden glow when I kissed Carys on Gwen's first day? That's the vortex energy."

"Then all you need to do is to use the energy to send the message," Draco said. "If she's part of it, she's bound to hear you."

"I don't know how, Draco," Jack said tiredly. He shoved a hand through his hair. Why didn't they understand that he didn't know how to contact the Tardis. If he could, he would, but he honestly didn't know how.

ARCANUM 101

“Sure you do,” Draco said. He smiled over at Jack and nodded in the direction of his chest. “It’s inside you too, isn’t it? Just...” he trailed off. “Just look inside.”

“That is amazingly unhelpful.”

“No, he’s right,” Ianto said. “You’ve never really accepted it because of all the negative emotions attached to how you became immortal, but Draco’s right. It’s inside you, too. Come, sit down.” He smiled at Jack and held a hand out to his husband. He waited for Jack to return to his end of the table and settle in his chair. “Close your eyes and reach inside, Jack. If you’re going to save the Doctor, you need to see clearly into your own connection to the Vortex. Please. Try.”

“What am I looking for?” Jack asked softly. He could almost feel the way everyone in the room held their breath as he attempted to find the vortex inside him.

“You’ll know it when you find it.” Ianto pressed his lips to Jack’s. He brushed his fingers over his husband’s cheek. “And who knows. It might welcome you home.”

“I feel amazingly silly, Ianto,” Jack murmured.

“Stop making it difficult, Jack,” Ianto snapped. “Stop being afraid. Look!”

A shudder raced over Jack’s skin. For a moment, all he could think was ‘now, he gets dominant’ before Ianto pressed his hand over his eyes, blocking his sight so Jack was all but forced to look inwards instead of at his watchful audience. He consciously slowed his breathing, the way he’d been taught years before at the Time Agency, and tried to relax. As he settled into that breathing pattern, Jack was surprised to feel breath against his ear just before he heard John’s soft voice murmuring in their native dialect. The words soothed his fear, calmed him more, and he could just hear a familiar singing on the edges of his mind. He wasn’t certain if it was her, but he found himself chasing the sound, stretching his mind as he called, “*Beautiful?*”

ARCANUM 101

“Tatlimse?”

Jack recognized that word even if he hadn't heard it spoken since he'd left the agency. He smiled – both outwardly and inwardly – and held a mental hand out to the Tardis. *“Come to me, Beautiful,”* he encouraged. *“I need your help.”*

He no sooner finished the request then he heard the distinctive groaning of the Tardis' engines. Several gasps echoed through the room as the sound grew louder and louder. Jack reached up and tugged down Ianto's hand. He clutched it tightly and turned toward where the sound came from. As he watched, the Tardis slowly materialized in one corner of the room, her doors facing toward where he sat expectantly waiting for her. He rose, all but dragging Ianto with him, and went to the Tardis. Jack rested a hand on her doors and sighed as he felt her echoing depression. *“I'm sorry, Beautiful,”* he murmured. *“We'll find him.”*

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

“Martha!” Jack’s shout echoed out the now open doors. “She wants you in here, too.”

Everyone watched as Martha jumped up and, after giving Tom a quick reassuring kiss, ran inside the Tardis. Harry chuckled as the rest of the group began to serve themselves from the meal which had appeared on the table before them. He shook his head a bit, a slightly unnerving humming echoing across his mind, and he tilted his head to consider the large, slightly battered police box dominating one corner of the dining room. In an almost daze, he rose to his feet and circled the table to get a better look at it. He rested a hand on one corner of the box and the soft humming rose to a joyous crescendo.

He stroked the side of the box. There was something about it. The soft song which echoed in his mind much the way his magic sang in his veins when he cast spells. He just couldn’t move away from the police box. He didn’t even know what it was, only that it called to him the same way that little bit of coral on the Captain’s desk did when he was in the Hub.

“Harry!”

ARCANUM 101

Jack's shout barely registered on Harry's mind. He shook himself just a bit to focus on the captain for a moment. "Yes, Jack?"

"Harry?" Jack questioned. He pressed a hand to the door of the Tardis beside him. "Beautiful, I'm sorry, but that's not the Doctor. That's just Harry."

"Stop flirting with my ship, Jack," Harry muttered.

"What did you just say?"

"Hmm?" Harry shook his head. He forced away that soft humming from the front of his mind using the occlumancy Draco had taught him. He could still hear it; however he didn't feel like he was drowning beneath it. He slowly slid his hand down the corner of the police box until it dropped away from the wood. "What did I say when, sir?" he asked.

"Just a minute ago," Jack said. "What did you say to me just a minute ago?"

"I don't know," he murmured. Harry blinked a few times. He absently leant a shoulder against the police box. "I don't remember. Why?"

Jack just shook his head. Before him, in the same negligent pose the Doctor often took, Harry stood against the side of the Tardis. It was like seeing a much younger Doctor. He turned and stared at Martha and Ianto. Martha looked from Jack to Harry and back again before a soft gasp escaped her.

"Jack...?"

"I know," Jack murmured.

"Jack, *cariad*," Ianto said quietly. "Do you remember Alice's prophecy?"

"What proph...?" Martha started to ask but Jack's voice overrode her.

"Oh, no."

ARCANUM 101

"Didn't you tell me once the Doctor was called 'The Oncoming Storm'?" Ianto asked.

"Yes, but..." Jack looked at Martha again. "You're the only one who's ever known him as someone else. Was it like this?"

Martha shook her head. "He shouldn't remember anything."

"It doesn't appear that he is remembering," Ianto said. "He's reacting as if there's Harry and someone else in his head."

"What the hell happened?" Jack wondered aloud. "If what we're thinking is true, the Doctor ended up inside Harry's head somehow. But how... When?"

"Hey, I'm still standing here! Could you please explain what's going on? What is..." he trailed off and patted the Tardis gently. "She? Why can I hear her inside my head?"

Draco jumped up to stand beside Harry. "Yes," he said. He reached out and took Harry's hand in his own. "I think he needs an explanation, don't you?"

"She's the Tardis," Jack said. "The last Tardis. She belongs to a friend, mentor, of mine who's now missing."

Harry rested his head against the panel beside him. His eyes went soft and dreamy again. "I never thought I would see her again," he murmured.

Jack looked over at Martha. He pointed at Harry. "That..." he snapped. "That's what I mean."

"Are you suggesting that this Doctor friend of yours..." Draco began but trailed off for a moment. "But Harry's my age! Everyone knows when he was born and what happened to him!"

"He's saying things the Doctor would when he does that." Jack shook his head. "I don't know what could have happened nor do I know what happened to Harry."

ARCANUM 101

“We could ask my cousin what he might know,” Ianto said. “Sirius was the first on the scene after Godric's Hollow was attacked by Voldemort.”

“Get him here now,” Jack ordered.

Ianto frowned a bit at Jack, but nodded. He thought for a moment before deciding on whom to send to fetch his cousin from his home in London. “Hermione?” he asked. “Would you go bring Sirius, Remus and Tonks here, please?”

“Yes, Tad,” Hermione said. She rose to her feet, nodded to the others and left the room. Soon the soft pop of apparition signaled her departure for Grimauld Place.

Ianto gave Jack another look before he stepped around him and returned to the table. He was starving, again, and figured he had time to eat something before Hermione returned with his cousins and Remus. He smiled a thank you at John as a filled plate was set in front of him. While he ate, he watched Jack watch Harry leaning on the Tardis. Soon enough the familiar sounds of Tonk's tripping over things echoed into the dining room while Sirius's voice boomed through the halls. Ianto looked up from his meal and smiled a welcome at the newcomers but Sirius's focus was solely on Jack and the object in Jack's hand.

“I wondered what happened to that thing,” Sirius said. He pointed at the sonic screwdriver. “How do you have it?”

“What do you know about it?” Jack retorted. He crossed his arms over his chest and glared at the long haired man in the doorway.

“Harry was holding it when I found him,” Sirius said. “Wouldn't let it go. Then it all went to hell, and I didn't think about it until now.”

“We found it in the study here,” Jack said.

“And where is here?” Tonks asked. “We were just tumbled out of bed and shoved into a fireplace without a by-your-leave.”

Ianto laughed softly. “My home, Tonks,” he said. “Welcome to Afalglyn.”

ARCANUM 101

Tonks took a step back. "Don't joke about it, cousin."

Ianto rose to his feet. "I don't joke about this, Nymphadora. Afalglyn is my home." He paused for a moment and shook his head. "Father gave me the family ring. I've taken possession of the estate... or the estate has taken possession of me. Neither of which is pertinent to the discussion of the moment."

"As you would, my king," Tonks said as she curtsied to Ianto.

Ianto inclined his head and smiled to her. "Please, don't," he murmured. "Sirius, you're certain Harry had the screwdriver when you found him among the destruction of the Potter house?"

"Yes," Sirius said. His confusion was clear in his voice as he answered Ianto. "In a death grip. I couldn't get him to let it go."

Ianto thought for a moment. "And the house was destroyed, if I remember the stories correctly, right?" he asked. He absently waved the trio to seats at the table as he sat down again. Slowly, a theory was forming in his mind; however, he wasn't certain it would make sense to anyone but him.

"Yes," Sirius drawled. "The only room left with any walls and part of a roof was the nursery."

"Hmmm..." Ianto twisted to look at Harry. The pieces fell further together in his mind. "Jack? Martha? Tell me about regeneration, if you can."

"When a Time Lord's body is injured beyond repair, it will generate a new one," Martha said. "The only thing I know for sure is that it involves a huge amount of energy, so much so that it can actually harm those around him."

"Or destroy a house..." Ianto murmured. "Lily and James were killed with the Killing Curse. There's no destruction with that but combine regeneration with a murder spell..."

"The explosion would be incredibly powerful." Jack said

“Which would completely explain the near total destruction of Godric's Hollow,” Ianto said. He nodded his head toward Harry. “If Voldemort is now the Master, is it possible that the Doctor's 'soul' ended up in Harry but was suppressed somehow?”

Martha nodded. “There's a way a Time Lord protected him or herself by locking away his Time Lord persona. If the Doctor's regeneration was going badly and Harry was mortally injured, then he might have tried to preserve Harry's life by fusing their energies.”

Ianto considered for a bit more and then nodded. “The story goes that Tom Riddle, who we now know as Voldemort, cast the Killing Curse on Harry when he was an infant. It rebounded on him, destroying his body which he regained last year after the Triwizard Tournament. The spell should have killed Harry, but it didn't. Just left him with that scar on his forehead and a mental connection to Voldemort,” he explained.

“Or maybe not to Voldemort at all, or at least not directly,” Jack said slowly. “To her.” He pointed at the Tardis. “Only a Tardis could read a Time Lord's mind.”

“As you say, but Harry regularly gets visions of what Voldemort is up to,” Ianto said. He looked over at the seemingly oblivious Harry still leaning against the side of the Tardis. “Now all we need to do is figure out how to wake up the Doctor. We have the six daughters of the vortex, but I don't know how to wake that part of Harry's mind.”

Before Ianto could continue or Jack to ask what Ianto was thinking, Draco's smooth cultured tones slid into the conversation. “Look, we're all a little freaked out here,” he said. His hand gestured to silently point out all the children in the room. “And Hermione is going to pitch a fit any minute. So,” he paused and crossed his arms over his chest. “Just what the hell are you three thinking about *my* Harry?”

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

“They ain’t the only ones,” Gwen said. She looked around the table and then turned her patented glare on Jack and Ianto. “We’re all lost. I’d like a proper explanation.”

Ianto thought for a moment, nodded, and rose to his feet. “Let’s take this someplace more comfortable,” he said. He started for the door, paused and looked at everyone still seated at the table. “Will you all come on,” he said. “We’re going to the drawing room, getting comfortable seats, and then I’ll explain what I think happened to Harry and what we likely need to do.”

Ianto waited, semi-patiently, for everyone to gather themselves up. He led the way through the manor to the smaller drawing room near the back of the house which overlooked both the formal garden and the ancient stone circle nestled in the small valley between the Manor house and the castle hill. Ianto leant against the window frame, looking out on the deepening twilight, and listened to the sounds of his family and friends settling down into chairs behind him. He watched their reflections moving about in the window glass and smiled before finding a chair of his own. With a sigh, he accepted the plate of fruit salad and

mug of tea from Mipsy which he set on the small table next to his chair. Ianto waited for everyone to have their dessert of choice or drink in hand before releasing his breath on a sigh.

"I'll make this really simple," he said. "Before the weddings, Alice made a prophecy." Several protests arose, but Ianto held up a hand to silence them. "Trust me, I know what a valid prophecy sounds like. Now that Jodi has joined us, I know what one part of it means. The 'daughters of the vortex must stand behind the father' refers to Jack's daughters – Jodi, Alys, Alice, Gwen, Hermione and Mica." Ianto took a moment to point out each of the women in turn. A small smile came and went as he watched Mica squirm up onto a sofa between Jack and Jodi. He drew in another breath and let it out slowly. "A bit later the same prophecy says that the 'six must awaken the storm or all is lost' which clearly refers to Harry and the dormant personality of the Doctor which is somehow contained in his mind."

"But how can Harry be this Doctor?" Hermione protested. "He's Harry!"

"Yes, he is, Hermione," Jack said quietly. He leant forward a bit and looked over at her. "But he might also be, or be housing, the consciousness of my friend, the Doctor."

"Dad!" she all but screeched. "What happens to Harry?"

"Whatever he wants," Jack said, looking Hermione right in the eye. "We aren't going to force him to do anything he doesn't want to. My word on it."

Ianto raised a brow at Jack's words, but his focus was on Harry. The young wizard sat on the floor in front of Draco. His fingers idly played with his wand and the sonic screwdriver which he'd somehow acquired from Jack. Just when Ianto was about to ask Harry if something was wrong, the boy looked up. Ianto wanted to cringe away from that bleak expression.

ARCANUM 101

"I don't really have a choice, do I?" Harry asked. He looked around the room. His eyes met everyone else's for a single moment before moving on until he was staring intently at Jack. "I didn't when it was only Voldemort and I've got less now. This Master, if he can live in Voldemort's mind, he must be..." he trailed off for a moment. "What is he like, sir?"

"You don't want to know," Jack said. His voice was flat and toneless as he spoke. "You really don't."

"I rather think I already know..." Harry replied. He spoke softly never taking his eyes from Jack. "Sometimes I dream that I am a little old man trapped in a cage and I hear someone screaming..." Harry took a deep breath. "No. I'll do whatever it takes to stop him."

Jack shuddered. "Yes," he murmured. He closed his eyes tightly before looking at Harry again. "That's me screaming, Harry, but I won't force you to do anything."

"You're not forcing me to do anything, Sir." Harry tried to laugh. It came out more a sob. "Besides, I have a good record of survival. Maybe something will come up."

Jack nodded. He completely understood Harry's thoughts. He often thought the same way. However, his middle daughter shrieked at them both.

"Dad!" Hermione cried. She gave him a look so reminiscent of Ianto when Ianto was disappointed in him. It was disconcerting. When he didn't react, she turned her attention to the party in the conversation. "Harry!"

Harry reached over and patted her knee. "Calm down, Hermione," he said. He smiled at her before settling back to rest against Draco's chest. "We always knew I was going to be in trouble one way or the other."

"I am not going to calm down!" she retorted. "I don't want to lose my best friend."

ARCANUM 101

“Harry may not have a choice, Hermione,” Jodi said. She held out her hand to him, palm up, and waited patiently for him to move. “The truth, Harry.”

Harry considered her for a moment. Then he leant back to press a brief kiss to the corner of Draco’s mouth. Finally, he rose to his feet, crossed the couple of feet separating them and took her hand. “You know,” he said softly. “Don’t you?”

“What are you talking about?” Hermione demanded.

Jodi turned Harry’s hand over and examined it closely. “Harry has been sick for a while,” she said. She gave Harry a stern look silently demanding the truth from him. “Haven’t you, Harry?”

“Since the Tournament ended,” he said.

Ianto considered Harry before looking over at Draco. He raised an eyebrow in question and received a quick nod in return.

“Yes, I knew,” Draco said. “Harry can’t lie worth beans, Tad.”

Jack chuckled softly for a moment before he focused his attention on Jodi. “What are you thinking, baby?” he asked.

“He shows signs of Sundering, Papa,” she replied. She kept her light hold on Harry’s hand while several gasps echoed throughout the room.

Jack shook his head. “I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he said. A quick glance over at Ianto confirmed that his husband was equally clueless.

“Centuries ago, the most severe punishment that could be inflicted on a witch was to separate him from his magic,” Jodi explained. “Not like Dementors do now or when they break a wizard’s wand. The Sundering literally separated the wizard from his power source. Separated from each other, they withered away. It was such a painful way to die that it was only carried out in the worst criminal cases.” Jodi stroked her fingers over Harry’s palm again before looking up over her

ARCANUM 101

shoulder as Alys gasped in her ear. The two women nodded to each other.

“What is it?” Hermione asked.

“It looks as if, when Voldemort cursed Harry, he didn't intend to kill him,” Alys said. She smiled over at her younger sister. “He must have wanted to Sunder him and absorb his magic. But... something else... interfered and bound itself around them. It has been holding them together all this time, but it's failing.”

“The Doctor's regeneration,” Jack said quietly. “What can we do?”

Jodi and Alys traded a long look. “There's a ceremony called a Joining,” Jodi said. “It is supposed to rebind a wizard and his magic again. The problem is that Harry's magic has changed. Mutated, in scientific terms.”

“And...?” Jack asked.

“And we don't know what the result could be in this case,” Jodi said. “Neither Alys nor I have ever seen something like this. He's partly magic, yes, but there's something else. Something like...” she trailed off before finishing quietly, “you.”

Jack leant back against the back of the sofa and stared up at the ceiling. “That's the Doctor...” he said. “The Time Lords also had a connection to the vortex. Nothing like me and the Tardis, but they did have it.”

“So if we do this, Harry might become someone else,” Draco summarized. “But if we don't, Harry will die?”

“Essentially, yes,” Jodi confirmed.

A string of soft French curses slipped from Draco. A quick glance around the room showed that the small group which had formed itself around Harry were all thinking the same thing. Either way the decision went, they would lose their Harry. He stared hard at Harry memorizing him as he was now and knew it was likely the last time he'd see his Harry. A hand, soft and delicate, wrapped around his wrist.

ARCANUM 101

Automatically, Draco looked down and smiled at Luna. She held her other hand up to him; he pulled her to her feet.

“My mother used to say that one had to get to know one's in-laws,” Luna murmured. She cast a glance toward the dining room. “After all, one is stuck with them for life.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

It was late. Or early depending on your point of view when Draco finally managed to slip away from the bedroom he shared with Harry to visit his apparent future in-law. He stood, hands in the pockets of his velvet robe, and stared at the Tardis. He sighed softly. How do you talk to a police box? A supposedly sentient police box at that. He considered the box for a bit before pulling one hand from his pocket. He stared at the silver ring on his hand. A gift from his older sister, Alys, it was sign of his place in the Harkness-Jones family. Slowly, tentatively, he reached out and rested his hand on the door before him. The wood was warm beneath his fingers and, with the touch, he could hear the soft humming Harry had attempted to describe to him when they'd crawled into bed hours before. It was a melancholy song, mournful, and brought tears to his eyes.

"I'm sorry, *Cherie*," Draco murmured. He stroked the wood. The warmth beneath his fingers a surprise and sighed softly. "I'd help you if I could, but you're going to take him away from me."

Gradually the song echoing through his mind changed. It drifted from a soft plaint to something alien, ancient and weighty. He closed

his eyes in response to the change. Almost immediately his mind was filled with visions of an astonishing bronze planet shining beneath the rays of twinned suns. It was beautiful.

A soft startled sound escaped him. “Is that his place, *cherie*?” Draco murmured. “Is that where he comes from?”

He was almost certain an affirmative tone slipped through the song. The images changed – war, destruction – the planet destroyed under relentless attack by horrible metal creatures. Everyone dead. Everyone except him – the Doctor – who ended everything. And then a succession of faces: old, young, happy, sad, silly, angry, yet all of them one man. He saw the battles he fought... the people he saved.

He shifted and rested his forehead on the door. One part of him ached for this being. She wasn’t merely a ship but a person. The rest of him wanted to hate her because she would take his Harry away from him. The door he rested against creaked slowly open. The sound reminded him of the unoiled hinges in the deepest vaults of Malfoy Manor. Draco stumbled forward, almost falling, and regained his balance to the echo of soft mirth across his mind.

“That was not funny,” Draco muttered. He brushed his hands down his robe before looking about himself. The space before him was dark. He couldn’t really see anything, just ambiguous shapes. Shaking his head a bit, he gently closed the door behind him and leant back against it. “*Cherie*,” he said quietly. “I can’t see a thing. Could you turn the lights up, please?” Draco valiantly ignored the strangeness of speaking to nothing in favor of being polite.

Starting at the floor, a soft light began to creep up along the walls. At first glance, it reminded him of the astronomy tower. Carved stone columns encircled the room. The walls seemed to be carved stone blocks stacked so closely together not even a sheet of parchment could slip between them. Wooden planks radiated outward from the center of the room where a massive round object, piled with odd gizmos,

ARCANUM 101

switches, and levers, dominated the space. From the center of it, a tall column of glass and light encircled with a metal spiral reached toward the distant ceiling where the creeping lights came together to wash the room with a reddish gold radiance not unlike the suns of his visions. Beyond the central desk, an arched door with gothic hinges led deeper inside. It was just barely open giving a tempting glimpse of the corridor beyond.

“Oh,” Draco breathed. He slowly climbed the slope leading from the door toward that massive desk. He reached out, tentative, and rested the tips of his fingers on the desk. When nothing seemed to happen, Draco smiled and stroked the edge. It too was warm. Warmer than the door he’d first touched and the hum became a pleased purr as he stroked the wood and traced his fingertips around the edges of levers and dials. “This is lovely,” he said softly. “Though a nice armchair, secure of course, in case of trouble, wouldn’t be amiss. Something to sprawl in...”

As he circled the desk, tracing the edges and humming along with that soft purring, Draco thought certain he saw a glimmer of golden light shimmering to one side of the room. He wasn’t certain as it was just seen out of the corner of his eye and faded quickly away. Yet as he continued around, in a space he was certain was empty when he began, he spied a heavy chair – the classic overstuffed armchair – just begging for him to sprawl in. He threw his head back with a laugh. “Are you trying to seduce me?” he asked.

“She likes you.”

Startled, Draco whirled about to stare at the entrance. Harry stood there or more accurately he leant back against the door. His feet crossed at the ankle and his hands tucked behind him. He looked absolutely delicious standing like that. Draco shook his head and half-shrugged. “I like her,” he replied. “I didn’t hear you come in.”

“Didn’t want you to know I was here,” Harry said.

ARCANUM 101

“Why?” Draco asked. He thought for a moment, gave a purely mental shrug, and sprawled in the armchair the ship had apparently gifted him with. “I got a noisy creaky door. You get to sneak up on me. So, why?”

“Why not?” Harry asked back. He continued to lean there and gave one his little apologetic smiles. “I wanted to see you with her without wanting to impress me.”

“So you remember but are lying about it?” Draco snapped. He knew Harry tended to keep things from his friends, but this was too much. “What else are you lying to me about?”

“I’m not lying,” Harry retorted. He shook his head and shoved a hand through his hair. “Ever since the Captain brought her here I can hear her. I just...”

“Just what?” Draco demanded. He sat up, clasped his hands together and leant forward toward the other boy. “Talk to me, Harry, because right now... I don’t think I can trust you.”

“Draco...” Harry began. He trailed off and shook his head before thumping it back against the door behind him. He repeated the thump before flinging his hands up in front of him. “I don’t know what I mean!” he shouted. He glared, first at Draco, then at the console and snarled wordlessly. “I just don’t know!”

“Harry...”

“I don’t know, Draco!” Harry repeated. “I have all these things bubbling up in my head and I don’t know if they are real or not! I don’t know anything except that this... this machine... this being... I know her inside my heart, inside my gut, but she’s. Not. In. My. Memory!” He threw himself against the console almost as if trying to embrace it. “Help me!”

Draco slipped from the chair, crossed the space separating him from Harry, and knelt down beside his boyfriend. He wrapped an arm about Harry and hugged him gently. “Shh,” he murmured. “Calm down...”

ARCANUM 101

Draco looked up, instinctively seeking the central column, and said, “*Cherie*, can you help him?”

An expectant hush fell in the room. Draco watched Harry. He could feel the other boy’s muscles tense beneath his hand before his shoulders shook with what Draco was certain were suppressed sobs. He was adrift left with nothing but the silence and inadequate stroke of his hand over Harry’s back. Draco shifted until he knelt on the floor and rested his head against the desk beside him. From this angle, he could see the tears leaking from Harry’s eyes as he braced himself against the same section of the desk. “Harry?” he just barely asked.

“I’m okay,” Harry said. Brilliant green eyes slowly rose to meet his. “She... she...” he paused and shook his head, “she showed me some of my... our... past. I...”

“Can you tell me?” Draco watched Harry. He saw the other boy’s eyes go just a bit unfocused almost as if he was holding a conversation completely in his mind. “Harry?”

“I can’t tell you, but...” Harry paused and looked up at the ceiling. “Show him for me, love?”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

His mind reeled under the flash of visions. He recognized only one or two of the people in them. A much younger and flirtier, if that was even possible, Jack and a younger Doctor Jones appeared and disappeared while another girl, a blonde, seemed to linger for a long time before being torn away in a violent windstorm. Others appeared, disappeared, some returned while others were lost and yet over everything was a desperate, heartbreaking loneliness. That loneliness tore at Draco's heart. As the images died away, he was left staring at Harry... Harry, who stared back at him with fear in his eyes... and Draco could do nothing more than reach for him, pull him close and murmur, "I'm not leaving, Harry."

"Draco..." Harry murmured. He buried his face in his boyfriend's neck. "I can't ask you to stay."

"You're not asking," Draco said. "I'm telling you I am." He thought for a moment and then gently eased Harry away from him. He rose to his feet and tugged Harry up from the floor. "So this ship of yours wouldn't happen to have a garden space in it, would it?"

ARCANUM 101

"It has lots of spaces," Harry replied. A small laugh escaped him. "Bedrooms galore... a kitchen or two... a library... a pub room... the cloister..."

"Ah, perfect," Draco interrupted. "A cloister garden would be perfect for what I'm thinking of. Question now is..." he trailed off for a moment. He looked around the room they were standing in before he finally turned to Harry with a frown. "Where is it?"

Harry started laughing before shaking his head. "I'm not laughing at you," he said. "She'll show us the way, but it'll be beyond that door somewhere." Another chuckle escaped him as he took Draco's hand and led the way to the door. "At least you didn't make the remark every other person I've brought into the Tardis did."

"What's that?"

"It's bigger on the inside," he replied. "Usually said in tones of shock and disbelief."

"Harry," Draco said. He reached over and smacked the back of the younger boy's head. "I'm a wizard. Things bigger on the inside than the outside are not new to me!"

Harry rubbed the back of his head, pouted and then pointed at the towering light in the center of the room. "Stop laughing at me!" he complained. Then he laughed himself and pushed the door to the corridor fully open. "Where's the cloister room, love?" he asked more calmly.

A shimmering light, not unlike a lumos spell, appeared before them. It bobbed and swayed down the hall to a set of wide double doors which swung open at their approach. The light bobbed again coming close enough to seemingly kiss Harry's cheek. Draco watched Harry smile, a sweet yet sad smile, before the light disappeared leaving them in near darkness. Dropping Harry's hand, Draco slipped between the doors to investigate the room before them.

ARCANUM 101

Warm stone, like a sun warmed terrace, greeted him on the other side of the doors. Arched stonework, a medieval cloister walk stretched to either side of where he stood, framing a moonlit garden. The rich scent of roses, apple blossom, jasmine and other flowers lingered in the air. Intrigued despite himself, Draco stepped down off the cloister walk to wander along the stone pathways of the garden beyond. It wasn't a large garden, just large enough for a few crowded flower beds and a small gazebo in the center of the layout. He looked up at the sky and chuckled. It was so realistic as to make the illusion on Hogwart's Great Hall look like a mere painting. Reaching the gazebo, Draco rested a foot on the step and smiled at what he saw inside it. A thick quilt lay over the wooden floor while nearby a small tray held wine glasses, a dusty bottle and finger foods. If he didn't know better, he'd think the ship was setting him and Harry up.

A noise from behind him caused Draco to turn and smile at Harry. He considered his boyfriend for a moment. The silence – weighty with emotion – seemed to echo around them. Draco closed his eyes for a moment, desperately seeking the right words for what he wanted to ask Harry before the Re-Joining Ceremony, and finally opened his eyes and held a hand out to Harry.

“Harry,” he murmured. “Marry me under a garland of stars with the conifers as silent witness and the night wind's echoed vows. Bearing our promises upward through universal whiteness to the sepulcher of the Goddess,” he said quietly. When Harry started to speak, he quickly shook his head in order to finish his request. “Touch me once for all time, all lives that are to be... Our love enshrines,” he said. “Marry me under the gaze of stars,” Draco repeated. He gave Harry a hopeful smile. “Celestial concourse, bless our joy now and forevermore...” He waited, his fingers mentally crossed, for Harry's reaction. Just when he thought Harry would reject him, the other boy reached out and closed his hand over Draco's.

ARCANUM 101

“Are you certain?” Harry asked softly. He took a step closer and tightened his hold on Draco’s hand. “I’m not easy to live with, Draco... either as me or him... and if we do this...”

“I know you aren’t.” Draco chuckled and backed into the gazebo. “I’ve known you for what... five years now... and the way you’re acting now I think that the part of you that was him was never really that far from the surface.” He smiled and reached for Harry’s other hand while backing further into the gazebo. “I love you, Harry...”

“Draco...” Harry breathed. “I...”

“Don’t think,” Draco murmured. He pulled Harry close to him and pressed a gentle kiss to his lips. “Don’t think about anything other than us and this moment,” he said.

He thought for a moment. For all their petting and exploring over the last few weeks, he’d held back from that final step. Now, with the possibility he could lose Harry looming so close on the horizon, he didn’t want to miss what could be his only chance to make love with Harry. He kissed his boyfriend again before he set Harry’s hands on the tie to his robe. “Love me, Harry.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Draco eased from Harry's possessive hold and slipped from beneath the heavy quilt covering them. He hummed softly to soothe the other boy back into sleep. A soft, barely audible chuckle escaped him when he realized the ship was also humming softly in the back of his mind, echoing his own humming, in order to keep Harry asleep. Slowly, inch by inch, Draco edged away until he could slip from the gazebo, stand and start toward the door they'd entered the previous night. Tilting his head to one side, he murmured, "So, you wouldn't happen to have something for me to wear and a place to shower before I go meet Dad and Tad?" He got the impression of laughter in his mind before a gentle nudge urged him through the door. Across the hallway, another door swung open to expose an inviting bedroom with a steamy bath beyond. "Thanks," he said.

One long, leisurely and nicely hot shower later, Draco was feeling closer to human and far more likely to be able to stand up to both his fathers. He was surprised to find a new set of clothes including wizard robes laid out on the bed for him. He shook his head a bit with a smile. "If I didn't know better, I'd think you had a house elf or two hidden

away in..." An affronted feeling blasted across his mind. Draco broke off abruptly. "Okay, okay, I'm sorry."

Shaking his head and laughing, Draco settled his clothes and headed out of the Tardis. He wanted to gather up breakfast for Harry, share some quiet time before the women of the family dragged him off for that ritual. He wanted to make memories, just in case something went wrong later that evening; instead, he ended up walking into a war council. As he watched, Ron leant forward to tap the large paper spread out across the tabletop.

"Sir," Ron said. "I'd like to go into Diagon Alley, setup at Fred's shop. That will cover a lot of the area and allow me to take out any of the Death Eaters without being seen."

Captain Harkness, *Dad*, he really needed to get used to thinking of him as Dad, nodded, his own gaze on the map, and tilted his head to consider the other Captain. "Would that hinder your plans, John?"

"Not really," Hart replied. He scanned the map and nodded himself. "Lavender and I will be on the move. You know how this works. We'll check in when we can," he said. As he spoke, he tapped his wrist strap once. "Anything goes south and I'll send Lavender back to the Hub, then get out myself."

"I'll hold you to that," Jack replied. "We need *him* as off balance as we can get before we go after him directly. I'll get you a list of people to check on. I have a pair of mixed UNIT teams about to go out checking as well. Persuade these people to come here or to Harkness Hall," he said. "If you can't persuade the adults, watch their kids. Muggleborns, as they call them here, have large targets on their backs. Whenever you can, grab the children and bring them back to either place. Gwen and Rhys will be at the Hall. Ianto and Luna will be here to watch them."

"Got it," Hart said. The two men clasped wrists and then, to Draco's great surprise, Hart pulled Dad toward him for a quick kiss before

ARCANUM 101

stepping away with a grin at Tad. Ianto just shook his head with a laugh and waved toward the door. Hart saluted, turned sharply and left. Ron quickly followed the older man.

Before Draco could slip out after Ron, Ianto turned and gave him a glare. Draco felt himself wincing away from him. "Tad?"

"Where is Harry?"

"Asleep." Draco tilted his head toward the Tardis. "In there. We..." he trailed off and blushed. "Um... I just came for breakfast for us before he needs to join the girls for their ritual or whatever it is."

"That's why we were wondering where you two were," Ianto said. He smirked. There was no mistaking that look on his father's face. "You missed breakfast and nearly lunch. Good thing this ritual isn't done until after dark." Draco ducked his head a bit in a vain attempt to hide a blush before looking up again to glare right back at Ianto. Before he could say a word, Ianto waved a hand toward the sideboard with a faint smile. "Jack, handle the UNIT briefing?"

"Of course," Jack said. He turned and headed for the door. "We'll be in here in ten, so..."

"What was that about?" Draco snapped. He followed Ianto over to where a buffet of sorts was laid out. From stew to sandwiches and everything in between lay before him. Conjuring up a tray, he set to work gathering up a meal for himself and Harry while watching Ianto from the corner of one eye. "Well?"

"That was Jack giving us time alone to talk." Ianto rested a hip against the sideboard. "Look, I'm not going to lecture you on how bad the timing of your decision is. I'm certain you already know that. All I ask is that you be careful." He rested a hand pointedly on his stomach and chuckled softly. "You're as much of a Black as I am, so..."

Draco couldn't help but laugh. "And if I was?" he asked quietly. He finished gathering up the food and turned to consider the options for drinks. "I mean... not that it would be..."

ARCANUM 101

"If it happens, if you want it, then Jack and I will help you however you need," Ianto said. He reached out and clasped Draco's shoulder. "Go spend the afternoon with Harry. You don't need to be here for this." He waved a hand at the table where the maps of the British and Welsh wizarding world lay spread out along side more mundane maps of the country. "Either Jack or Martha will come find the pair of you when it's time. They both have keys to the Tardis and she should readily let them in."

"What will you be doing while we're hiding out?"

"Starting a war," Ianto said. He sighed and shoved a hand through his hair before setting a small pitcher of juice on the tray Draco had made up. "After the discussion with the UNIT teams, I have a meeting with a detective from the Cardiff Police. I'm hoping she'll be willing to help the tiny team we send back to handle the Rift. While I'm with her, Jack's going to have the fun of explaining to a guy who really hates our jobs that he's his grandfather."

"I bet that's going to be something to see." Draco shook his head, lifted the tray and chuckled softly. "Tad...?"

"Yes?"

"Thanks for..." Draco half-shrugged and ducked his head again. "Well, you know."

"I do. Get." Ianto nodded to the Tardis. He glanced over at the doors where the sounds of people were getting closer then back at the spaceship. "The sooner you get in there, the less likely people will be bothering you."

Draco nodded, headed off and smiled as the door swung open for him. He stepped partway inside before looking a back at Ianto; however, his father wasn't looking in his direction but was leaning on the table scanning the maps before him. He held a pen in his hand as he marked something off on a notepad next to him. Taking a deep breath,

ARCANUM 101

Draco slid through the door, kicked it shut behind himself and then froze as Harry's voice drifted across the room toward him.

"You left."

"Only to get lunch."

"There is a kitchen here..." Harry paused for a moment. He tilted his head to one side clearly thinking hard about where said kitchen might be located before he gave Draco a somewhat embarrassed look and a rueful smile. "Somewhere."

"Then it's a good thing I got the food. We can find that another day." He crossed the room and nudged Harry back into the hallway. "We have permission to hide out in here for the afternoon doing whatever we want. Dad or Dr. Jones will come find us when you have to go for that ritual."

"The Cloister then?" Harry asked. Draco nodded and started past him only to suck in a startled breath when Harry all but plastered himself to his back. A kiss was pressed to his throat followed by a soft whisper. "Or would you prefer we find a bedroom instead?"

Shaking his head, Draco twisted about to kiss Harry. "The Cloister for now. We'll find a bedroom later. I don't want to get lost." He shifted his hold on the tray, lifted the pitcher of juice to give to Harry, and then wrangled it so he could carry the tray cradled in one arm while he held Harry's hand with the other. "Come on, I'm not wasting our afternoon." He started for the cloisters with Harry's laughter echoing down the hallway around him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

"I'm starting to think Ron's hanging out with the UNIT boys," Ianto said. He looked over at Jack from where he lay on the sitting room sofa and shook his head. "His reports are sounding more professional military than a Quidditch play-by-play."

"Lavender's taken over hers and John's," Jack replied, chuckling. He handed across a stack of paper in trade for the one Ianto was holding out to him. "All nice and professional without the flirty remarks John was always adding."

"That's a plus," Ianto muttered dryly.

Jack's rich laugh flowed over him as his husband joined him. He knelt beside the sofa and smoothed a hand over Ianto's very round belly. Another laugh escaped as one of the twins kicked hard enough to force a groan from Ianto. "How much longer?"

"If your daughters and Owen have their way, the full three months," Ianto snapped back. He shifted on the sofa in a vain attempt to get comfortable. "I think all three of them deserve torturer licenses for this. I'm so damned bored, Jack."

ARCANUM 101

"Yet, you're keeping this entire war organized," Jack said. He looked up at Ianto before smiling a bit ruefully. "Not helping, am I?"

"Not really, no." Ianto skimmed the report, set it aside on a nearby table and leant his head back against the arm of the sofa. "I'm sick of the bed rest. I can't do much of anything. I'm tired all the time," he paused for a moment to clasp Jack's hand in his where they rested on his stomach. "I want you and Owen banned me from sex!"

"If it comes down to a choice between your and the babies lives and sex, you and the babies's safety will win every time," Jack remonstrated. He vividly remembered the scare just two months before which led to the restrictions on Ianto. An attack on Abergavenny which left several dozen families dead and even more muggle-born children orphaned at the same time the Rift seemed to explode all over Cardiff had so stressed out a four months pregnant Ianto that he'd collapsed on the stairs. The resulting fall sent him into preterm labour. Luckily, Jodi and Pommy had been able to stop it without harm to the babies; however, Ianto was now on full bed rest, only allowed up to go to the bathroom and move from bedroom to sitting room. Otherwise, he was stuck horizontal. "I can't lose you, Ianto."

"I know. I'm just..." Ianto trailed off again and shook his head. He understood everyone's fears. He even understood the reasons for the restrictions; however, it didn't mean he didn't chaff beneath them. He forced a smile and reached out with his free hand to brush Jack's cheek. "I'll be good," he murmured. "Promise." He threaded his fingers into Jack's hair and tugged gently until his husband was close enough to kiss gently. "How are things going with Harry?"

"You would ask that question," Jack grumbled. Shaking free of Ianto's hands, he rose to his feet and began to pace the sitting room. "They aren't. I knew the spell would combine Harry and the Doctor's personalities a bit. I knew it would stabilize his magic thus making him healthier, but I wasn't expecting it to make his 'fearlessly rush in' urges

exponentially worse." He paused in his pacing to cross his arms and glare down at Ianto. "Only Draco's been able to keep him from running off to Scotland and I'm not certain how much longer Draco's going to be able to manage that."

"Well, Harry is a Gryffindor..."

"He's also a Time Lord. The last Time..." Jack trailed off as he remembered the number of times he'd either gone rushing after the Doctor himself as the older man had run head first into danger or the tales of all the times the Doctor had gone rushing off into danger that he'd heard from Martha and Rose. "Never mind."

Ianto's lips curved into a smirk as he struggled to hold back laughter at Jack's expense. The expression on his face was very telling as he realized that the double dose of impatience in Harry came naturally. Shaking his head just a little, he held a hand out to Jack. "Come here," he ordered. With his other hand, he grabbed his wand and widened the sofa some. "We may not be able to have sex, but I really need you to hold me." The smile he received for his request was almost incandescent. Ianto just smiled and scooted over a bit to allow Jack to stretch out beside him. Once again, Jack's hand found its way to his stomach, fingers tracing idle patterns before the loose shirt he wore was tugged out of the way and a palm pressed flat to his belly.

"We really should consider discussing names," Jack said. His voice was low, soft, almost as if he was afraid of mentioning names in case something should happen to the twins. "Have you thought on it any?"

"I have some ideas, but I'm..." Ianto paused and thought for a moment. "I'm really worried about your reaction to one of the choices I'm going to throw at you."

A chaste kiss was pressed to his lips while gentle fingers brushed over his cheek. "Don't worry, just tell me." Jack smiled at him and gave him another soft kiss.

ARCANUM 101

"All right. I thought maybe Gray Eldisch for one of them and Marek for the other." Ianto smiled at the confusion which took over Jack's expression. He reached out and stroked his fingers over Jack's forehead, smoothing away the wrinkles, and smiled. "You told me about how you lost your brother to raiders months ago after John mentioned him the first time. The mere fact that John has said he's found your brother but not said anything more since he discovered I was pregnant makes me believe that there is a very good reason for us to not meet him now."

"You're likely right," Jack conceded sadly. "John knows how important family and family connections are, especially out on the rim worlds." Tears shimmered in his eyes. Ianto reached up to brush Jack's cheek, catching the lone one which escaped with his thumb and wiping it away. Jack sighed softly and leant into the caress for a moment. "If Gray did survive to adulthood, he's likely damaged in some way which would leave John worrying about these two and Mica. We both know he won't allow harm to you."

"So, name one of the boys Gray," Ianto said. "Honor the brother you loved and lost. Maybe when all this is over we can sit down and talk to John, find out what did happen, but better to assume..."

"I agree." Jack punctuated his statement with a soft kiss. It hurt to know that for all intents and purposes Gray was dead to him. Otherwise, John would have brought his brother to join the family before going off with Lavender to harass Death Eaters. "Gray Eldisch and Marek... Marek what?"

"I thought I'd let you decide that, *cariad*," Ianto said. "Eldisch and Marek are star names, keeping to the Black family tradition like I did with Mica, so whatever you want for Marek's other name." He chuckled lightly at Jack's look. "Within reason, Jack, within reason!" He shook his head at Jack's pout. "I want to be able to pronounce my child's name when I'm yelling at him, okay?"

ARCANUM 101

"Oh, you're no..."

Before Jack could finish, Draco slammed into the sitting room. The doors rebounded off the walls as the teenager came rushing onto the room. "Dad!" he yelled. "Where's the Tardis?"

"What?" Jack leapt from the sofa, almost pulling Ianto off before he remembered to release his hand, and whirled about to face Draco. "It's in the dining room."

"It's gone." Draco shoved a hand through his hair. "I can't find the Tardis or Harry."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Harry leant back against one of the many apple trees which dotted Afalglyn's formal garden. It was easy to see where the estate got its name. Shouted laughter and high-pitched giggles drew his attention to a nearby patch of grass edged with moss covered rocks. Mica had gathered together some of the displaced children and launched an attack on Draco. The blonde was sprawled on his back being tickled into submission by Mica and her cohorts. A sigh slipped from Harry's lips as he watched Draco first allow the attack and then shift about to retaliate. His boyfriend - or should he term him spouse? He knew what Draco had done that night months before - would make a wonderful parent someday.

As Draco rose, swinging one of the youngest children onto his hip with now practiced ease, Harry tilted his head to consider him. For the last week or thereabouts, his sense of other Time Lords had increased. Oh, he'd known about Master-Voldemort up in Scotland; however, he'd also been picking up another, much closer to him than the Master. Now, watching the way Draco moved he had a sneaking suspicion he knew what he was sensing. If he was correct, well, there was only one

ARCANUM 101

way to keep Draco completely safe - take out the Master first. He couldn't risk Draco in the potential battle.

"Hey." He smiled up at his boyfriend as Draco joined him. "You're a bit grass covered, love."

"You look comfy," Draco replied. He nodded and shook his head. Bits of grass flew everywhere from amongst his hair. "Comes from playing with the kids." He tilted his head toward the one he was carrying and released a sigh of his own. "I'm going to put Rani here down for a nap, then grab a shower," Draco said. A yawn punctuated the end of the sentence.

"Maybe you should get a nap yourself," Harry said. If Draco did settle down and sleep, it would make it even easier for him to escape the estate. He'd be safe here while Harry finally, irrevocably, finished this epic war between him and the Master.

Another yawn escaped Draco while he nodded. "I might," he conceded. "I'm more tired than I expected to be after attempting to wear this lot out." He looked from Harry to the little girl he carried and back again. "Harry?" he asked. "Do you think when this is all over..." he trailed off again. It was so unlike Draco to be uncertain but Harry only stared up at him, silently encouraging him to continue. "Think your Tardis would mind if we brought this little one along when we go traveling?"

"Seeing as she's completely remodeled herself just to keep you happy, I don't think it'll be a problem."

"Well, she does like me," Draco said. He chuckled a bit and shook his head. "Still, Dad tells me you don't do domestic and to not get attached, so..."

Harry sighed. He should have known Jack would start subtly warning Draco away from him. Their mutual history was so complicated to begin with even before you added Jack's immortality. He climbed slowly to his feet and wrapped an arm around Draco's

ARCANUM 101

waist. "When I first met Jack, I wasn't in the best of places emotionally. I was also traveling with a young woman who alternately blew hot and cold with me, used him to attempt to make me jealous, and the only way I could fend her off was to tell her I didn't do relationships. He heard me and well..." he trailed off with a slight shrug.

"Took it the wrong way?"

"Something like that." Harry pressed a kiss to Draco's cheek and reached over to rub his free hand over the girl's thigh before allowing it to come to rest on his lover's stomach. "I had a family once. A very long time ago. Even traveled with my granddaughter," he said softly. "It's not easy to travel with children, but it can be done."

"So," Draco said slowly. "You'll consider it?"

"We all make it out of this in one piece, yeah, I will," Harry agreed. "I can see you getting attached to this one. I don't know why this particular little girl, but I can see it. It's like watching you with Mica all over again."

To Harry's surprise, Draco actually blushed scarlet and ducked his head before answering him. "If Rani's eyes were a brighter green and her hair blonde instead of brown, well," he trailed off for a moment before giving Harry a sheepish smile. "Look at her at the right times in the right light and you'd think she was ours, you know."

"You, love, are a romantic."

"Shh," Draco hissed. "Don't tell anyone. I have a reputation to maintain." Another yawn, this one large enough to crack Draco's jaw, interrupted Draco's answer. "I'd complain more, but I think I do need that nap you recommended. Meet you in the Tardis before lunch?"

"Of course," Harry replied. He slid his hand up Draco's shirt until he could turn his lover to face him. He gave him a leisurely kiss and then lent over to kiss Rani's cheek. The little girl was completely conked out on Draco's shoulder. He stepped back to wave a hand toward the house. "Go on then."

ARCANUM 101

He watched Draco leave before turning to look over the gardens again. He closed his eyes for a moment. There were so many ways this plan could go wrong; however, it was the only option he had now that he had a chance to confirm his suspicions. He only wondered how in the hell it had happened that Draco was pregnant. He'd worry about figuring out how it happened another day. He took the knowledge of the children and his feelings for Draco and buried them as deeply in his mind as he could, behind as many tricks and traps as he could think of. Opening his eyes again, he took a deep breath, let it out slowly, and headed into the house in Draco's wake.

He eased his way through the halls, pausing occasionally to greet those he knew, until he reached the thankfully empty dining room where the Tardis rested in one corner. He scanned the table where notes, reports and maps from the ongoing skirmishes lay in semi-organized piles and found a blank piece of parchment. He scrawled a note on it, signed it with a flourish, and then called for Dobby.

"Yes, Doctor Harry Potter sir?"

"Dobby, I want you to stay out of sight but watch Draco," he said. He considered the note one last time, nodded to himself, and folded it carefully before sealing it shut. "When he realizes I'm gone, and goes to Captain Harkness, I want you to give this to the Captain. He'll know what to do then."

"Yes, Doctor Harry Potter, Sir."

The house elf popped away again. Harry let out a breath he didn't realize he'd been holding and rummaged amongst the items on the table until he found the Sonic Screwdriver. He tucked it into the back pocket of his jeans. The only thing he could think of that he wanted but didn't have was the Sword of Gryffindor. He'd just have to manage without it. Pulling his wand from his sleeve, he headed over to the Tardis. Harry reached out and rested a hand on the door, looked from the room behind him and back to the Tardis and sighed softly.

ARCANUM 101

"You know, don't you girl," he murmured. He felt her affirmative answer echo across his mind. He drew in another breath and let it out again. "Anything happens to me, you need to come back here to Draco. He'll need your help with the baby he hasn't yet realized his carrying." He felt her fear and worry and shook his head. "No, I need you to do that, okay?" He felt her reluctant agreement and took a step back to lift his wand casting as many silencing charms as he could think of on his ship. With all those charms on her, no one would hear him leave. He definitely didn't need Jack flinging himself onto the outside of his ship when he attempted to leave - again. Finished, he tucked the wand away, opened the door, and stepped inside. "Now, we need to get to Honeydukes in Hogsmeade. You'll be safely hidden there in the basement while I go into the castle to confront the Master."

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

As the Tardis settled down within Honeydukes' basement, Harry pulled the Marauders Map out from the bookcase it was stored on. He still couldn't get over the fact that his Tardis had created a little reading nook - complete with armchair, bookcase and lamp - for Draco in the control room. Once again forcing away thoughts of Draco, Harry tapped the map and murmured the access spell. He was indeed in luck. It seemed Voldemort and all of his Death Eaters were gathered in the Great Hall, likely eating lunch, which meant he could slip inside via the secret passages. If he was truly lucky, he could get to the hall without getting captured by anyone.

Tucking the map away again, he patted the console of the Tardis one last time. "Remember what I asked," he said softly. He felt her melancholy response and wished he could reassure her that he'd come back in one piece. He crossed the room, slipped out the door and paused to look back inside. "I'll be fine, my girl," he said as he slowly closed the door, locked it and patted it once.

Harry scanned the cellar until he found the opening to the secret passage which led into the castle. He took one last glance back at his

ARCANUM 101

Tardis before slipping into the passage way. It was a long walk from Hogsmeade up to Hogwarts. A walk which gave him plenty of time to think of all the ways this could potentially go wrong, yet he refused to allow himself to linger on those thoughts. To do so would be to set himself up for defeat.

Reaching the other end of the passageway, he eased it open just enough to listen for activity on the other side. At first he heard nothing, so he prepared to slip out into the hall. Just as he opened the door further, voices drifted down the hallway beyond toward him.

"So why are we searching the DADA classroom and office again?"

The first voice sounded more than a bit petulant. It was followed by a more aristocratic toned voice which vaguely reminded Harry of Ianto.

"Because the Dark Lord wants us to," the second speaker began. He paused for a moment. From the volume, and the results of a quick peek out of the passageway, the man was standing just in front of where Harry was hidden. "Rastaban, you know our Lord is hoping that my son was stupid enough to leave a clue behind as to where he and his partner have hidden the Potter brat."

"We know where he is," the now named Rastaban snarled. "He's in Cardiff, Rodolphus. Protected by those Welsh bastards who have no idea of purity, breeding with muggles all the time."

"Be that as it may, Cardiff is a large area," Rodolphus replied. "Our Master seeks a definitive clue as to where in Cardiff to look though he swears that it's more likely someone he refers to as 'Handsome Jack' has taken the boy out of the city."

Hidden away in the passageway, Harry mentally raised an eyebrow as Rodolphus's words confirmed both his and Jack's opinion. Voldemort was the Master. It made him both infinitely more dangerous and infinitely easier to kill. This time, this time, he vowed to kill the Master; for the man he was now was not the playmate of his Gallifreyan childhood but a dangerous psychopath. He shook his head

ARCANUM 101

just a bit, still unable to believe that his eleven previous selves had kept giving the man chance after chance when he'd long ago proven he'd never change. He bit back the sigh and mentally counted to one hundred while he waited for the Lestrage brothers to continue on their errand. All his planning on sneaking into the castle came to naught as Peeves appeared by the statue and started taunting both him and the Lestranges.

"Ickle Harry's back... thinks he's a sneak... Peeves finds and wins..."

Harry had just enough time to draw his wand before the passageway swung open to reveal the two men. Both had wands in hand and before Harry could even think of a spell, Rastaban disarmed him. A muttered curse escaped Harry who struggled a bit before being stunned, wrapped in magical ropes and levitated in the general direction of the Great Hall. All the while Peeves cheerfully sang as he soared amongst the castle rafters.

Floating along on his back, Harry's eyes traced the familiar path from an unfamiliar perspective. He recognized certain portraits along the way and could just hear their dismayed whispers at the sight of him as a prisoner. If he could move, he was certain his lips would have twisted into a rueful smile. He'd made two mistakes in this plan of his. He'd forgotten his invisibility cloak and, as Draco would put it, he'd behaved appallingly like a Gryffindor. He really should have known better than to attempt to sneak in without a better way to hide from the Death Eaters. Finally, his view changed to the ceiling of the Great Hall. He was unceremoniously dropped to the floor before the dais at the far end. He wanted to groan yet couldn't make a sound.

"Search him!" Voldemort's raspy voice ordered.

Harry felt himself shifted about, patted down, and the sonic screwdriver slipped from his pocket. As soon as it was gone, Rastaban's voice gleefully echoed about the room.

ARCANUM 101

"All he had was his wand," Rastaban was saying. "Shall I snap it, Master?"

"Go ahead."

Voldemort muttered a quick *finite*. Harry found himself abruptly freed and twisted about to look at which of the brothers was closest to him. He couldn't help but stare as the man crouched beside him gave him a quickly concealed wink while tucking a hand beneath his arm to pull him from the floor. The snap of his wand echoed throughout the room. The whole situation was a bit surreal; however, one thing did stand out to Harry.

"Why aren't you gloating?" Harry said. He shook off the Lestrangle's hands and struggled to his feet. He clasped his hands behind his back, bounced a bit in place, and barely refrained from reacting as Rodolphus slipped his sonic screwdriver into his hand. "You always gloat and pontificate right about now."

"I read that list, Potter," Voldemort snarled. He uncoiled from where he lounged on the throne-like chair once used by Dumbledore at meals. "I start gloating at you which, of course, buys time for Handsome Jack and the gang to come swooping in to save the day." He leant forward toward where Harry stood below the dais at the front of the Great Hall. "I don't think so!"

"So, are we late?" As if he'd just been waiting for his cue, Jack's overly cheerful voice drifted into the Hall from the doors behind Harry. Harry twisted about to return Jack's grin. He was relieved that while many members of the Slytherin-Gryffindor group followed Jack in, Draco wasn't among them. "I really hate to be late for a party."

CHAPTER THIRTY

"What are you idiots doing standing around staring?" Voldemort shouted. He turned his worst glare on everyone in the room. "Kill them!"

Chaos erupted in the wake of the command. Gunfire and spellfire ripped through the room. Before Harry could do more than blink, he once again found himself having a rather forceful meeting with the slate which formed the floor of the Great Hall. An oof escaped him as he hit and he craned about to try to figure out how he'd ended up horizontal this time.

"Hold still," Rodolphus hissed in his ear. "My son will kill me if anything happened to you and I managed to survive this." Something cold, hard and metallic was pressed against his side. Harry ducked his head to spy one of the guns Blaise had been forced to leave behind months ago when Hogwarts was abandoned. "Can you use this?"

"Yeah," Harry muttered. He slid his hand down to wrap his fingers around the Desert Eagle. While not his preferred weapon, he could manage with it. A quick check proved the gun was still loaded. He

ARCANUM 101

readied the pistol and gave a quick nod. "Can't do a damned thing pinned to the floor though."

"I know," Rodolphus said. He rolled away, stood and grabbed Harry by the collar to pull him up again. "Go get that creature."

Harry gave the older man one last look. He didn't understand why the elder of the Lestrage brothers seemed to have switched sides at the last moment; however, he couldn't take the time to question either. Not with spells of all kinds, many of them the darkest curses known to living wizards, flying about the hall. He gave the man a brief nod, ducking a passing *reducto* curse, and started toward the dais where Voldemort was shouting directions amidst curses of his own.

"Harry," Rodolphus called after him. Harry spared a moment to look back at the man. "Tell my son I'm sorry."

Harry gave a brief nod. As he watched Rodolphus intercepted Rastaban's charge toward him. Moving quickly, Harry dodged his way through people to crouch just below where Voldemort was standing on top the table on the dias. Here on the floor, he was in one of the few blind spots Voldemort had considering his superior position. He crouched down further and scanned the room. Carefully aimed shots allowed him to pick off a few of the Death Eaters until he could actually see Jack calmly shooting and slashing at anyone in black capes and white masks.

"Jack!" Harry screamed. He waited until the man looked toward him. He then waved a hand in the universal signal for 'come here'. A tiny chuckle escaped him as Jack gave him a 'what you want me now?' look in response. Nonetheless, the immortal began to fight his way across the room with Neville flanking him to one side. The two worked well together. All Neville needed was a long coat of some kind of his own to be the perfect shadow of the Captain.

While he waited for Jack and Neville, Harry concentrated on the screwdriver. Despite three months of resting and training, his memory

ARCANUM 101

wasn't yet completely recovered and he needed to get this right. Part of him was shocked at what he was about to do; however, he resolutely buried that part again. He didn't need the distraction of his previous selves and their complaints about violence and killing. There was only one way to end this war, only one way to protect his future child, and it was not by being all nice and friendly. A shadow fell over him. He looked up with a half-smile for Jack.

"What the hell do you think you're doing, Har... Doc?"

Harry was torn between rolling his eyes and frowning in exasperation at Jack's greeting. He'd be really happy when the man decided if he was going to treat him as Harry Potter or the Doctor. The constant switching between the two was enough to drive him mildly insane some days. "Ending the war, Jack," he said. He nodded to the sword dripping blood onto the floor between them. "And I'll need you to be ready to use that once I get him down."

"What do you mean use it?" The familiar almost deferential tones had drifted into Jack's voice again. He might be questioning him, but only until he knew exactly what Harry wanted from him. "Doc?"

"Once I have Voldemort down, I'm going to kill him." Harry made one last change to the settings on the screwdriver. He held it loosely in one hand and looked back up at Jack. A quick sidelong glance confirmed that Neville was guarding their position while they talked. He really shouldn't be surprised by the sight even if he was at the moment. Harry refocused his attention on Jack. "I need you to use the sword you're carting about to finish the job. I didn't have the chance to get the one I'm more familiar with out of the Headmaster's office."

"You want me to do what?" Jack demanded.

"I want you to behead the body once I have him down and mostly dead." Harry handed the gun he held to Neville in order to free his hands. One for the screwdriver and one to help him get up onto the dais. "He can't be allowed to regenerate, Captain."

ARCANUM 101

"You want me to kill someone?" His voice shook with the shock which laced it.

"Yes." Harry managed, barely, to keep from reaching up and slapping Jack. He knew it wasn't what the immortal was used to but he didn't think it was that far out of reach for him to commit murder when the circumstances warranted it. "Snap out of it, Jack."

"Snap out of it?" Jack stared at him as if Harry had grown another head or turned into a weevil while he wasn't looking. "You've spent a great part of my life looking sideways at me because of my so-called violent tendencies! You wanted to save the Master even after he had spent a year torturing me and killing all our friends. And you're telling me to snap out of it?"

Harry had to concede at least one of his previous selves was a complete and total idiot who had indeed treated Jack that badly. Shaking his head, he gave him a barely there smile. "We can argue about that later. I have three very important reasons to be certain the Master doesn't return back at Afalglyn, Captain." He drew in a breath and let it out slowly. "Now, will you help me?"

"I always have and always will, and you know it. Let's move, Doc."

"Yep, I do." Harry waved a hand toward the dais above them. "I need a distraction, Jack, so I can get up there."

"That's not a problem," Jack replied. He shifted back and around Neville, pausing along the way to give the young wizard a soft voiced order, and looked up at where Voldemort was shouting orders interspersed with curses at the people below him. "Hey, Snakeface!"

As one, nearly everyone in the room turned to look at Jack. Voldemort started ranting, people began running toward where Jack stood grinning at the Dark Lord, and Harry just rolled his eyes at Jack's antics. "The plan falls apart if he kills you," he muttered while quickly tucking the screwdriver into his trouser pocket. Harry rested his hands on the edge of the dais, hoisted himself up and rolled to his feet. He

ARCANUM 101

pulled the screwdriver back out and held it loosely in one hand. "Master!"

Absolute silence fell at the sound of Harry's voice saying that one word. Those on the side of the Light couldn't believe Harry said it. The Death Eaters were all smirking in triumph believing that Harry had seen the light, as the muggles would put it, and switched to their side. Regardless, the room and the fight came to a standstill as the last echoes of his yell faded away.

"Doctor?"

Harry inclined his head in a barely there nod. He kept one eye on the avid spectators. He reined in the smile which threatened as Jack eased his way closer. He took a step forward, moving slowly, he didn't want the Master to realize this wouldn't be one of their typical reunions.

"How?"

"It's complicated," Harry said. He grinned to himself. Complicated was putting it mildly. He took another step forward and shifted his hold on the screwdriver. "Your fault though."

The Master sighed theatrically. "It's always my fault. Always." He pointed down at Jack with the wand in his hand. It was nearly a stabbing motion. "And you're still hanging around with the freak. At least you could have brought the pretty doctor. I have plans for her."

"Actually the Captain's now family. That's complicated, too." He glared at his old friend turned nemesis. "As for Martha and the others, your plans will never happen."

"Family?" The Master scoffed. "Don't tell me, he married your daughter? No, it would have to be your son, wouldn't it? I remember the pretty Welsh boy."

"No, I married his adopted son," Harry laughed. He took the last step he needed to and gave Jack a significant look. He received a barely visible nod in return. "But that's not the point."

ARCANUM 101

The Doctor's words seemed to stun the Master for a moment. "You... well, that's a turn up, isn't it? I knew you weren't as indifferent as you pretended.... I hope you had a nice honeymoon, Doctor, because it's about as much as you're going to have."

A snicker from the watchers had the Master turning toward the watching audience. Harry barely breathed a relieved sigh as he thumbed the control on the screwdriver and raised it.

"Blah, blah, blah. You always did sound like a villain in a twenties movie, Saxon." Jack slung an arm around Neville's shoulders where both of them now stood at the foot of the dais. "But he always beats you in the end, doesn't he?"

With the Master's focus on Jack, Harry moved. He wrapped one hand around the skeletal wrist lifting the wand toward the Captain while pressing the screwdriver into the Master's ribs. A high voltage current ran through the Master's body. It dropped him, twitching, to the floor. Harry followed him down in an almost parody of a lover's embrace. As soon as they were both on the floor, however, Harry shifted about to rest a knee in the Master's stomach, pinning him to the floor, and tossed the now unneeded wand in Neville's direction.

Keeping his weight on the Master, Harry upped the current in the screwdriver just a bit to knock the other man, creature, whatever you wanted to call him completely out. He grabbed a handful of his robes, tore them away and shifted the screwdriver to rest against the Master's bare chest. He upped the current one last time and looked back over his shoulder at Jack. "Captain?"

Booted feet thudded onto the dais at his call. Harry kept the current active. He couldn't allow the Master to come around or start to regenerate before Jack fulfilled his part of the plan. Jack shifted his grip on the sword, which Harry now recognized as the one Ianto had used in the wedding ceremonies months ago, and raised it high over his head. "Out of the way, Doc." Harry slid backward, waiting until the last

ARCANUM 101

possible moment to pull the screwdriver away. The sword whistled down to separate Voldemort's head from his neck with one clean cut.

Screams, full of agony, echoed behind them as the two looked at each other. Harry rose slowly to his feet and absently kicked the disembodied head a few inches away from the remainder of the body. He looked around and blinked in shock at the sight of the Death Eaters writhing about on the floor. Some of them fell still, obviously dead, while others collapsed unconscious. Looking over at Jack, he raised an eyebrow in silent question.

Jack returned the stare for a long moment. "What did you do?"

"I didn't do anything!" Harry snapped back. He was as clueless as Jack. He frowned at Jack's look. "Really, I didn't."

Before he could consider scanning the room himself with the screwdriver or asking Jack to, Neville jumped up to join them. "It was the sword. That's a..." Neville trailed off for a moment. "It's a very powerful weapon. It is the sword of the last great line of Welsh Kings and it's steeped in magic. When it killed Voldemort it sundered whatever magic holds he had on his followers."

"Ianto's father..." Jack began to scan the room. Desperation and a bit of sorrow echoed in both his words and gleamed in his eyes. "He..."

"Which, depending on the type, would kill them..." Harry murmured, more to himself than anyone else. Hearing Jack's words, Harry scanned the room himself until he found a familiar looking body lying off to one side. He pointed the spot out to Jack. "There. With Captain Hart," he said. He tilted his head to one side and sighed softly. He had hoped, but it was obvious that the magic backlash on top of other apparent injuries had killed Rodolphus Lestrange. He thought of the man's last words to him and stared hard at Captain Hart until the other looked up to meet his gaze. Harry gave a significant nod toward the body and received an answering nod in return. Shifting his attention

ARCANUM 101

back to Jack, he gave the Captain a tired smile. "Let's go home, Captain."

EPILOGUE

Thirteen years later....

Shifting his youngest daughter, who Jack had wanted to name 'Oops', in his arms, Ianto perched on the terrace railing. He offered Carys her bottle and smiled as he watched the family gather together on the lawns below him. It was a bittersweet reunion of the massive family he and Jack parented. Sweet because they were all together for both Mica's coming out party that night and Carys's naming ceremony later that afternoon; however, there was still an ache in his heart that their eldest daughter, Jodi, wouldn't be there for the event. She'd succumbed to her long illness within days of Carys's birth. A sigh slipped from Ianto. At least their eldest had lived long enough to momentarily hold her youngest sibling.

Shaking off his melancholy, as he knew Jodi wouldn't appreciate it, Ianto scanned the group below. Gwen was playing den mother, a role she'd relished so much during the chaos of the Welsh Wizard War, she'd actually retired from Torchwood, kicked Jack out of his estate, and set up a home for the children orphaned by the war itself and the skirmishes which lasted for months afterwards until they'd finally

ARCANUM 101

cornered the last Death Eater in London six months after the battle. Ianto knew now why John sometimes referred to her as a heroine of the war. She'd fought off attacks on that home she'd created both during the skirmishing - including one when she was in early labour with her eldest, Ifan - and by bureaucrats who threatened to shut her down afterwards.

His gaze slipped from Gwen, now settling on a quilt beside Rhys, to one of his older children. Still as bushy haired as ever, Hermione, or more properly Minister for Magic Hermone Parkinson-Granger, joined her older sister. Even here, at home and supposedly on a day off, she was hard at work on her PDA. A soft chuckle escaped him as Pansy pulled it away, handed it to a nearby house elf, and glared down at Hermione until his daughter nodded in agreement. They were very much in love, yet refused to have children of their own preferring instead to spoil everyone else's kids and then give them back to their parents. Hermione's reasoning made perfect, if painful, sense. Pansy's injuries in the Great Hall Battle were such that she'd never be able to have children so Hermione refused to have any and upset her wife.

The platinum blonde little girl which toddled over to drop into Hermione's lap was followed by a waddling Luna aptly supported by her doting husband, Blaise. There was no denying the toddler was Luna's daughter with those barely blonde curls. Sofia's birth had brought a pair of relieved sighs from both Jack and John. Both men were even happier when Luna announced her current pregnancy. No one knew for certain, but the hints from the men and from Alice were that this was the son which many generations down the line led to Jack.

Speaking of Alice, the former nurse and now full healer, was hovering over Luna. Ianto watched intently as Alice discretely cast a spell with an ease which belied the three years of arguing which led to her apprenticeship with Jodi a decade ago. When Alice took a few steps

away and called for a house elf, Ianto knew it was going to be another eventful family gathering.

An explosion, laughter and an outraged bellow tore Ianto's gaze off to another portion of the lawn. There the Weasley twins, Fred and George, were entertaining some of the older boys in the family with pranks from their shop. The group included Ianto's own twins. Gray was the one who'd yelled and was now wrestling with his brother, Marek, on the grass. It was a playful, yet semi-serious fight which broke up when the third Weasley in the group, Ron, pulled them both apart with a stern glare. In the wake of that glare, Ianto half expected the boys to drop and start doing pushups.

Ron... properly Major Ronald Weasley of British Army Special Operations... had developed quite the reputation as both an instructor and sniper. He'd started at UNIT; however, he said that some of the things the UNIT officers did reminded him of the Wizarding World before the Voldemort war. A state which the British Wizarding World seemed to be reverting to despite Hermione's best efforts, and had left UNIT to join the regular British Army. From training with them, he'd been posted abroad somewhere classified. So classified even Torchwood wasn't able to get any information. Ron only returned nine months ago to take over the SAS sniper school. To everyone's surprise, he brought with him a wife and two sons.

The wife, Amira, had later turned out to be Jack's great-granddaughter; much to Jack's eternal surprise though not Ianto's. As old as Jack was, it was easy for Ianto to accept there were likely children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, if not even more distant relations, of Jack's out there. It had taken Tosh and Percy a bit of work to find the actual connection, a woman Jack had a brief fling with during his posting to Lahore; however, once Jack knew of that branch of the family, he'd taken to spoiling them as much as the rest. In his deepest heart, Jack was very much a family man. Or as John

ARCANUM 101

liked to put it, you can take the boy out of the fifty-first century, but can't take the fifty-first century out of the resulting man.

Thoughts of Captain Hart led directly to looking for the man. It took Ianto a bit to find him, yet find him he did. John was settled beside one of the decorative ponds, his back against a large overhanging oak, and his wife, the former Lavender Brown, nestled between his legs as they cuddled in the shadows. The pair had quietly retired from Torchwood's special operations branch the year before. Questions were asked again and again, yet neither would discuss why they'd retired. Lavender would only say "you'll find out" when nagged about it. Upon retiring, John resumed his position as Ianto's chief bodyguard while Lavender named herself chatelaine of Afalglyn. Within a week, Ianto's chaotic household which had barely managed to hold itself together for the proceeding dozen years was running with a smoothness which amazed even him. A smile ghosted over his lips as he realized that the couple was doing more than merely cuddling. John was holding the reason they'd retired in his arms while the child, still nameless as of now, nursed. Ianto was very glad he still had a few hours to think on their request regarding their son's name.

Feminine laughter dragged Ianto's attention away from the cuddling to where Alys, Mica, Faith - known to most as the Tarot Girl - Tosh and a few other adolescent girls were talking. Amongst the group was Tosh's daughter, Midori Harper, the only living link to Owen. They'd lost Owen to a case and only Ianto putting his foot down, and Faith's determined refusal, had kept Jack from doing something stupid to bring the medic back. If Jack turned his anger and depression over the loss of Owen into an over protectiveness of Tosh and Midori, Ianto could accept that much more easily than some of the other possible outcomes of Jack's attempt to locate the other resurrection gauntlet. Also in attendance, trading gossip and apparent lessons, were Katherine and Deborah Weasley. The first being Percy's daughter by Kathy Swanson

ARCANUM 101

- a relationship which surprised everyone - while the later was Ginny's daughter. She wouldn't say who the father was, but Ianto's money was on Andy. Considering that Ginny was pregnant again and Andy was walking about all puffed up like a rooster, he was fairly certain he was correct in his assumption.

Speaking of the Weasley's, Ianto only had to find the shrillest of the women on the lawn to find them. Despite the years, Molly Weasley still sometimes reminded Ianto of a fishwife with her way of yelling at everyone, even her grown children; however, she was a doting grandparent to the dozen or so grandchildren her seven kids had presented her. Bill was there, on a short vacation from curse-breaking, with his wife, the former Fleur Delacour. Charlie, much to Molly and Arthur's shock, had married a man he'd met in Rumania at the dragon sanctuary. Charlie and his husband adopted three of the orphans Gwen was sheltering while Bill and Fleur had adopted two on top of the three they'd had naturally.

A racket from further down the terrace brought a very happy smile to Ianto's face. He watched, intent, as first Jack, flanked by Neville and Andy and a bit further back by Mickey, Martha and Alesia, strode out of the house and onto the terrace. Andy, Mickey and Martha headed on down onto the lawns. Martha joining the gossiping women section while Andy and Mickey headed off to join the 'test the pranks' crowd. It wasn't until they'd moved further from the terrace that Ianto realized Martha's husband, Tom, had arrived with them.

Remaining on the terrace were Jack, Neville and Alesia. It was interesting to watch the trio. Jack, in his great coat, was speaking intently to Neville and occasionally waving his hands to emphasize a point. In front of him, Neville stood with one hand on his hip to hold back his long leather trench coat. Ianto still couldn't get over how similar the two were, especially now that Neville was second in command of Torchwood Cardiff. Ianto's mind drifted back to the day

ARCANUM 101

when Minerva announced Hogwarts was reopening and the students were invited back to resume their interrupted Fifth Year. Her look of stunned outrage when Neville turned her down and then turned to Jack to calmly ask if he could join Torchwood was a very good memory. The resulting argument between the Hogwart's Headmistress and the Captain was still talked about by all those who witnessed it. An argument which ended only when Neville told Minerva he felt more accepted at Torchwood than among wizards who saw him as little more than a squib with a talent for herbology. In the end, Neville won. Jack hired him on the condition he do an apprenticeship and finish his education in the Welsh Wizarding style. Ianto knew Jack was grooming Neville to take over for him so he could focus on his greater roles as Director of Torchwood and Consort to the Welsh King. Even if the kingship was only amongst wizards, it was still a role Ianto had to assume once the castle accepted him.

Ianto looked down for a moment, removed the now empty bottle from Carys's mouth, and set it aside. Lifting her to his shoulder, he started rubbing her back and resumed his watching of Jack and Neville talking. His gaze shifted just a bit to Alesia. As he had so often done when he'd been with Torchwood, she stood just behind Neville's shoulder. Ianto shook his head a tiny bit, not wanting to disturb his daughter, and smiled as he watched them turn away from Jack to head down onto the lawn. Descending the steps, Neville paused for a moment, Alesia reached up and gently removed the trench coat he wore. Neville looked over his shoulder at her and smiled before giving a brief nod. They separated yet Ianto knew they'd be together again as soon as Alesia put the coat away in the house.

"They remind you of someone?" Jack said by way of greeting. He slipped off his coat, tossed it over the railing in front of Ianto, and tilted his head toward where the couple had just stood. "Or someones?"

ARCANUM 101

"A bit." Ianto looked up to smile at his husband. Jack held out his arms and Ianto shifted Carys over to them. "Of all the kids we mentored, Neville is the most like you."

"And she's your clone." Jack settled Carys against his chest and took up a seat at the table on the terrace. "Think they're together yet?"

Ianto considered for a moment. "Maybe," he conceded. "If they aren't now, they will be soon." He nodded down to the lawns. "Everyone's here but Harry and Draco."

"Well, the Doctor does have a timing problem."

"True." Ianto sighed softly. He slid off the terrace rail and crossed over to give Jack a brief kiss. He waved a hand down to where John and Lavender were sitting. "What do you think of Bran as a name for their son?"

"Bran?" Jack asked. He settled a now sleeping Carys into her moses basket on the table and tugged Ianto down into his lap. "Why Bran?"

"Yes, Bran," Ianto said. He smiled. "After Bran the Blessed. He was Guardian of the Islands until Arthur dug up his head."

"Interesting choice and fitting." Jack was about to say more when the never to be forgotten sound of the Tardis materializing drowned him out. Joining in with the sound was an abruptly wakened Carys now screaming her head off at having her nap interrupted. Ianto rose and lifted the baby up in an attempt to soothe her while Jack rose and bounded over toward the Tardis in the nearby corner of the terrace. As Jack reached it, the doors opened and Harry bounced out first, followed by the kids. Rani, now a tall and willowy fourteen year old led the way as she and the other two children, twelve year old Chara and seven year old Rigel, ran down to join their cousins playing on the lawn. The two girls, even if Rani was adopted, looked more like Draco with their blonde hair and pale skin, though both sported green eyes. Rigel, on the other hand, was a Harry clone right from the messy black hair to the emerald eyes to the fearless nature. Last out of the Tardis, Draco

ARCANUM 101

calmly reached over and slapped the back of Harry's head with one hand while pressing the other hand to his back.

"What do I tell you, Harry?"

"Draco!" Harry retorted. "We're back home. Rushing out is allowed here."

"Right... says the man who misjudged where we were twenty minutes ago and almost landed us in the middle of the Thera eruption!" Draco smacked Harry again. "You are the last adult Time Lord. Act like it. Stop rushing in like Gryffindor!" Draco then turned to Jack and smiled. "Hi, Dad, are we late?"

"Right on time, though I think it's going to be a tossup between whether you or Luna interrupts the naming ceremony," Jack replied as he hugged first Harry and then a roundly pregnant Draco. "We should get Alice to look at you."

Ianto shook his head with a soft laugh. He remained on the terrace, swaying back and forth to settle Carys, and watched his extended family. Despite everything they'd been through, all the battles and losses, all the joys and victories, Ianto knew if ever given the chance to go back and make a different decision that long ago summer when he'd learned about Hermione's parentage, he, as Jack had put it to him once, wouldn't change it for the world.

BETH MCCOMBS

Previously published under a pseudonym as an erotic romance author, Beth McCombs has returned to her roots as a fan fiction writer in an attempt to recover from a severe bout of depression-induced writer's block. She still hopes to be published again someday, but isn't pushing herself in any direction instead she writes for the pure joy of writing.

Beth lives in South Alabama with her husband and young daughter. In her spare time, she studies history, anthropology, and mythology.

You can email Beth at beth@memccombs.com or visit her website at www.memccombs.com.