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# AWAY WITH THE FAIRY

BETH MCCOMBS

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*Come away, O human child!*

*To the waters and the wild*

*With a faery, hand in hand,*

*For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.*

*– Excerpt from “The Stolen Child” by W. B. Yeats, 1886*

## CHAPTER ONE

Jack was smiling as he pulled Ianto's Freelander into the school parking lot to pick up Misha. Not only did Ianto trust him to pick up his – no, that was wrong – their daughter, but he was happy, genuinely happy as he hadn't been in centuries. The last time he'd been this happy was before Ianto's death in that other world. He parked the SUV between two other range rovers and was perversely glad that Ianto had a thing for being different. Rather than the standard black, his fiancé had bought his in a rich green. At least, he'd be able to find the car again after he'd collected Misha.

Leaning across the passenger seat, Jack took a few minutes to lock the Webley in the glove box before sliding from the car. He twitched his coat back into place as he closed the door and started for the gate to the nursery building's walled garden where the other parents were gathering to pick up their children. That was one of the primary reasons Ianto had chosen this particular school, every child in the

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nursery and juniors sections had to be picked up by an authorized person directly from the child's teacher. Even then the authorised person had to be known to the school and the teacher before the child was handed over to them. Misha was only allowed to go with him, Ianto or Kate. Usually Kate picked her up and brought her back to the Hub in the afternoons, but Jack had plans for this afternoon, so he'd finagled his way into picking her up from school.

Someone started walking along side him. It took him a moment to recognise Gwen, but he just shrugged her hand off his arm while he focused on his plans for the afternoon. She was still a pretty woman, a bit plumper than when he'd seen her last, which was a usual side effect of pregnancy on most women, but she just didn't interest him. Even if she hadn't angered Ianto so badly with her remarks about his sister, Jack wouldn't have been interested as he'd never betray the promises he'd made to Ianto. Gwen was married; for all intents and purposes, so was he. And those kinds of promises, even in the much more liberal fifty-first century, were sacred. You didn't commit adultery or interfere in a committed relationship, it was one of the few true taboos of his time and ingrained very deeply in him.

Reaching the gate to the nursery, Jack smiled at Misha's teacher. "Miss Allen, is Misha ready to go?" he asked, scanning the group of children playing on the other side of the gate. "We have an appointment this afternoon I'm hoping we won't be late for."

"Yes, she's just playing with the others." Miss Allen smiled back. "Misha's been very excited all day, unable to sit still, Mr. Harkness. She's been telling everyone who would listen about how she was looking forward to spending time with you and the surprise you have planned for her tad."

"I hope she didn't disturb the rest of the class." Jack shook his head just a tiny bit. He was sounding so parental even to his own ears. "I know Ianto would want to nip that before it develops into a problem."

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“No, as always a single warning was sufficient to calm her down. She’s a very well behaved child.”

“Daddy!” Jack recognised that childish soprano instantly. He knew he was grinning as he turned to watch Misha to run to him. “Daddy! Is it time? Did you...?”

He swept his coat back in preparation to crouch down and catch her up in his arms when Gwen, who’d been watching the conversation, stepped in front of him. He took a step to one side to get around the woman. “Gwen, what are you...?” Before he could finish the question, he saw Gwen’s hand come up, then fall across Misha’s face hard enough to send his daughter sprawling on the asphalt.

“He’s not your daddy, you little bitch,” Gwen snapped. “He’s not even your uncle. So stop calling him that.”

Jack shoved Gwen away. He didn’t even give a damn that she was carrying her month old baby in her arms. His only concern was Misha, sprawled on the asphalt sobbing her eyes out. One hand pressed against her face, covering her eye, with just a bit of blood seeping between her fingers. “Shh, baby, everything’s going to be fine. I’ll take you to Uncle Owen and get you all fixed up.” He knelt down and gathered Misha up into his lap, rocking and cuddling her. Carefully, he wrapped a hand around her wrist and tugged very gently. “Let me see, sweetie.”

“No, hurts,” Misha whimpered.

“Okay, baby. We’ll wait for Uncle Owen to see it then, okay.”

“Oh, stop babying the brat. It was just a little fall,” Gwen snapped down at him. “Just call Ianto to come get her and we’ll go get coffee or something.”

“What the hell were you thinking?” Jack looked up and glared at Gwen. This wasn’t the compassionate woman he’d known before. He didn’t know who this bitch was, but she wasn’t the Gwen Cooper he remembered. “Were you even thinking at all? Those rings of yours....

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You could have..." he trailed off in frustrated anger, a small snarl escaping him.

"I was just correcting the brat. She should know better than to assume you're related to her, or her," Gwen paused, a disturbing sneer twisting her lips before she continued speaking, "*father.*"

"Daddy," Misha sobbed against his chest where he held her. "Did I do something wrong? Why did she hit me? What did I do, Daddy?"

The words tore at Jack's heart. Those words, spoken so brokenly between hitching sobs, made him want to cry himself. Both he and Ianto went out of their way not to smack Misha; none of the team laid a hand on her except in affection. For this to happen to her at the hands of someone they had trusted despite her meanness was devastating. Jack shifted Misha, cradling her in his arms, and rose to his feet. He glared at Gwen, took a step closer to the other woman, and totally ignored her suddenly flirty smile to hiss softly at her, low enough that the still hovering bystanders wouldn't overhear, "If you ever lay a hand on *my* daughter again, I will retcon you back to infancy and dump you in an asylum never to be seen again."

Straightening up, he glanced over at Miss Allen. "Would you inform whoever comes to take the report on this to contact Ianto or me on our mobiles? I'm taking Misha to see our doctor, make sure she's not seriously hurt." He started away, paused for a moment and looked back. "Tell them that this is also a Torchwood matter, they'll understand." He didn't wait for an acknowledgement from the woman, just headed for the car. He had to get away from here before he went for his gun and shot Gwen Cooper for laying a hand on Misha.

## CHAPTER TWO

Ianto paced across the gantry, shoes clanging off the metal as he headed away from the greenhouse, only to spin about on his heel and return to the small room. He stepped inside and stared down at the lower level. Reaching out a hand, he pulled a leaf from one of Owen's alien ferns and began shredding it into tiny pieces. He wasn't certain what had happened to so anger Jack, but whatever it was... the anger, fear and worry bleeding off the other man was so intense as to have Ianto shaking in reaction to it. Ianto leant his head back, closed his eyes and tried to regulate his breathing in hopes of calming down again. He'd almost succeeded in calming himself when Jack announced his arrival in the Hub via the garage entrance with a loud scream of Owen's name.

Ianto was running from the greenhouse before Jack's call had even finished echoing through the Hub. He slammed out of the room, determined to know why Jack was carrying Misha, and raced along the

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gantry to the stairs, taking them two at a time until he could swing down onto the Hub floor. “Jack!” he yelled, trying to get the other man’s attention. “What’s happened? Why is she crying? What did you do?”

Ianto stopped dead in his tracks at the look Jack turned on him. He hadn’t seen that kind of raw anger in the older man since he and Jack had fought on the Plass just before Lisa’s death. It took him a moment to realise that the anger wasn’t actually directed at him, but was still simmering from whatever had happened before. “Jack? Talk to me.”

“That bitch slapped Misha,” Jack snarled as he ran down the stairs into Owen’s domain. He pressed a kiss to Misha’s temple. “I don’t know why, maybe she’s jealous, but she slapped Misha so hard our daughter was knocked down onto the asphalt.”

“Fuck,” Ianto murmured, staggering a bit as Owen shoved his way past him to get down the steps. Without knowing exactly how, he knew it was Gwen who’d made Jack so snarling mad. He’d worry about the how of that later, now was the time for damage control and worrying over their daughter. “Was it reported?”

“Miss Allen called it in. Told her to have whoever took the report to call our mobiles.” Jack kept his words short. His primary focus was on Misha. Her sobbing had subsided to little hiccupping breaths, but she clung to him as best she could with one hand. She still refused to move her other hand away from her face. “It’s okay, baby. I won’t let you go,” he murmured to her, hopping up to sit on the gurney. He considered for a moment before lifting her bit higher and swinging one leg over to straddle the bed. Scooting back as far as he could against the raised end of the bed, Jack sat on the gurney in front of him between his spread legs. He kept one arm around her while he looked up at Ianto. “Ms. Cooper should be damned glad I locked the Webley in the car or I would have shot her right then. How dare she touch Misha?”

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“I would have covered it up in an instant, *m’gwr*,” Ianto snapped right back, seething. “And you know it.” He shifted his gaze to Owen. “How is she?” No matter how much he wanted to be down there holding Misha, he knew better than to try to get down into the room. It was crowded enough with two grown men and one child in it much less *three* adults.

“I’ll tell you as soon as I can get near her,” Owen replied exasperated. “Jack, mate, you have to let her go so I can get a good look at her.”

“No.” The snarled response was flat, firm and totally implacable. “You can work around me to tend to her. I’m not letting her go. Not while she’s this upset.”

Owen raised his hands in surrender. He knew this was a battle he wouldn’t win. He looked Misha over as best he could around Jack’s hold on her. There was a bit of swelling in one wrist, probably a minor sprain, and a few scrapes on her hands and knees that could do with a good washing, but his primary concern was the way she refused to remove her hand from her face. He debated his options and finally appealed to Jack directly, while speaking to both men, “You need to get her to move that hand, Jack. Everything else looks like minor scrapes and bruises.”

“What did I do, Daddy?” Misha’s one visible eye blinked up the men surrounding her. “Why did she hit me?”

“You didn’t do a thing, sweetheart,” Jack murmured, again kissing her temple. “Can you let Uncle Owen look at your face? He needs to make sure you’re okay.” He curled a hand around Misha’s wrist and tugged gently while addressing Owen. “I’m worried she has a concussion. All she’s done since it happened is repeat those questions.”

“I can check.” Owen looked up at the sound of a harshly indrawn breath to see Ianto drop his head and clench his hands on the mezzanine

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railing. He caught his wife's eye and tilted his head toward Ianto before turning back to Misha and Jack. Assured that Ianto would be kept calm by Kate, he reached out and carefully pulled Misha's hands down into her lap, tugging one of Jack's over. "Keep her hands there so I can work, eh?"

"Fucking hell," Owen ground out between his teeth. He automatically ducked Jack's attempted slap. "Tosh," he called over the comm, "record the CCTV for in here and get stills of Misha for the police."

"While I appreciate the sentiment, Owen," Ianto spoke softly above him. "Could you please not curse in front of Misha?"

"Yeah, yeah, Ianto, but believe me, this time it's warranted." Owen snapped back, grabbing up the Bekaran scanner to run it over Misha's face. He slumped with relief when the images popped up on the scanner's screen. Yeah, he'd have to sedate her to stitch her face, but she wouldn't need major surgery to repair anything. "She's lucky, damned lucky, though the next few weeks are going to be hell on all of us. Fractured cheekbone, but not a fracture that requires intensive intervention, and some stitches for the cut." He looked up at the two men. "Cooper didn't damage her eye, but Misha's going to be in pain for a while and have to be watched closely for a few days, especially the next twenty-four hours. We don't want any complications from the concussion."

Owen tossed the scanner down onto a nearby table and sighed softly as Misha began to repeat her questions to Jack. He stepped around the gurney to rummage in the drug supply cabinet for the sedative he kept on hand just for Misha. He filled a needle with as little as he could get away with and returned. Most of the time, he envied the two men having her, but this wasn't one of those times. Using her questioning as a distraction, Owen slipped the needle into her arm and dosed her. In her condition, it shouldn't take long to put her out.

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“Alright Jack, up. Lay her down on the table so Kate and I can work, then you can take her up to the sofa where we can watch her.” Owen shook his head at Jack’s bristling. “No, you can’t stay. No telling where you or that coat has been. I won’t want her getting an infection.” He smiled and pointed firmly to the mezzanine. “Go, Jack. You’re worse than a mama bear guarding her only cub. For which I want an explanation as you aren’t normally like this, but for now go help Ianto plot twisted revenge on Cooper.”

## CHAPTER THREE

As soon as Owen finished with Misha's cheek, Jack was back in the autopsy bay, picking her up and carrying her to the sofa behind Tosh's desk. Once there he laid her down, stripped off his coat and covered her with it before sitting on the floor between the sofa and the coffee table. He stroked his fingers through Misha's hair, brushing the tangled strands off her face and away from the bandages now gracing her cheek. He watched as Ianto settled on the other end of the sofa to watch him and their daughter. His husband fairly radiated a combination of furious anger at Gwen and pure confusion at his actions. Jack had no idea how to explain himself to Ianto or the rest of the team, but he knew he needed to, sooner rather than later.

"Alright, spill, Harkness," Owen's acerbic tone cut across Jack's wildly circling thoughts. "What's going on with you?"

"It's..." Jack shook his head. "It's complicated." He shifted a bit and looked over at Ianto. He reached out along the bond, now so much

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more than it had once been, between them and whispered, *“I really wanted to tell you this privately. It’s more personal to us, but will affect the team as well. I’m sorry, Ianto.”*

*“It’s okay...”* Ianto replied the same way with the tiniest hint of a smile settling on his lips. *“Tell us now what affects the team directly, if it’s too personal, say so.”*

“Everything with you is complicated. Always has been, Jack.” Owen’s voice again interrupted his thoughts, but wasn’t quite as confrontational as before which helped Jack stay calm. “So talk to us.”

He sighed again. This was so damned hard to talk about, especially when he was angry, but they had to know. He shifted his gaze to Misha again petting her hair. Just knowing she was safe, safe from harm here in the Hub, was calming him down again. Taking in a breath, he looked up again, but couldn’t quite meet anyone’s eyes. “You know I’m not from here, right?”

He waited until everyone had nodded, some more quickly than others, and forced himself to continue in an even tone. “Where I’m from... *when* I’m from... most of humanity isn’t one hundred percent human.” He cast a quick glance around the group now gathered around the coffee table. Tosh sat in Tommy’s lap looking like she desperately wanted to take notes while Owen sat on the floor on the other side of the table doing just that with Kate in Owen’s desk chair behind him, leaning forward to watch the note taking. Ianto, though, was silent; watchful, but silent where he sat on the other end of the sofa. “To quote one of my Doctors, humanity became more than a bit flexible about ‘dancing’.” He couldn’t help a soft laugh at the memory of Rose telling him what the Doctor had said. “So many species, so little time.”

“You’re not human?” The stuttered question came from Toshiko. “But... I mean...”

“I’m more human than some,” He half shrugged, leant his head back and thought for a moment. “I think in my particular family we’re

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about ninety percent human, just enough alien in us to make our lives interesting.”

“Still doesn’t explain the overprotective mother thing you did with Misha,” Owen stated, pointing at him with his pen. “Unless...”

“The alien in me had to do with it?” Jack dropped his gaze again. Their reaction, their instinctual fear, had thrown him. He didn’t want to explain. Not now, maybe not ever at all. How could he tell them what he was when they were afraid of him? He could smell their fear and distrust, Toshiko’s and Tommy’s. Even Owen and Kate were afraid though their reaction was now shifting into intense interest, especially on Owen’s part, but Jack knew it was from a medical standpoint and not a personal one. He really didn’t want to talk anymore, not after that. Just as he readied himself to break off the talk, a surge of love, desire and support edged across his mind. He looked up at Ianto in a bit of shock only to see an encouraging smile on his young husband’s face. That look gave him the courage to continue, “It does, Owen. One of my maternal ancestors was mated to a Vulpine. At least we think it was a Vulpine.”

“A fox? But you aren’t acting anything like a fox,” Kate asked, pointing at something on Owen’s notes page. “If you’ll pardon me for being exceedingly blunt, you’re acting like an alpha wolf female guarding her den.”

“But he’s a man!” Tommy protested. The protest seconded by Toshiko’s soft “Very male, I know that for a fact.” Then she blushed, but her comment did confirm his long held belief that Toshiko had spied on him and Ianto via the CCTV.

Jack stared at her. Her fear had subsided. Now, she smelled more curious than afraid. Perhaps this would turn out okay after all. “Do you remember what I said that rainy night when we first met Gwen Cooper?” He watched her shake her head in denial, but Owen surprised him by answering.

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“You were commenting on the rain, something about contraceptives...” Owen trailed off, clearly trying to remember before his jaw dropped only to close with an audible snap. “You said ‘Still, at least I won't get pregnant. Never doing that again.’ You weren't shitting us. You really can get pregnant? How?”

“How do you think?” Jack snapped back to him. He cast another look over at Ianto. This was where it got personal. *Cariad, he needs to know but I really wanted to tell you first.* He watched Ianto. He didn't know if he could handle it if his mate rejected him now. Unconsciously, he tilted his head back and to one side, once again offering his throat to his lover. *Please, Ianto.*

“So tell me, *m'gwr,*” Ianto murmured. He leaned forward and ran his hand down Jack's neck, letting it rest over the pulse that pounded so fiercely beneath Jack's skin. Just that one touch, that silent acknowledgement of what they were to each other, calmed Jack completely. “Tell it to me and forget about the rest of them.”

Jack swallowed, watching his husband, his mate if he were completely honest about it, and forced all thought of the others watching them out of his mind. He heard some rustling of them shifting about, thought he heard Kate hissing softly at them, but all he could do was focus on Ianto.

“The Vulpine are essentially the basis of the werewolf legends on Earth. I was never certain if my ancestress was one of the Vulpine or a related alien species. Regardless, we ended up with lupine instincts. The need to find a mate, to have a pack, to protect the young of the pack, those are the most prominent ones.” Jack drew in a breath, held it for a moment, and then released it with a sigh. “Unlike Earth wolves, the members of my family all tended to chose one mate for life. After my father was killed by alien raiders, my mother never remarried or had other children, just pined away for him.” He shuddered and resolutely forced the memories surrounding the loss of his father away.

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He watched Ianto and was startled when the younger man slid off the sofa onto the floor, gathering him into his arms and holding him tightly until he was calm again. Jack wrapped his arms around Ianto and clung. Millennia had passed and those memories, especially of his mother's actions after the loss of Gray and his father, still hurt so damned much. He nuzzled against Ianto's neck, breathing deep of Ianto's scent and used it to settle his highly strung nerves down again. Ianto's hand stroked his back. He felt the rise and fall of Ianto's chest as the other man breathed. He pressed closer to him, needing to hide in him, and pressed a kiss to Ianto's neck.

"I brought some pastries in earlier." Kate's voice slid across the slightly tense silence. "Let me bring those and some coffee down while Jack tells us his story." There was an audible grin in her voice when she continued, "All of Jack's stories go better with coffee."

## CHAPTER FOUR

When the sounds of people shuffling about subsided, Jack straightened slowly away from Ianto. He scanned the gathered team; Owen poised to take notes, all of them scattered around the table and also sitting on the floor. He gave them a weak smile. “Like I said, it’s complicated. That, what I said before, that was the easy stuff.” He wanted to pace as he hated to speak of his secrets, but at the same time all those instincts awakened by Ianto’s claiming refused to let him leave Misha’s side. He had to be close in case she needed him. He settled for drumming his nails on the table top. “In twentieth century terms, I’m intersexed.”

“You weren’t assigned a gender?” Kate asked, setting his coffee mug in front of him. “Well, before you landed on Earth.”

“In the future, gender in humans is determined by physical appearance just as it is here. I’m male, for all intents and purposes, but am also a functioning female.” Jack barely managed to keep from

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laughing at the others expressions. They all radiated some bits of confusion, but he did catch Toshiko's quickly concealed smile. He tilted his head a bit at her in question.

"You've just answered a question I long had, Jack." Toshiko handed him a pastry, her hand briefly squeezing his in reassurance, before taking one herself. "So, thank you."

Jack took a bite of the pastry. They were his favorite jam filled ones. He wondered exactly what she wanted to ask, but decided that he'd ask another time. He had the distinct feeling it would be embarrassing. "Now you know how I can get pregnant."

"Um, no I don't." Ianto blinked several times at him. "Believe me; I'm certain I would have noticed if you were female at any stage in our relationship."

Jack did laugh then. He couldn't help it. The confusion in Ianto's tone and emotions was so relaxing after the team's fear that he just had to laugh. He wrapped an arm around Ianto's shoulders and pulled the other man close to his side for a moment in a brief hug. "I managed to hide from you by topping those times when it would have been most obvious. You can only tell, externally that is, when I'm fertile."

"So, like a canine, you have a fertile cycle?" Owen asked. "Fuck, this is disturbing." He looked at Jack, shook his head, and shrugged. "I'm not afraid or angry or even weirded out. It's just disturbing to realise that you'd likely been hiding a lot of truths in those tall tales about aliens you told us."

"More than you know, Owen, but yes. It's a wolverine cycle, though. Once a year in the spring for about two weeks unless I get pregnant," Jack said calmly. He could still feel Ianto's steady support, silent but there as always, and that made it far easier to talk about this to the team medic. "The reason I'm so protective of Misha is because she's the pup of the pack." Jack blushed. He could feel his face heat up and was

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actually embarrassed by the fact he was blushing. “Ever since Ianto marked me as his, the instincts I suppressed are coming out and...”

“You see us as your pack,” Ianto finished for him. “It explains a lot. Even before, you always had an almost paternal air with regard to the team, but I thought it was you taking in the rest of us as a substitute family. An emotional connection, not an instinctual one, but it is instinct, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is.” Jack nodded. “That brings me to something that has to be dealt with before it does cause problems for everyone.” He twisted on the floor so that he was kneeling, facing Ianto, and waited until the younger man was looking at him. “I can’t lead the team, Ianto. Not now. Not since you claimed me as your mate. I cannot order you to do anything. You’re dominant to me, but I don’t know what we’re going to do about that.”

“Good thing we’re not your team anymore,” Owen interrupted. “We’re Ianto’s team. Ain’t that right, Brigadier?”

“Brigadier?” Jack looked between both men in shock. “But you were never military, Ianto.”

“Owen,” Ianto growled in a long suffering tone. Ianto rolled his eyes, looked up at the ceiling and then shook his head. “I would have told him eventually. It’s an honorary rank. The Queen’s thank you for something I did for her a few years back, but yes, I do outrank you.”

“I guess I shouldn’t have worried about it then. You lead and I’ll follow along behind.” Jack grinned. “I’ll get the best view that way.” Ianto’s hand, then Owen’s, and finally Toshiko’s whipped out and smacked him. Jack laughed. The release of tension felt so good. He grinned at the gathered group for a moment before sobering. “That would work, wouldn’t it?”

Ianto seemed to actually be considering the proposal. He could almost feel the other man weighing the pros and cons, considering

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options, and wasn't surprised that when Ianto finally did speak it was to offer an entirely different plan.

"No," Ianto leant forward to rest his arms on the table. "What we'll do is this, I have overall command of the team, but Jack will be field team leader and second in command. If, and this is a very large if at this stage, you should ever fall pregnant, then you will be pulled from field command until you deliver." He turned a stern gaze on Jack, who just nodded in response, before refocusing on the rest of the team. "Owen is third in command within the team itself, but second in the field as well as primary medic. Tommy you're the low man on that totem pole as you're just field agent." Ianto paused and waited for Tommy's nod of acknowledgement before he continued, "Tosh, you're still our technical specialist, but this would bump you from the primary chain of command. You'll also have field duty as always until you tell me I need to pull you from the field. Kate remains as administrative support and secondary medic." Ianto reached over and squeezed Jack's hand. "Jack, when you are pulled from the field, Owen takes command there. Agreed?"

Owen smirked and replied, "It's about time you recognised my worth around here, Teaboy."

"I thought you were going to stop calling me that?" Ianto retorted with a grin.

"Special occasion," Owen snarked right back at him.

"I could hide your video games," Ianto smirked as he rose to his feet.

"I could drug your coffee."

"I make the coffee. That's a useless threat."

Jack found himself acting like he was at a tennis match, just swiveling his head back and forth between the two combatants as they lobbed words at each other. Finally, he couldn't take it anymore. "Boys!" he broke in.

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Both men turned to look at him with nearly identical smug grins. “Yes, Jack?” they said, almost in complete unison.

Jack just thumped his head on the table in front of him while everyone laughed at him.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Andy Davidson sighed as he crossed the waterfront toward the small shack that provided Torchwood its official cover. Not that anyone believed the tourist office was actually a tourist office; well, not the locals that was, maybe a few lost Americans might believe it, just maybe. After all only the bloody Americans would believe the Wales Tourist Board would tuck a tourist office down here with more access security than the Welsh Assembly.

Sheltering the keypad from view with his body, Andy swiped his access card, keyed in his code, and pushed the door open when it buzzed. Stepping inside, he leaned across the counter to hit the lock button, then the door button in rapid succession. “Bloody Torchwood,” he muttered, slipping through the still opening door to head for the lift. “Why can’t they have a normal office like everyone else?”

The trip down was short and, within two minutes, he was striding down the short hall from lift to that pretentious entrance door someone

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had put on the place. Andy barely refrained from rolling his eyes as he grabbed the key and twisted, opening the door in front of him. He strode into the room beyond, calling for Ianto just as he always did, and just as quickly froze. Furious, growling men, especially Mulder there reaching for his thankfully missing gun, were more than enough to stop him just inside the open door.

“Jack,” Ianto’s soft voice drifted over to him. Torchwood’s commander reached out a hand and laid it on Jack’s arm.”*M’gwr*, calm. Andy’s our liaison with the South Wales Police here in Cardiff. I gave him clearance and his own access codes about a year ago.” Ianto rubbed his thumb over Jack’s wrist and shifted his focus from Jack to Andy. “What do you need from us?”

“Your help to start with,” Andy replied shortly, taking another step into the main Hub before stopping again and considering Jack for a long moment. “Mulder, I’m not going to do a thing to your kid. Just here for information is all.” He pulled a pen from his pocket and fiddled with it. Anything to keep busy while that soft growl came from Harkness. “Yours isn’t the first kid Sergeant Cooper’s abused. You lot are likely the only ones who will actually follow through on the complaint.”

“She’s done it to other kids?” Jack snarled. “And no one’s done anything? *You’ve* done nothing?”

Andy found himself taking a half-step back away from Jack. He was actually glad he had the heavy cog door behind him as it protected his back from the snarling predator in front of him. Jack’s expression, stance, tone, all of it reminded him of a dog protecting its territory. He took a deep breath and consciously relaxed his body, moving just a bit further back so he could lean on the doorframe. “I didn’t have a choice,” he said softly. “Professional Standards and the IPCC told me to drop it. Always cited insufficient evidence, lack of witnesses, or other such bollocks.”

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Another low snarl escaped the captain. Andy reminded himself that he was a trained professional there was no reason to want to run away up the stairs, fuck waiting on the lift, and out of Torchwood. He needed to get Torchwood on his side; maybe then she'd be stopped before she seriously injured or even killed someone, likely her son from what Rhys had let slip in the pub.

"Torchwood is too powerful to be intimidated," Andy began reassuringly. "Too powerful and far too willing to take things completely out of the hands of the police, so if I can get all the paperwork filed, complete and proper. We can keep her from harming anyone else." He scrubbed a hand over his face and shook his head. "Fuck, Ianto, even my complaint against her was dismissed because the evidence I had suddenly disappeared. I can't prove my case, help out Rhys or our..." Andy broke off, dropped his gaze to the concrete beneath his feet. "Sorry, their kids."

"Tosh," Ianto snapped, dropping his hand from Jack's wrist.

"I'm on it," Tosh responded, already moving for her computer, coffee and pastry abandoned on the table. "Start with the PNC, then maybe NHS..." she trailed off as she started to work.

Jack took advantage of his sudden freedom to cross the Hub to where Andy leant against the doorframe. He stopped, just out of reach of the other man. He crossed his arms and leant a shoulder on the frame to the cage that blocked the inner side of the door from the Hub. He considered the team, already moving briskly about the Hub in response to Ianto's orders, and then considered Andy for a long moment before giving the other man a gentle smile. He'd recognized the particular pain in the other man's eyes as he spoke of Gwen's kids with Rhys.

"I had a daughter once," he said, quietly. "She was beautiful. So tiny and perfect. Little fingers with their tiny nails, little rosebud mouth, and gorgeous blue eyes..." he trailed off for a moment, looking

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away from Andy to catch Ianto watching him. He held his mate's gaze for a long moment before dropping his head to look at his arms. "I lost her. Her father took her from me, tore her right from my arms, and made her completely disappear, no records. It was as if she'd never been born at all. I never saw her grow up, so she's always a tiny baby in my memory." Jack lifted his gaze to meet Andy's again. "Children are the most precious gift in the universe, Andy. We'll help you get yours back from that bitch."

"How did...?" Andy looked up at him, total shock written on the cop's face. "No one believed me when I said I thought Ginevra was mine. Well, Rhys did, but he..."

"He what?" Jack took a step closer, silently encouraging the other man to talk. "Talk to us, Andy. We can't help if we don't have all possible information."

"Look, Mulder, can we get out of the doorway? I don't mind telling you what I know, but can we at least be comfortable when we talk?"

"Sure. Just use my name, would you?" Jack laughed softly and waved a hand into the Hub. "Do us both a favor, don't go near the sofa," he whispered.

"Not a problem," Andy replied equally softly. "No getting between you and the vulnerable kid. Got it."

"Very good." Jack grinned at the other man and straightened away from the door. "Ianto, can we get some coffee for Andy here while he talks to us?" He led the way across to the sofa and sat on the edge next to Misha. "Owen, don't you have something disgusting to cut up?"

"No, but I can take a hint." The medic rose to his feet and slid his chair toward Andy. "Jack, when you're done, I'll need to see you. Full physical to get proper records on you this time."

"Do I gotta?" Jack whined and grabbed another pastry.

"You come see me or I pull your medical clearance." Owen nodded to Andy as he passed the detective. "Good to see you, Andy."

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Jack pouted after Owen. He hated having medical exams for any reason much less the torture he'd seen Owen put the team through for their annual physical. Nope, he'd rather wrestle a rabid weevil, two mating hoix and a pride of irate velociraptors than deal with Owen's idea of a physical. A whimper from Misha as she shifted in her sleep brought his attention down to her. "Shh, sweetheart, you're okay," he murmured, stroking her hair and again covering her with his coat. After she settled back into sleep, Jack looked across the table to Andy. "So, what else has that bitch done? You don't smack a child around that violently in public unless you've gotten away with similar things before."

## CHAPTER SIX

“Just about everything: intimidation, verbal abuse, misuse of power.” Andy accepted the mug handed him by Ianto and stared into the black depths as if the coffee held the answers to the universe. “I just can’t prove a bloody thing.” He looked up at the two men across the table from him. “Ianto, you know as well as I that she was promoted to desk sergeant solely to get her off the beat.”

“I remember. I was told it was because they thought I would want her as official liaison since she’d turned down the position on the team.”

“I’m surprised you offered it to her in the first place.” Andy snorted a laugh at the way Ianto rolled his eyes to punctuate his statement. He shifted his gaze to Jack. “She’s an idiot, but a slick manipulative one. Gwen knows how to get and keep control of people. With Rhys, it’s the kids. At the station, it’s those bloody cow eyes and

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vacant smiles. No one seems to want to believe anything bad of her, but..." he trailed off and once again dropped his gaze to his coffee.

"Andy," Jack's voice was lower than he usually heard it. Quiet and soothing, much the same as how he'd spoken to his daughter to calm her down. "Andy," he repeated. "Tell me. There's nothing you can say to me that I haven't heard about, seen or experienced. I've lived a long time, very little surprises me anymore."

He looked up for a moment, met Jack's eyes with their traces of sympathy, and had to look away again. His gaze drifted down to Misha. The poor little mite with her bandaged face and bruises whimpered in her sleep only to be instantly soothed by Harkness. All he could see when he looked at her were Rhys's kids. Bran, trying so desperately to protect his sisters; Ceriddwen always hiding behind her curls whenever she was out in public. Then there was Ginevra, just a baby, but soon she'd be as damaged as the others if he didn't say anything. But how could he tell these men what she'd done to him? Andy looked up again, glanced over at Ianto, and took a deep breath.

"When you asked me to work as your liaison, they promoted me," he started, picking his words carefully. This was so damned difficult. "Chief Inspector. Right over to the Detective ranks." A bitter smile twisted his lips. "I was so damned proud of the promotion. I didn't question the sudden visits from Gwen – questions about cases asked over half-rate coffee." He shook his head, set the now empty mug down on the table, and pulled his pen out again to twiddle it through his fingers.

"This went on for a few weeks. She even pulled Rhys into it, getting him to invite me over for dinner sometimes – "You've been busy, don't worry about it. There's plenty. Besides the kids would love to see you," he echoed Rhys's rougher Welsh accent. "We were suddenly mates again. I should have questioned why I was now worth

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hanging out with when she'd been ignoring me for more than a year." He paused and swallowed hard before looking up at Jack.

"I never thought to question it until she was there after a particularly bad domestic homicide, all sympathetic smiles over pints at the local." Andy threw his pen down onto the table in disgust. "I remember going to the pub. I remember the first drink. Then, nothing until I'm waking up in my bed, stark bullock naked and Gwen's perfume all over me, and no memory of how I got there." He looked up at Jack again. "Nine months, later, there's Ginevra Jacklyn Cooper-Williams being shown off around the station."

"And nothing was done?" Jack's voice was still low pitched, soothing to his raw nerves, but what surprised him was the light clasp of fingers around his wrist, the briefest touch over his pulse before the hand was removed again. "No one investigated?"

"There 'wasn't enough evidence to warrant an investigation' or so I was told," Andy retorted snidely, air quoting his superiors as he went. "With all the mistakes she makes, I expected an investigation of her, especially considering the nature of my complaint against her, but nothing was done. I was the one reprimanded instead."

To his immense shock, Ianto began to curse in virulent Welsh. The young man rose to pace around the Hub, still cursing as he went, before stilling and whirling about to face Jack. "Killing is too easy. She needs to suffer, *m'gwr*." There was something in those cold flat tones which chilled Andy to the core. Ianto's gaze shifted to him; Andy cringed back in his chair. Ianto Jones was scary when angry. "When this is over, you'll join us. I've always felt you should be working from here rather than the station. Your skills, especially your intuitive ability to know when something is a Torchwood case rather than a mundane one, are wasted on the South Wales Police."

"I have cases..."

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“Which can be handled by others,” Ianto spoke right over the objection. “If they are going to treat you that badly, one of their good solid detectives, then they sure as fuck don’t deserve to have you there.”

“Ianto...” Jack started to interrupt only to fall silent when the younger man turned the cold glare on him instead.

“We have enough start a proper investigation.” Ianto took in a breath, clearly trying to calm down, and started issuing orders. “Tosh, continue to dig through the police files, see if you can find anything. Kate, NHS. I know we have both Rhys and Gwen’s DNA samples still on file, find the kids and see if you can get enough information to do paternity tests on them. Andy, get with Owen. We need at least a blood sample from you; though if you have the time, I’d like Owen to do a full baseline exam on you to start putting you in the system as an operative.”

Andy blinked. He couldn’t believe this firmly in control man was the same one who’d just been discussing whether killing was too good for Gwen Cooper. Ianto’s moods had never jumped from place to place that quickly before. He resolved to talk to his future teammates about what was going on.

“Jack, *m’gwr*, we’re going home.” Ianto stared at Jack for several minutes. Jack stared intently back. Just when the silence became nearly unbearable, Jack nodded and turned to gather up Misha. It was obvious to all the observers that a silent argument had been waged between the two men, an argument that Ianto had clearly won. “Shut down at six unless an emergency comes up. We’ll meet in the conference room tomorrow at nine to discuss any findings we have,” Ianto snapped, turning to follow Jack from the room. “Owen, you’re in charge until then.”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Jack slid from the car as soon as it was parked. Popping the rear door, he plucked Misha from the backseat and stalked through the garden into the house, leaving the kitchen door ajar for Ianto to come in, and headed for the parlor. There was a large, overstuffed chair there in the fireplace corner where he could settle with Misha. He sat her in the chair while he sat on the ottoman in order to remove his boots, setting them to one side. Then, he gathered her back into his arms, curling up in the chair and leaning forward to pull the coverlet off the ottoman. He used it to cover her, keep them both warm in the dark, chilly room.

He pressed his lips to her hair and breathed deep of her still babyish scent – powder and lavender – and shifted her around so she could rest her cheek on his chest without resting on her injury. He hummed softly, an old lullaby which truthfully hadn't been composed yet, to keep her sleeping for the moment. Jack lifted his head, listening

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carefully as Ianto stormed through the house from the kitchen; the angry Welsh mutters announcing his presence long before the younger man stalked into the sitting room to toss their coats onto one of the sofas before entering the parlor through the connecting pocket doors. He tightened his hold on Misha and cringed back into the depths of the chair as Ianto went past on his way to the fireplace.

“What’s gotten into you?” Ianto snapped as he knelt on the hearth. “Ever since we left the Hub, you’ve been quiet. You are never quiet, Jack.”

“Do you trust me, Ianto?” Jack asked softly. He couldn’t look at the other man, focusing instead on the child in his lap. “Honestly, do you?”

“You know I do. Do you think I’d trust my daughter, my home, my team to just anyone?” Ianto turned toward him. “Hell, I trust you with me. What does that tell you?”

“Then why did you interrupt my interrogation of Andy?”

“What?”

Jack looked up again. He stared at Ianto. For a moment, he let himself get lost in the play of firelight on the younger man’s skin then he swallowed and spoke quietly, “I was getting the information we needed to formulate a plan to handle Gwen when you interrupted and took charge of the situation.” He dropped his gaze again and sighed. “Then you ordered me, mentally if not verbally, to leave the security of the Hub for here.”

“Jack, you’re not making any sense.” Ianto rose to his feet. He began to pace the confines of the parlor. “The house is just as secure as the Hub. More so now that you’ve worked on it.”

Every time Ianto came near, Jack found himself flinching away from his lover. He couldn’t even think of him as his mate, his husband, when the man was treating him like this, so angry and distant. He tightened his hold on Misha, only easing up when she whimpered softly

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in her sleep. Jack wanted his gun, or just about any other weapon he could get a hold of just to feel properly secure in Ianto's house. "Ianto, stop pacing," he stated, struggling to keep his voice calm as his instincts to defend Misha fought with his need to talk to Ianto. "Sit down so we can talk without..."

"Don't you start ordering me in my house, Jack," Ianto snapped, whirling about with an angry glare. "I'm not your teaboy anymore, remember?"

"I know," Jack murmured. He pressed another kiss to Misha's hair. He shifted her again, easing from under her slight weight to settle her on her side in the chair. It dwarfed her, bringing a momentary smile to his face, and he covered her with the throw to keep her warm as he rose to look down at her. He ran his fingers over her hair then turned to Ianto. "Your house, your daughter, your team," he stared at the younger man, struggling not to give in to the urge to cry. "What am I to you, Ianto? You never let me in."

"Why should I?" Ianto glared at him. His hands went to his hips; Jack recognized the move for the tell it was, Ianto was feeling threatened, cornered. "You left me! Just like everyone else I have ever loved, you left me! Why should I let you in when you always leave me?"

"Ianto," Jack reached for him only to drop his hand when Ianto took a step back. "I won't leave you. Never again." He took a half step forward, stopping again when Ianto glared at him. "Don't you get it, I *can't* leave you."

"No, I don't get it!" Ianto snapped back. "I don't understand a damned thing. Yeah, I get the protective thing with Misha. You did that whenever any of the team got hurt, but I do not understand why you're acting the way you are. Can't we just concentrate on dealing with Gwen? That I understand completely."

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“If that’s what you want,” Jack responded. “I really think we should settle us first, but if that’s what you want, we’ll discuss what’s to be done with Gwen.” He turned away, unable to look at Ianto, and shoved his hands into his pockets, curling into himself as he hadn’t since he’d first lost Ianto all those millennia ago.

“Jack.” He heard Ianto move closer to him but the slide of warm arms around his waist was unexpected. He tensed, only relaxing as Ianto pressed a kiss to his neck, and leant back against his young lover. “I’m just driving you crazy with all my hang ups, aren’t I?”

“Just a bit,” he murmured back, arching his neck in silent demand for more kisses. “I’m never certain where I stand with you. Here at home, with Misha, or with the team. I’m lost, Ianto. And you’re the only anchor I have.” He paused a bit, uncertain, before deciding there was nothing to be done but to say the words. Things couldn’t get any more screwed up unless Ianto decided to kick him out. “Everything I am is now tied up in you.”

## CHAPTER EIGHT

“*Duw*, Jack,” Ianto gasped as quick flashes of the afternoon’s events whipped through his mind. He took a step back from Jack and turned the other man to face him. He reached out, cupped Jack’s chin in his fingers and forced Jack to actually meet his gaze. “How many times have I given you an oblique order without realizing it? Why haven’t you said anything?”

“I...”

“No,” Ianto cut off Jack with a wave of his hand before he could answer as the answer actually dawned on him. “You said it in the Hub and I wasn’t really listening because I was so ticked off over Gwen. The dominance factor.” Jack’s reaction, the weak nod and the drop of his gaze, forced another curse from Ianto’s lips. He pulled away from Jack to stalk to the fireplace, crossing his arms on the mantel and staring down into the flames below him. His thoughts were in a tangle, but one thought consistently stood out above all the rest. Ianto laid his

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cheek on his crossed arms and looked back at Jack. "I could have forced you into something you didn't want without even knowing I had done so. I've hurt you. You should have said something to me before now, Jack." He swallowed, biting at his lip as his thoughts came full circle. "I'm no better than Gwen."

"You are nothing like that bitch." Jack's fierce snarl came from almost directly behind him. "Never compare yourself to her again."

"But..."

"I could have said something and didn't," Jack whispered fiercely in Ianto's ear. He was so close to Ianto's back now that Ianto could feel the warmth of his body through all the layers of clothes he wore. "If anyone's to blame for the personal mess we're in right now, it's me for not telling you sooner what happened the night you declared me yours. I should have, didn't, and now we need to manage the fallout. I was just too damned happy."

"Happy?" Ianto twisted around to look at Jack. "How can being owned by me possibly make you happy?" He reached out a hand, pressed it to Jack's cheek, absently stroking his thumb over Jack's lower lip, and shook his head. "No, as much as we need to talk about this," Ianto said softly, "we have other priorities at the moment. Misha needs to be woken and fed something. And so do we."

"Ianto, are you...?" Jack started awkwardly only to fall silent at a soft whimper from Misha. He looked over at the little girl just to see if she was alright. She still slept, but it was a restless sleep, probably broken by nightmares of being hit.

"Shh, *m'gwr*, shh." Ianto moved his thumb away and slid his hand back to wrap around Jack's nape and pull him in for a kiss. "I love you, Jack. I have for what seems like forever. We'll get through this."

He opened his lips ready to protest again when he felt Ianto step closer, trailing kisses down his jaw to his throat before nipping at his pulse. Warm lips pressed against his skin, hot tongue flicking over his

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pulse, and then the velvet caress of Welsh vowels as Ianto spoke softly directly into his ear.

“My Jack,” Ianto murmured. “All fierce and protective, but so loving as well.” Teeth gently grazed his throat, eliciting a soft moan as Jack wrapped his arms around Ianto again. “You remind me of Kipling’s Raksha, so determined to defend our cubs from all attackers. Perhaps I’ll call you that.”

“What?” Sheer shock had him stepping back to stare at Ianto. “That’s where it came from? My mother always said it was a literary name, but I never knew from what.”

“What are you saying, Jack?”

“My mother named me Raksha. Though my father always insisted on calling me Jack, said I needed a ‘normal’ name.” Jack smiled shyly, ducking his head for a moment, and then looking back up at Ianto. “I don’t think anyone’s used my true name since before Gray was born.”

Ianto’s jaw snapped close with an audible click. Jack watched him work things through in his head. “That’s really your name? The one you were given at birth?” He nodded and watched Ianto’s jaw drop open again before the other man suddenly grinned and hugged him tight.

“*Duw*, do you have any idea what it means to me to know that one thing about you?” Ianto asked before kissing Jack deeply. “To know someone’s proper name...” Another kiss was pressed upon him before Ianto settled a bit, stepping back to clasp his hands. “To quote you, *m’gwr*, it’s a long story. So, discussion after we eat. Do you want to wake Misha or shall I?”

“Um, Ianto, don’t take this the wrong way, but you just went from pissed as hell to hyper in less time than it takes me to devour a jam donut. What the hell just happened?”

Before Ianto could retort, a small hand smacked Jack on the arse. “Bad word, Daddy!” Jack glanced down to see Misha staring up at

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him, shaking her finger at him. “You need to sit in the corner for five minutes and say sorry.”

Jack rolled his eyes at Ianto’s sudden hysterics and crouched down to pick up Misha. “If I have to sit in the corner, then who’s going to make you a proper spiced porridge with bananas, hmm?” He tickled her ribs with his fingers, shook his head at Ianto, and carried her out of the room toward the kitchen. “Are you going to help me cook?”

## CHAPTER NINE

Ianto blinked, startled at the speed with which Jack had changed moods, but followed his husband and daughter down the hall to the kitchen. He leant back against the door and watched the two people he loved most move about the kitchen with the ease of familiarity. He had no idea where anything in the kitchen was aside from the coffeemaker and microwave, so this dance of Jack and Misha's was disconcerting to say the least.

"Thank you, sweetheart," Jack said, accepting the wooden spoon Misha offered him. Ianto watched as Jack handed her a stack of bowls. "Set those out. Then set the table for me?"

"Sure, Daddy."

Ianto watched Misha head for the table and shook his head a bit. None of this made any sense. He reached over and plucked one of the bowls off the table, turning it over in his hand to peer at the label. Wedgewood, pristine, immaculate, and likely worth a small fortune

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Wedgewood was being used as casual dinnerware. “Jack, when did we acquire dishes?” he asked, returning the dish to the table.

As he watched, his daughter picked up the dish, turned it and moved it maybe two inches to the right to it was back in the center of the placemat, and then she grinned up at him. “Daddy bought them. I think they’re pretty!” Then she scampered over to Jack and pointed at her face. “Ow!”

“What she means is I brought it home,” Jack explained before peering down at Misha. “Don’t do that, poppet. You’ll pull your stitches.” He handed her several pieces of silverware and tapped her nose. “We don’t want Uncle Owen to get cross with you. Now do we?”

“Nope. He uses lots of bad words.” Misha skipped across the room to the table and started laying out the silverware. “And he gets scary when he’s cross.”

Ianto pulled out a chair, sat, and then picked up one of the spoons Misha had just set down. It couldn’t be what he thought it was. He turned it over, read the mint mark, and blinked. Antique silver which dated from before World War One laid out on the table for use in porridge. “What the hell?” he muttered, looking from the spoon to Jack and back again. “Jack, this stuff’s worth a fortune.”

“It’s meant to be used, *cariad*,” Jack replied. “It was just sitting in storage gathering dust. I thought it better to bring it out and use it rather than buy new things.”

Ianto could do nothing more than stare at the other man as Jack stirred porridge, mixing things together with the ease of what was clearly long practice. Certainly longer than the two months he’d been living in the house with him and Misha. “I didn’t know you could cook.”

“I’ve lived a long time,” Jack retorted, glancing over with a smile. “Takeaway didn’t really get invented until the fifties.”

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As Ianto watched, Jack wrapped a towel around the pan he'd been working with and carted it over to the table, deftly dodging around Misha as the five-year-old wrangled a chair over to a cabinet, climbed up and began to pull glasses off the shelves. Each glass chimed against the granite countertops. The shimmering sound warning Ianto he was likely going to have a heart attack when he saw what Jack was using for everyday glassware.

He was right. Misha clambered down from her chair to pick up the first glass, carefully holding it in both hands, and brought it over to him with a smug, "One for Tad." He did indeed nearly have a heart attack. Waterford. Absolutely gorgeous Waterford crystal to go with the Wedgwood china and Elkington silver now graced his kitchen table. He had the equivalent of the gross income of a small country set in front of him.

Ianto could do nothing more than stare at Jack while the older man stood by the table serving porridge from the cast iron dish that now rested on a matching iron trivet. He watched Misha calmly accept her portion and pout up at Jack who chuckled while handing a bowl over to him.

"You know better than that, Misha," Jack scolded absently. "I'll pour your milk when I'm done serving."

The words had the casual air of a common complaint. What had he been missing? When had Jack and Misha gotten so close? It was just too much too fast. "What the hell is this, Jack?"

"Dinner. Something soft which Misha can eat with her injury," came the reply as Jack set the serving spoon aside to head for the refrigerator. "Just means I'll have to rework a few things. Maybe chicken soup tomorrow," was mumbled at them as Jack leaned in for the milk. "Would you like that, sweetheart?"

"Ooohh," Misha almost cooed in response to the question. "Do I get to make the noodles again?"

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A laugh came from Jack as he filled the glasses on the table. “You’re not big enough yet to make the noodles, but you can help again. Chicken soup, soda bread and a crumble.” The milk was put away and Jack resumed his seat across from Ianto who still could do nothing more than stare at the other man. “You’re not eating, *cariad*. Don’t you like it?”

“What?” Ianto shook himself and blinked. “Oh, haven’t started yet. I’m still trying to get my mind around the idea that you can cook.” He picked up his spoon and fiddled with it for a moment. “I mean you avoided everything that even implied domesticity before, even now I can’t get you to agree on a date for our official partnership, but cooking? It just doesn’t mesh with the Jack I know, is all.”

The sound of a chair being violently shoved back from the table brought Ianto’s head up from the dish he’d just started to eat from. As he watched, Misha scrambled around and up into Jack’s lap, her arms wrapping tight around the other man’s neck while she spoke in that rapid, almost run together way, children had when they were upset. “He didn’t mean it, Daddy! Really he didn’t. Tad’s just confused!” She buried her head in Jack’s neck and started to cry, little hiccupping sobs that just about broke Ianto’s heart.

“Shh, sweetie, don’t cry,” Jack whispered against her hair. “You’ll hurt yourself if you cry.”

Ianto watched the twosome across from him. Jack settling Misha with all the apparent ease of long practice, soothing her tears with soft murmurs against her hair. Yet for all the coaxing and love in Jack’s voice, the eyes that met his own were so flat and lifeless. The shimmer that always livened those blue eyes was missing, the sparkle gone, before those eyes themselves were hidden behind Jack’s eyelids. Ianto found himself shaking so much in response to that single look that the spoon dropped from his hand to clatter off the bowl. He rose, circled

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the table and hugged the twosome, pressing his lips behind Jack's ear to whisper, "I'm sorry, Jack. Whatever I've done, I'm sorry."

## CHAPTER TEN

They finished dinner though the meal was very quiet and subdued. Misha refused to leave Jack's lap after her little outburst but it seemed Jack didn't mind holding her. Ianto volunteered to do the cleanup while Jack went up stairs to supervise Misha's bath. He stood at the sink, carefully hand washing the dinner dishes, and listening to the laughter echoing down the stairs. Soon enough he heard the sound of water gurgling away down the pipes, the patter of Misha running down the hall chased by Jack, and knew that Jack had brought her into their room for the night. Out of dishes and resigned to deal with the situation, Ianto secured the house, flipped off the lights and headed upstairs.

He stepped into the bedroom to find the room in near total darkness. Only the table lamp in the sitting area was lit, the rest of the room was cast in a variety of shadows. He shrugged out of his jacket, tossing it onto the armchair and removed his cufflinks, tossing them onto the

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nearby chest. Shoes and socks removed, Ianto settled onto the leather sofa in their usual cuddle spot and waited for Jack to join him. He didn't; he never moved from his spot curled up around Misha in the middle of their bed. Ianto could feel Jack watching him but didn't understand why his lover wouldn't join him like usual.

"Jack?" he asked softly. He held out a hand to the other man and hoped that Jack would take it, take him up on the silent offer to cuddle like they always did. He needed this time to relax. To stop being Torchwood's commander and start being Jack's husband, Misha's father again, to just be Ianto Jones. "Com..."

The brisk ring of his discarded cell interrupted his request for Jack to join him on the sofa. Snarling softly, he stretched out an arm to reach for the phone only to hear Jack answer it instead. Something in the older man's tone was off, but Ianto couldn't quite figure out what. With a rather abrupt, "I'll let you talk to him," Jack dropped the phone into Ianto's hand before leaving the room. He stared after the other man for a long moment before he lifted the phone to his ear. "Hello?"

"What the hell have you done, Ianto?" Kate snapped.

"I just talked to him." Ianto pulled the phone away from his ear for a moment, and then put it back. "Wanted to know why he was so quiet," he paused again, thinking. "I might have mentioned a bit about the suddenly appearing dishes and my inability to get him to commit to a date for the partnership."

"What the hell were you thinking, Ianto?" Her anger was palpable even over the phone. "Jack's a mess. I can hear it in his voice. And you've turned him into this mess by taking every damned thing that defined him away from him. You're worse than Gwen right now because at least Rhys has something aside from those kids to give him a focus. All Jack has is you and Misha."

"But..." Ianto attempted to interject in order to defend himself.

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"Don't you but me!" Kate snarled into his ear. "Listen to *me*, Ianto, since you sure as fuck weren't listening to Jack earlier. You mated him. You claimed him. He's yours... and he *cannot* defy you."

"Kate..."

"No. Don't even try that cajoling tone on me, young man. You've torn everything away from Jack, his job, his team, pretty much his whole identity, without giving him anything to replace it. Now you've all but taken yourself away from him." Kate paused long enough for Ianto to hear the static on the line. "Wolves that lose their pack generally die of loneliness. Jack told us his mother died because she pined away for her husband, his father. You will fix this or I will find a way to permanently kill you." Another long pause, then she snapped, "Do you understand me?"

"Kate, *how* can I fix this? I can't seem to make a simple request without him taking it as an order, or say anything without tearing him apart." He swallowed hard. "I love him, but I don't know what to do. This is harder than any of the deaths I went through while I waited on him."

A heavy sigh echoed down the phone line. "I know, Ianto, but you have to make that clear to him. Look at him, right now he's wounded, you need to make him feel safe. Talk about it in the morning, but tonight, make him feel safe."

"I love him. I adore him. I can't lose him, Kate." Ianto rose and stepped around the sofa to lean against the windows staring unseeing out at Roath Park. "Just the thought of losing him tears me to pieces. I doubt I could survive that sane, but I have no idea how to show him just how important he is to me. He's avoiding my touch..," he sighed softly. "I sure as fuck don't want him thinking I only want him for the sex, no matter how wonderful that is, but when we're in bed seems to be the only way we connect in any way even remotely resembling an equal partnership."

## *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“Then why haven’t you told me.”

The words were a soft whisper, barely audible over Ianto’s harsh, angry breaths, but just loud enough he could hear them. “Kate, I have to go.” He didn’t wait for an answer but clicked the phone off, dropping it to the floor. He turned around to stare at the man standing in the doorway, one shoulder propped against the frame and such sadness in his eyes that it made Ianto want to cry. “I didn’t know how to tell you just how much a part of me you’ve become,” he whispered, his eyes scanning Jack’s body, taking in every bit of tension in the other man. “I’d be nothing without you.”

He watched Jack. That’s all he could do. Just stare at the man who held his heart and soul in his hands while he felt like his very soul was being torn into tiny pieces to be devoured by ravens. How much of that pain was truly his own and not echoes off Jack, Ianto didn’t know. All he knew was that he felt so much pain that his body actually ached with it. He felt tears seep from his eyes, but didn’t reach up to brush them away. He couldn’t. Not now, not when everything – his past, his present, his future – was dependant on what Jack did now.

Ianto watched Jack, he could almost feel the other weighing his words before doing anything more. A tiny corner of his mind drew the comparison to an abused puppy wanting a treat, yet afraid to come near the hand offering it. He resolutely shoved that thought away. If he was going to lose the man he loved more than his own life, he was going to watch Jack walk away from him. Ianto sucked his lower lip between his teeth, biting it hard enough to draw blood, but still watched as Jack slowly pushed himself off the doorframe to straighten and cross the room to join him.

“You’re crying,” Jack murmured. A hand came up to brush against Ianto’s cheek. He felt the slight tremble in the fingers that wiped away his tears. That one single touch willingly initiated by Jack felt so good, so damned good, that Ianto could only close his eyes and lean his head

*AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

into Jack's palm, a tiny yearning whimper escaping his throat. "Why are you crying, Ianto?"

"Oh, Jack," Ianto murmured. The words slipped from him before he could stop them. He opened his eyes to stare into Jack's, so close yet so distant from him, and swallowed, licking his lips to moisten them before speaking. "Jack, please..."

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

“*Cariad?*” Jack questioned softly. He took a step closer to Ianto, bringing his other hand to rest on Ianto’s hip, and stared back into those stormy blue eyes he loved. If he listened with his mind and not his ears, he could hear the twist of Ianto’s thoughts, the way they turned against his beloved, to trap him in a spiral of fear and self-loathing with the strongest thoughts being of losing him or abusing him. “I’m here, Ianto. Not going anywhere.”

“Jack!” So fierce was Ianto’s cry of his name that if it hadn’t been a whisper, it would have been a scream. Jack staggered back a step as Ianto flung himself at him, face buried in Jack’s neck as the younger man cried. “Don’t let me hurt you again.”

“Hey,” Jack ran his fingers through Ianto’s hair. “It’s okay. Whatever it is, it’s okay.”

“It’s not.” The words were muffled in his shoulder. “It’s not, Jack. What have I done to you?”

*AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“Talk to me, Ianto.” Jack shifted his loose hold on Ianto so that he could rub the younger man’s back. “Your mind’s a mess at the moment. And, verbally, you’re not making a lot of sense.”

“How many times in the last two months have I told you to fuck me?” The words were still muffled but the self-loathing inherent in them came through loud and clear. “And you did, but...” A pause, a rough sob echoed in the room, then Ianto spoke again. “Even though I call you my husband, I haven’t really trusted you. Not with me. Not with Misha.” Ianto twisted closer, his nails dug into the small of Jack’s back causing him to bite his lip rather than protest the action. “I haven’t even had as much common sense as Myfanwy does. Didn’t think to be certain you had a legal identity, accounts... especially since I know Jack Harkness hasn’t existed since the end of World War Two.” Ianto moved again, lifting his head to briefly meet Jack’s eyes before dropping it down onto Jack’s shoulder again. “Hell, I don’t even know when you’re birthday is... though you probably don’t know that either as you’re not from here.”

“Winter Solstice.”

“What?” Ianto pulled out of Jack’s loose hold to blink at him, confusion written all over his face. “Jack...?”

“My birthday. The Terran equivalent is the Winter Solstice.” He barely refrained from shaking his head, bemused by Ianto’s confusion. “My birthday fell on the longest night of the Boeshane year. Thus, Winter Solstice here on Earth.”

“Oh... umm...”

Jack gave in and chuckled just a little bit, reaching out to catch Ianto’s hands in his and lead him to the sofa. He seated Ianto there, gently pushing his legs apart to kneel between them, and rested his cheek against Ianto’s inner thigh while he gathered his thoughts. Ianto’s hand seemed to automatically find its way into his hair, shaking

*AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

fingers resting on his scalp. Jack shifted his position a bit, pulling away so he could consider Ianto.

“You said a lot of things, Ianto, but you’re thinking a lot more, many of them so much worse than what you did say. I won’t have you thinking that way about yourself.” Jack reached up and pressed a hand to Ianto’s mouth, stopping him from speaking. “You forget so often. After five billion years, I’ve become a very powerful telepath and you are projecting, *carriad*.”

Ianto’s hand curled around his wrist and pulled his own hand away. “I raped you,” Ianto whispered, low and fierce, his eyes refusing to meet Jack’s. “If you can’t defy my orders, then that’s what I’ve done... several times over the last few months.”

“No!” Jack’s response was an equally fierce whisper. “No, Ianto, you never...” he trailed off for a moment, looking up at the ceiling in a desperate search for the right words to explain to Ianto without exposing even more of his past. Finally, he knelt up, resting his hands on either side of Ianto’s hips, trapping him in place in front of him. “You are not a rapist, Ianto Emrys Jones. You are the man I love, who is my mate, and who I trust above all others.” He lifted one hand, cupped Ianto’s chin in his fingers and forced Ianto’s head up. “Listen to me, Ianto. I know what rape is, in all its myriad of forms, and nothing we have done together comes anywhere close to that. There is only love in this room, in our bed. Is that understood?”

“But...”

Jack shook his hand, shaking Ianto’s head as he did so, and snapped, “Answer me, Ianto. Is it understood? You’ve never done a thing I haven’t wanted.” He stared intently at the other man, holding his gaze, and continued in a low almost snarl, “If there is a rapist anywhere among our circle of friends and acquaintances, it is Gwen. You heard Andy. I know you did. She drugged him, took away any choice he had, and used him for her own ends.” A shudder raced down

## AWAY WITH THE FAIRY

Jack's spine, but he forced that away to focus on Ianto. He had to get Ianto out of this dark spiral he was in before it destroyed them both. "Never, ever, have you done that to me."

"Jack..." Ianto lifted one hand, only to freeze without touching Jack. "I..."

"Shh," Jack murmured, reaching up to catch Ianto's hand with his own, entwining their fingers. "Put it from your mind, Ianto." He eased his hold on Ianto's chin, turning the hold into a caress of his fingers along the other man's jaw. "Now, we should get some rest. Come to bed."

Jack rose, only to tumble onto the sofa when Ianto pulled him back down again. He blinked, chuckled just a bit, and then settled into their usual cuddle position, his head on Ianto's chest as he lay between Ianto's legs. "Want something, then?"

"Yep." Ianto's hand free hand stroked through his hair. Settling into comfortable familiarity as their emotions began to settle again. "I have questions, *m'gwr*. Questions I really need to have answered before I do something that neither of us could possibly recover from. Things I need to know but the team doesn't. Willing to talk a bit more before we sleep?"

"I guess." Jack leant his head back to look up at Ianto. "I can feel your exhaustion. You really should get some rest before we have to tackle the Gwen problem."

"I know, but I need to know these things. It's not much, kind of like you wondering why I went from pissed off to hyper in less than thirty seconds." Ianto smiled at him, twisting down to meet him in a brief, but oh so lovely kiss. "I'm wondering how you went from emotionally devastated to stern captain so quickly. And that's just the start of my lingering confusion, but I promise, as soon as I know a couple of things, we'll go curl up with our daughter and sleep."

*AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“Only a few questions, Ianto,” Jack replied. “You really need to sleep and this couch, while good for cuddling, isn’t made for sleeping. We really should move it down to the sitting room.”

“But I like this sofa. Goes well with the bed you still want to replace,” Ianto retorted, some of his usual liveliness back in his voice. “And you, my Jack, are trying to change the subject. So, my questions, bed, and then we deal with Kate likely trying to crash down the door at the crack of dawn. I did hang up on her.”

Oooohhh, bad Ianto,” Jack laughed. “Fine, just a few questions.”

## CHAPTER TWELVE

Ianto grinned at Jack. He knew the other man was in a better place emotionally if he was teasing him again. So many little clues he'd missed over the last two months. Any other time he'd be beating himself up for missing so much, for being such an oblivious bastard, but after Jack's minor captain fit, he knew better than to even think about brooding. He considered his options and decided to start with the thing that was disturbing him the most at the moment and work his way up to the hard, yet oh so important, question. "So, why did you change moods so suddenly on me?"

"You showed me you needed me." Jack shrugged one shoulder while settling back into his usual spot. "Downstairs, the implication was you didn't need me, wanted yes, but didn't need." Jack paused and Ianto waited patiently for Jack to continue speaking. "You kept saying it was your house, your daughter, there wasn't any 'us' in what you

## AWAY WITH THE FAIRY

said. Then you made that comment about the partnership date. It just..."

"Hurt. I know." Ianto stroked Jack's hair and nape, sighing softly. "I should have thought about the technical details, like you not having a legal identity, as being the problem, but it never dawned on me. I allowed myself to get distracted by work."

"I should have said something, *carriad*," Jack murmured a bit sleepily. "But I..."

"You what?" Ianto asked when it was obvious that Jack wasn't going to continue. "Why *didn't* you say something to me?"

"You know how old I am, Ianto," Jack began, twisting his body in Ianto's embrace so that he was now looking up at the younger man. Ianto nodded, watching Jack, but remaining silent. He had a feeling that whatever Jack was about to say wouldn't be said if he spoke and interrupted him. "I've suppressed everything from my earliest life, but especially my deeper instincts, in order to survive. I had to because so much of what I did..." Jack trailed off, his lashes dropping to veil his eyes while a shudder racked his body. Ianto made a mental note of the reaction, resolving to discuss things when they were both not so raw and aching with a difficult case looming on the horizon. "Anyway, that night, I used the skills I've picked up over the years to connect to you, subtly increase your pleasure by teasing the pleasure centers in your brain, and somehow doing that with the link we already had broke through the suppression. Then..."

"Then I got tired of waiting."

"Yeah..." Jack chuckled. The sound was full of remembered sex. "At the time, I didn't understand why I did what I did, but as time passed I figured it was related to the psychic overtones of the sex we had. I thought it – the feeling of being mated to you – would fade away, but it never did." Jack lifted up a bit, resting his arms on Ianto's chest and stared at him. "Why did you do it?"

## *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

Ianto dropped his head back against the arm of the sofa. That was a loaded question if he ever heard one. He also had the distinct impression, subtly teasing at the back his mind, that this was another one of those pivotal moments where his future hung on his answer. He searched his thoughts, brought that memory back to the front of his mind, and examined it in detail. His every action once he had Jack beneath him that night was to ensure that Jack knew he was his, always his, and wasn't allowed to leave him for another.

Sighing, Ianto began to speak, "You're mine." He smiled at Jack, running his hand along Jack's throat. "All I thought that night was you were mine and I was going to make certain you and everyone else knew it." He shook his head with a soft laugh. "It's strange. It was like there was me and then there was this primitive caveman determined to drag you off and keep you. I remember thinking I was claiming you, but not knowing where the impulse to do so actually originated from," Ianto paused and waited patiently for Jack to lift his eyes to his own once again. Staring into those brilliant blue eyes, noting the well buried nerves in them, he murmured, "But I wouldn't change that moment for the world."

For a moment, there was absolute silence as Jack stared at him. Then he moved in a rapid surge up Ianto's body to clasp his face in his hands and kiss him. It was a strange kiss, hungry yet tender. Easing off, and then deepening in turns. Ianto curled his arms around Jack, moaning softly, letting Jack lead the kiss for however long the other man wanted it. It finally broke when they both needed to breathe again. Ianto drew in several panting breaths before chuckling softly. "Now I know we're tired, lying tangled up like this and neither one of us are hard..."

"I know," Jack murmured, soft laughter in his voice. "What is the world coming to?"

## AWAY WITH THE FAIRY

“Think we should call Tosh?” Ianto retorted with a grin. “See if there’s an apocalypse we weren’t told about.” He sobered quickly though. He stroked a hand along Jack’s cheek. “One more question,” he whispered, not even attempting to hide the nervous tension gathering within him. “What do we need to do to make this an equal partnership?” At Jack’s surprised blink, Ianto pressed a quick kiss to the other man’s lips. “I want that, *m’gwr*. Everything. Us equals in every way that we can be.”

“I... I would... I would need...” Ianto could only stare at this strangely nervous Jack. He was used to bold, brash, loud, and occasionally totally over the top. He hadn’t seen Jack this nervous since the day the other man asked him out for what would be their first date. “Do you trust me, Ianto?”

The unexpected subject change threw Ianto off balance for a moment. Then the underlying significance of the question dawned on him. There was a deep level of trust in baring your neck for someone. Doubly so for him since that horrid night in the Beacons, he still had a scar along his jugular to constantly remind him of that night. He shifted a bit beneath Jack’s weight, settling more comfortable against the arm of the sofa. Making certain he held Jack’s gaze with his own, because he knew Jack would understand exactly what he was doing, Ianto rolled his head back and arched his neck, exposing that barely visible scar to Jack. “Yes,” he murmured, almost holding his breath. “I trust you.”

“Ianto... *cariad*,” Jack murmured shock laced the other man’s voice, deepening it to tones that bordered on pure raw desire. His head lowered, tongue stroking along that scar causing a shiver to race through Ianto’s body. He nuzzled against Ianto’s neck, alternating kisses with tiny licks to the skin, finally stopping to murmur, “Are you mine, Ianto?”

### AWAY WITH THE FAIRY

“Yes! I’ve been yours since we caught Myfanwy all those years go.” Ianto hissed the words into the silence of the room. He was shocked to find himself aroused, not physically as he still wasn’t hard, his body too exhausted by the emotional extremes of the day to react, but still, he was so aroused he was shaking. “Jack, please,” he begged, struggling to stay quiet enough to not wake Misha who still slept across the room from them.

A chuckle rolled over his skin. Jack lifted his head away and Ianto whined in response. He reached up, tangled his fingers in Jack’s hair, fully intending to pull the man back down to him, when Jack struck. A hand covered his mouth, muffling his surprised scream of pleasure-pain as Jack sank his teeth into his neck, biting hard before sucking at his skin. Ianto arched into Jack’s body, suddenly grateful the other man was pinning him down on the sofa, and panted, struggling to breathe now that Jack slid his hand away to stroke down his side. “*Duw!*” he gasped. “Yes, Jack, yes.”

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Ianto draped the towel around his neck as he padded down the stairs and followed the very enticing scents of cinnamon and fresh coffee into the kitchen. It had taken the shower to wake him up completely; he'd actually slept too long. He watched Jack putter about the kitchen. "Morning, *m'gwr*," he purred shifting to lean against the doorframe. "Where's Misha?"

"In the garden," Jack replied, setting the pan in his hand down and crossing to join him in the doorway. "You have perfect timing. Breakfast is ready."

Jack's hands came to rest on his hips, fingers catching in his belt loops and tugging. Ianto let himself be moved, wrapping his own arms around Jack's neck, and smirked. "I like to think that I do." He tilted his head and pressed a brief kiss to Jack's lips. "So what's for breakfast?"

## *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“If our daughter wasn’t just outside the door, I’d have you.” Jack swooped in for another kiss which Ianto willingly gave him before stepping away. “You look good enough to eat, all shower mused and half-dressed.”

“But she is there.” Ianto twisted about, retrieving his coffee mug from beside the pot and filling it. “So...”

“So, cinnamon scones with butter and porridge with apples and maple syrup,” Jack replied as he crossed the room to the French doors leading out into the rear garden. “Misha, breakfast!” he called out the door.

“Coming, Daddy!” Misha yelled back from outside. “Modryb Kate and Ewythr Owen are here! Can they have breakfast too?”

“Of course, sweetie,” Jack called back again with a soft laugh.

“Daddy, Jack?” Ianto asked. He thought for a moment and then all but mentally slapped himself. She’d been calling Jack that the day before too but he’d been too angry for the naming to register on him. Then, an entirely different problem dawned on him. “Shit, I need to finish getting dressed.”

“If it bothers you, I’ll get her to stop.” Jack turned to look at him, a bit of wariness replacing the playful teasing in his eyes. “She’s been doing it here for a while. Yesterday was the first time she called me that anywhere outside the house and...”

“Doesn’t bother me, just surprised you’d want that from her is all.” Ianto paused in his attempt to leave and fetch a shirt. “Misha called you daddy and that’s when Gwen hit her, isn’t it?”

“Yeah.”

Hey,” Ianto crossed the room in brisk strides to hug Jack. “Not your fault. She’s been a vindictive bitch ever since we met here. She seemed to think I should be offering her command of Torchwood, not just a position as liaison. Then, after Misha came to live with me, she’s done everything she can to make my life hell.”

## AWAY WITH THE FAIRY

“You’re holding out on me, Ianto,” Jack murmured. Ianto attempted to back away, still planning on retrieving a shirt from the laundry, but Jack once again grabbed him by the belt loops and prevented his escape. “There’s more to the story, isn’t there?”

“It’s nothing important to the current problem.”

“You said you trusted me so tell me, love.” Jack pulled him closer, lips pressing against his cheek then down onto his shoulder. Ianto automatically brought an arm around Jack’s waist to anchor him, a soft moan falling from his lips as Jack again worried the bruise on his neck between his teeth. Ianto rolled his head back, letting his eyes fall closed, and sank his free hand into Jack’s hair, holding him against him.

“Jack,” he moaned, clinging. “Like I can think when you do that...”

“Oi! You two, get a room,” Owen’s voice interrupted Ianto’s train of thought. “Some people don’t need an education just yet!”

“We have a room,” Ianto retorted, drily. It was a good thing he was immune to Owen’s comments on his sex life or he’d be seriously blushing right now. “In fact, we have eleven of them. You’re the one who invited himself over for breakfast.” He tugged lightly on Jack’s hair to bring the other man in for a kiss. “I’ll be back in a minute, *m’gwr*.” He stepped out of Jack’s arms and nodded to Kate. “*Bore da*, Kate.”

“I see I don’t have to yell at you this morning,” Kate replied, coming over to kiss his cheek. “And good morning to you, too.”

“Owen, let Misha go,” Jack ordered. “It’s not the first time she’s caught us. Misha, run and fetch your Tad a shirt and wash your hands.”

“Okay, Daddy!” Misha squirmed from Owen’s hold, ran through the door and down the hall. Both men turned toward the door at the same time, calling after her, “Don’t run in the house!”

### *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“You two are such parents. Coffee, teaboy,” Owen demanded, grabbing a chair and sprawling in it. “I got dragged out at this unholy hour to come see you, least you can do is give me coffee.”

“Sit down, Ianto.” Jack reached for the coffee pot, pulled down a mug and filled it. He handed that to Kate, sharing a bemused look with her as Ianto seemed to automatically settle into the chair on the opposite end of the table from Owen. “Once Misha’s back, we’ll eat. I still want to know what you’re keeping from me about Gwen.”

“I told you. It’s nothing.” Ianto grabbed his coffee and sipped it. “She’s just being Gwen.”

“It is something, Ianto,” Kate snapped from where she was cautiously poking into the pans and dancing out of reach of the wooden spoon Jack was attempting to smack her fingers with; he finally managed to catch her, causing her to drop a lid with a soft yelp. “I still don’t know why you keep forgiving that woman after all she’s done to...”

“Tad! Got your shirt,” Misha squealed as she ran into the room with said shirt trailing out behind her. “Daddy says red’s your color. So I got it for you!” She shoved the shirt in Ianto’s general direction, turned to look at the room and pouted. Her hands went to her hips as she stared at Owen. “Ewythr Owen! You’re in Daddy’s chair. You need to move!” She turned the pout onto Jack. “Tell him to move, Daddy!”

“Oh, she is definitely your daughter with that move, Ianto,” Owen managed to gasp out around the laughter that captured all of them but Misha who was now glaring at each of them in a pose that was eerily reminiscent of ‘unamused Ianto’, hands on her hips with the barest hint of a frown on her otherwise blank face.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Ianto walked into the Hub via the cog door, shaking his head as he heard Misha's happy shrieks from the invisible lift as she and Jack took the more scenic route into the Hub. He stopped and looked up at them, grinning; as Jack crouched down to encourage Misha to toss chocolate to a circling Myfanwy. He was still amazed that his daughter got along so well with Jack. Hell, he might as well be fully honest, she was their daughter and likely always had been from the moment he'd formally adopted her.

"Ianto?"

"Hmm?" he replied absently, still watching the twosome on the lift. "Need something, Tosh?"

"Andy's parking. He'll be here in five," Tosh replied. "Oh!" Ianto staggered back a step as Tosh suddenly flung herself into his chest, arms wrapping tight around his neck. "I'm so happy for you."

## *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“I wondered if you’d figure it out.” Ianto held her loosely, kissing her lightly as she pulled away from him, and found himself grinning again. “I asked him,” he murmured. “I nearly lost sight of us last night, but...”

“Everything’s okay?” Her concern was clear in her tone. She turned to watch the lift. “I mean, he seems happier than yesterday.”

“Wonderful.” Ianto’s smile grew as Jack jumped off the lift before it reached the bottom. His husband turned to grab Misha and swing her around and down, eliciting more delighted shrieks from the child. Sobering, he turned his attention to the reason they were all in the Hub on a quiet Saturday. “Were you able to do any research on the Cooper problem after we left?”

“Some, not as much as I’d like,” Tosh replied absently. She too was watching Jack shift Misha to his hip as he crossed the Hub. “That’s why I asked Andy to come in. I’ve set things up in the conference room whenever you’re ready to start.”

Ianto tilted his head a bit; there was a wistfulness in Tosh’s voice. He’d always been sensitive to her moods, more so after their affair, and that disturbed him. She should still be all happy from her wedding and honeymoon, not wistful over Jack’s interactions with Misha. “Is everything alright, wagakoro?”

“Fine... fine...” Tosh looked across the room toward the sofa, wrapped her arms around herself, and leaned closer to him. “Would you...” she paused, and then rushed out, “Would you stop calling me that, Ianto?”

“Tosh...?” He started to question, but something in her expression told him now wasn’t the time to do so. A sidelong glance at the sofa worried him. Tommy sat there, glaring at them, and he found himself torn between stepping back from the glare out of old habit and snarling at the man for daring to look at him in such a manner. “If you’re

### AWAY WITH THE FAIRY

certain,” he murmured back. “But we will talk when other things aren’t so pressing.”

*“Let it go, Ianto. I’ll watch the situation.”* Jack’s voice echoed across his mind. There was a hint of a subliminal growl to Jack’s mental voice, enough to tell Ianto that he too had noted the subtle challenge in Tommy’s stare. *“Until she says something or we see something, we have to let things go. I did enough damage to her with how I handled the Mary incident.”*

Ianto managed not to jump when Jack laid a hand on his back. He turned his head and smiled at Jack, letting his doubts about just watching linger in the front of his mind. He wasn’t happy about it, but knew Jack was right; they had to wait on Tosh to ask for help from them. Sighing, he leaned over and kissed Jack, determinedly ignoring Owen’s “Oi! Get a room!” and the faint disapproving tut that came from the direction of the sofa. “Did you two have fun?”

“Yeah!” Misha’s high-pitched squeal made Jack wince and Ianto laugh in response to the wince. He continued to laugh softly as Jack glared at him. “Can we do it again, Daddy?”

“Maybe when we go to leave, sweetie,” Jack replied. “We don’t want Myfanwy to get fat eating too much chocolate, now do we?”

“Nah uh.” Ianto found himself grinning at the scene in front of him. It amazed him how much he enjoyed seeing Jack like this, relaxed and happy, and he was angry with himself for not having seen it before now. “Morning, Obasan! Tad says we have a big meeting today.”

“That we do, hime,” Tosh replied with a grin. “And while we have a meeting, I have a new puzzle for you to solve.” She moved away from them to tug a small box from beneath papers on her desk. “I remember when Jack, your daddy, first gave me this. Took me weeks to figure out what it was, but I’m certain you’ll have it done fairly quickly. When you solve the puzzle, there’s a reward inside for you.”

*AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“You spoil her, Tosh,” Ianto replied, watching Misha grab the box with a quick thank you. At least he didn’t have to worry about her being bored while they talked. Already, Misha was eagerly turning that harmless bit of alien tech, a teaching tool from the thirty-second century according to Jack, in her hands looking for clues. “Another certificate?”

“Of course,” Tosh smiled. “I need to add to the collection and it keeps her interested.”

The cog door rolled aside announcing Andy’s entrance to the Hub and forestalling his retort to Tosh. Ianto just shook his head, stepping forward to welcome Andy into the Hub again, quietly apologizing for his behavior the previous afternoon. He waved a hand, silently inviting Andy into the Hub, and turned back to look at Jack. He’d felt a start of surprise off his husband, but the other man was focused on Misha, talking quietly to her.

“Had another one of your spooky-dos last night,” Andy said quietly as he moved past Ianto. He took the steps down into the Hub rather quickly before pausing and turning back. “In my living room.”

“Does it ever end?” Ianto muttered, shaking his head at the way things seemed to snowball on him at least once a month. “We should...”

“Of course not,” Jack called across the room. “I remember this one time...”

“Don’t.” Ianto pointed a finger at Jack. “Just don’t.” He stalked across the room heading for the tunnels and the conference room. “Let’s get this started, shall we?”

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The first moments in the conference room had been interesting as everyone stood about trying to figure out where to sit. It had taken Misha pointing at what had been Ianto's usual chair and informing everyone that was her daddy's chair to get them to settle. Ianto took Jack's usual spot at the end of the table while Jack got Ianto's usual chair. Tosh took hers at the opposite end, on the left hand corner, as she always did to manage the computers. The rest of the group scattered about the table. Ianto exchanged a glance with Jack over the way Tommy put as much space between Jack and himself as possible. Andy ended up in the seat between Jack and Tommy. Once everyone was settled about the table, coffee in hand, Ianto spoke, "We all know why we're here. So Tosh, what did you find out?"

"We all know Gwen, so I won't bore you with the basics." Tosh handed round a printout. "In addition to the things she attempted with you, Ianto." Here she paused, her eyes flicking to Misha, totally

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engrossed in her bit of tech and ignoring everyone in favor of it. “She’s received commendations for cases that were later dismissed on appeal or completely dropped by the Crown Prosecutor when the cases were transferred to their office. Four major complaints, in addition to Andy’s, were made against her just in the last year, yet none were followed up on. The dismissal orders were all signed by the same officer.”

A soft growl rumbled from Jack’s throat. Ianto reached over and clasped his wrist, stroking his thumb beneath Jack’s wristband to rub over the other man’s pulse. He continued the caress even after Jack had calmed enough to speak, just reveling in the chance to touch Jack without worrying about how Jack felt about the public display.

“What do we know about him?” Jack demanded.

Tosh changed images in her presentation bringing up the image of a middle-aged Middle Eastern man in a formal constables uniform. Before she could even continue the briefing, Andy was cursing softly in a mix of Welsh and English.

“What do you know, Andy?” Jack asked. Ianto shifted to watch Jack. It was always fascinating to watch Jack interrogate someone; he could go from cajoling to vicious and back again without a twitch. Right now, he was doing the soft encouraging voice, trying to convince Andy that Jack was his best friend in the whole world. “We need to know.”

“That’s Rakesh Pradesh,” Andy snapped. The detective slammed his coffee cup down on the table causing everyone not focused on him to jump. “He’s the bastard who told me that even if I had the evidence I claimed; it was not possible for a man to experience sexual assault. I was just trying to get out of Gwen’s claim of harassment by claiming rape.” Andy’s hands clenched so tight that it was clear his nails were digging into his palms even to observers. “He put a notation in my file

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to have Gwen's complaint followed up on after her baby was born as the baby would likely provide proof of her claim that I'd seduced her."

Ianto was unsurprised to find himself with a lapful of Misha as Jack shifted his focus from protecting her to encouraging Andy to talk. As he watched, Jack nudged his chair back and to one side so he was mostly facing Andy. One arm rested across Jack's leg as he leaned toward the detective; however, his other hand came to rest on Andy's. "Relax, Andy. You're hurting yourself," he murmured. "No one here's going to judge you. Least of all me, so tell me everything you know, even if it's just a bit of suspicion. Any of it could be of vital importance."

With the subtle emphasis Jack had placed on the words *no one*; Ianto focused his attention not on the discussion between his second and the detective, but on watching the rest of the team. Owen had his usual casual, *do I really have to be here?*, look on his face, which Ianto knew from experience was hiding a highly focused mind, while Kate, seated between Owen and Tosh, looked like she was itching to check on Andy's hands. Tosh was quiet. Too quiet and composed as she worked on annotating her report with notes from Andy's discussion with Jack. However, it was Tommy who caught and held Ianto's attention. The displaced soldier was clearly disturbed by the contents of the discussion, a mild look of disgust on his face which deepened every time Jack touched Andy in the course of the conversation. Ianto made a mental note to call Tommy into his office for a private meeting, see if he could discover what was bothering the field agent.

"He's got another friend," Misha's quiet statement interrupted both Ianto's train of thought and the conversation going on in the room. "I don't like her."

"What, sweetheart?" Jack asked. Ianto looked down at her, running the conversation he'd been half listening to back through his mind, but couldn't quite put together what she was talking about. "Don't worry.

## AWAY WITH THE FAIRY

I'm not upset over you interrupting, I'm just curious as to why you don't like this friend."

"Bran has another friend. He calls her Jasmine." Misha threw the piece of tech onto the tabletop. "He says she's a fairy princess but she just feels evil to me." She looked up at Ianto. "She feels like that Mr. Manger did, Tad. He tried to get me from Mama once. She sent him away. She was so mad!"

Ianto lifted Misha up to sit her on the edge of the table. "Are you certain her name is Jasmine?" When Misha nodded, he leant his head back for a moment and then looked back at her. "This is really important, have you seen her? If I showed you a picture of her, would you know who she was?"

"Yup," Misha replied, nodding vigorously.

"Tosh, bring up the picture of the Cottingley fairies," Ianto ordered, his hand stroking down Misha's back as he rose to his feet. "The one of Francis taken in July of 1917 and enlarge the fairy in the lower right corner."

"What are you thinking, Ianto?" Tosh asked as she did what he demanded. Her question was echoed by Jack who expanded it to include what Ianto was thinking, "A new Chosen One?"

Ianto looked over at Jack and nodded. While his attention was away from her, Misha turned around, pushed up to her feet and walked down the table to stare at the screen. "Misha, don't stand on the table," Ianto scolded when he realised she'd moved from where he put her.

"It's just a table, *cariad*," Jack retorted. "Besides, considering what we've..."

"Yeah, okay," Ianto interrupted before Jack could finish the sentence. He felt his face heat up as he shook his head slightly at the older man's diversionary tactics. "Do you see her, Misha?"

Ianto's heart caught in his throat when Misha leaned forward and empathically pointed a finger at the screen. "Her!" She took a step

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forward, nearly tumbling off the table but for a well timed catch by Tosh who set her on the floor. “That’s Bran’s friend.” Misha turned wide blue eyes on the team before staring intently at Ianto. “Get rid of her Tad! She’s evil.”

Ianto dropped back into his chair. His godson was a Chosen One. “Fuck,” he murmured, dropping his head to rest on the tabletop. “Things have just gotten a hell of a lot more complicated.”

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

When the surge of pain-depression-resignation flashed across his mind from his mate, Jack surged to his feet. He stepped behind Ianto and rested his hands on his husband's shoulders. Kneading them in an attempt to relax the young man, he focused his attention on the rest of the team.

"Andy, contact Rhys. Get him and the children here. All three if you can manage it, but definitely Bran," he ordered. "Do not allow Gwen access to the building; make certain that Rhys knows Gwen's not to know where he's going."

He waited for Andy's nod of acknowledgement before switching his attention to Kate. "Sorry about this, but you get babysitting duty, Kate." Jack reached down, picked up the alien edu-toy from the table and tossed it to her. He grinned when she caught it easily. "Misha still has a puzzle to solve so that might help you a bit."

### *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“Tosh, pull up anything you can find related to the case we had before,” Jack said, pausing as he thought. “Also, see if you can find my reports from Lahore. It would be... um... 1910...”

“1909.” Ianto’s voice was muffled by the fact his head was still buried in his arms on the table top. “It’s filed under ‘miscellaneous reports, summer, 1909’.”

“1909, then,” Jack conceded. “Anyway, bring that up as well.” He stroked Ianto’s back again. “Owen, Tommy...” he shrugged. “Do whatever. We’ll be up in a few minutes. Let us know if Rhys arrives before we’ve returned.”

Jack watched the team gather themselves together to leave. He caught Owen’s eye as the other man passed him, flicking his eyes toward Tommy and then Tosh, knowing that Owen would understand the unspoken order. A barely visible nod was the reply before Owen swooped down to pick up Misha, carrying the girl from the room when she tried to linger. Only when he was certain they were all gone did he lean down and press his lips to the back of Ianto’s neck, wrapping his arms around the younger man, holding him close.

“Why, Jack?” Ianto’s voice murmured after several minutes of silence. “Why Bran? Of all the children in the world, why did they have to pick him?”

“They look for children who are lonely, frightened, abused,” Jack murmured, again pressing his lips to the back of Ianto’s neck. “The fact that he’s Gwen’s son makes it all the sweeter for them. They are vindictive beings, Ianto.”

“Sweet?” Ianto shook his head, cutting Jack’s response off before he could make it. “How did I miss it? As often as I see Bran, how could I miss what she was doing to him?” Ianto sat up, ran his hands through his hair. “I know what she’s like here. She’s become a spoiled, vindictive bitch. So how did I miss it?”

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Jack stepped around the chair to perch on the edge of the conference room table. "People have trouble believing that someone would willingly abuse their own children. Especially when the abuser is the mother," Jack dropped his gaze for a moment and then lifted it again. "Society conditions us to expect men to be abusers, to hit their wives and children in order to win arguments and feel powerful; however, the abuse a woman can bring to her family is far more insidious for its subtlety."

"Jack?" Ianto's hand wrapped around his wrist in what had quickly become a very familiar and very welcome caress. "How do you know about this?"

"I don't want to go into right now." Jack reached forward with his free hand to stroke Ianto's cheek. "Just trust me, Ianto, I know what I'm talking about," he murmured, sadly.

Ianto rose to his feet, gently pressed Jack's legs apart with his body and got as close to the other man as he possibly could. He wrapped his arms around Jack, one hand settling on his waist, the other on the back of his head. He urged Jack down to rest his head on Ianto's shoulder. "I'm sorry, *m'gwr*," Ianto whispered. "When you're ready, I'll listen, but I'm so very sorry you were hurt like that."

How long they stood like that, arms around each other, neither man could later say. They just basked in each other, silently supporting each other, and shared their feelings through the bond they shared. Jack nuzzled into Ianto's neck, pressing a gentle open mouthed kiss to the mark he'd left on Ianto the night before, and murmured, "I like seeing this on you. Says your mine."

"Hmmm," Ianto purred, threading his fingers into Jack's hair to tug his head up again. "I like being yours. Just as I like knowing you're all mine. I may need to leave a mark of my own later."

"I may take you up on that," Jack grinned. He pulled Ianto in and kissed him. He built the kiss slowly, starting with a brush of his lips

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over Ianto's, feather light and fleeting, before coming back to tease the other man's lips with his tongue until Ianto opened to him with a throaty moan. He broke the kiss only when Ianto was arching into his body; a leg wrapped around his, and nails digging into his shoulders. "I may indeed."

"Daddy! Tad!"

Misha's high yells echoing off the corridor walls announced her presence long before she arrived. Ianto groaned, dropped his head onto Jack's chest and muttered, "You just had to kiss me like that now... when I can't do what I want."

"I did it, Daddy!" Misha squealed, running into the room and literally bouncing off both of them because she couldn't quite stop herself on her own. She waved the alien toy about with one hand while waving a gift card for the Build-a-Bear Workshop with the other. "See, Tad! I did it! And Bran's here to play too!"

"So I see." Ianto stepped back out of Jack's loose hold, turning to the side to look down at her. "And did you remember to thank Obasan Tosh for the gift?"

"Oops!"

"Well, we better go thank her, hmm?" Jack laughed, swinging Misha up into his arms for an enthusiastic hug before setting her on his hip. "You know what this means, sweetie? I get to make your Tad very cross with me by rummaging about in his archives looking for a harder puzzle for you." Jack gave Ianto a grin as he headed past, carting Misha through the corridors toward the main Hub. "Would you like that, Misha?"

"Yes!" Misha grinned at Jack. Ianto just shook his head as he turned to follow them. "Come'n Tad!"

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

“Is she okay?”

Ianto looked over at Rhys before looking down at where Jack was keeping the children entertained with one of his improbable stories of his time with the Doctor. In one arm, he cradled the baby Ginevra, feeding her a bottle, while Misha and Ceriddwen pressed against his sides to alternate cooing at the baby and listening to the story. Bran, on the other hand, was sitting on the floor staring avidly up at Jack and hanging on his every word. Ianto sighed, nodded, and twisted to face Rhys. “She’s as well as can be expected. Save for the black eye, she seems to have gotten over it quickly.”

“Mate, you know if I’d had any idea...”

“Rhys, neither of us knew she was that unstable.” Ianto reached over to lay a hand on the other man’s arm. “I knew she was obsessed with becoming Torchwood’s commander, but never would I have ever thought of her abusing children.” He lifted his eyes to meet Rhys’s, not

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even attempting to hide his regret and guilt from the other man, and spoke softly, “I owe you an apology, Rhys. I should have been a better friend, especially after everything you did for me two years ago. I should have been available for you to talk to, but my attempts to keep Gwen from causing more trouble for me also cut you off.” He closed his eyes for a moment and swallowed. “I should have known; if only from what she’d done before, that she would have started at home. I’m sorry, Rhys.”

“Nothing to apologise for,” Rhys replied. “Listen, you had your own problems. We both know that. I could have said something any number of times when bringing you lorries, or sent a message with the driver if I didn’t come myself.” Rhys shifted to lean an arm on the railing and stare back at Ianto. “It’s embarrassing. I let her do whatever she wanted to me in order to protect them. She threatened me, Ianto, with losing all access to them if I said a word. As long as she was attacking me, she left them alone. Never expected her to go after a kid, especially your kid.”

Ianto looked back down at the kids in question and sighed tiredly. Even in his state of mental exhaustion, he couldn’t stop a smile from forming on his lips at the sight of Jack so at ease with the children. He didn’t think he’d ever tire of seeing Jack so domesticated and at peace with himself. Still, there was business to discuss, so he gave a nod and attempted to start the explanation. “The violence from Gwen isn’t the only reason why we called you in. Though you coming so quickly did allow Kate to gather physical evidence from all three of the kids for when we do deal with Gwen.” Ianto turned completely around, rested his arms back on the railing behind him, and stared blindly at the brick wall now in front of him.

“Bran is a Chosen One,” he said softly. “What that means is that ancient nature spirits have decided he belongs with them. They’ll come looking for him, eventually.”

## *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“Ianto, mate, what are you saying? Aliens want my son?” Rhys demanded. “That’s bollocks. Why would an alien want a kid? What could they possibly use them for, drugs or something like that?”

“Fairies, Rhys, not aliens,” Ianto replied. “Jack calls them Mara. He says that they pick children who are abused or neglected or otherwise feel alone. Whatever you call them, the last time Torchwood tangled with them they caused three deaths and threatened more before they claimed their Chosen One. She wanted to go with them. To save the world, Jack let her go.”

“And Bran?”

“I’m hoping he wants to stay with us.” Ianto turned again. “That our, all of our, love for him is enough to overcome the temptation the fairies offer. They’ll offer him safety from Gwen. They might even offer him revenge on her, though their idea of revenge is generally fatal.”

“You’re offering him that safety now. So...”

A shrill beep echoed through the Hub, cutting across his conversation with Rhys and startling the children into clinging to Jack. Tosh looked up from her computer to stare at Ianto. “It’s started. Severe wind alert at the children’s school. Same as the time before,” she called to him.

Ianto nodded, looking over at Jack. He had to prove his faith in the other man’s abilities as field leader. If there was anything Jack excelled at other than sex, it was strategy and field command. After all, he’d once been a soldier, several times over, and the experiences often carried over well to their quick and dirty work in dealing with aliens. Even as Ianto waited on Jack to decide on the makeup of field team, he headed down the spiral staircase, again making a note to look into getting it repaired, in order to be ready for whatever his husband decided.

### AWAY WITH THE FAIRY

“Kate, you and Rhys watch the kids. Do not allow them out of the Hub for any reason,” Jack ordered as he rose to his feet. He handed Ginevra to Rhys with a soft smile and a murmured, “Thank you for trusting me with her.” Jack leant down to kiss the baby’s forehead before crouching down to hug Misha.

Rising, Jack ordered, “Andy, call the station, get anyone at the school evacuated, then join us there.” He crossed the room in brisk strides. He reached for his coat only to discover that Ianto had beaten him there and was holding it ready for him to slip on. Jack stilled, shifting just a bit to allow Ianto to bring the coat up and over his shoulders, fingers brushing along his collar as the heavy woolen weight settled into place. He looked back over his shoulder at Ianto. They shared a smile full of warm memories resurrected by the familiar routine. He accepted the gun Ianto held out to him, turned and headed for the door. “Ianto, Owen, Tosh, and Tommy, you’re with me. Let’s go confront these annoyances and tell them *this* time, the Chosen One is staying here.”

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Hide-n-Seek was fun, even her daddies played it, but they always insisted on playing after she'd been put to bed so she couldn't play too. It wasn't fair, especially since they seemed to have so much fun. Misha crept across the gantry. She knew all the good hiding places in the Hub. So it would truly take her no time at all to find Ceri and Bran, but she had to play fair and give them time to both hide and run toward the base. Mainframe insisted she always play fair. She'd been told some very scary stories about what happened to those who didn't play fair or by the rules. She knelt on the grating to spy down on the lower level.

Modryb Kate was at Obasan Tosh's computer. She was listening to Tad and Daddy as they worked. Modryb Kate would occasionally make comments to Ewythr Rhys. Ewythr Rhys was sitting on the sofa, playing 'base monitor', and trying to convince Ginny to go to sleep. She didn't see Ceri, but she could see Bran.

And he was going to get in big trouble.

## *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

Misha waited, holding her breath, for either of the adults to notice that Bran was sneaking down the little tunnel toward the garage door. It was the only exit door in the Hub that didn't blare alarms when touched or opened, yet they didn't notice. Not even when he levered the door open, the creaking hinges loud enough she could hear them on the other side of the Hub. She rose to her feet and stared, but he didn't even look back, just squeezed out the door and into the tunnel beyond.

"Modryb Kate!" Misha screamed, running down the gantry to the staircase. She grabbed the staircase railing, not even slowing down as she swung onto the stairs to run down them too. "Modryb Kate! Bran just went out the garage door! And you know Daddy always forgets to shut the garage when he drives!"

"Don't run in the Hub," Kate snapped. Her fingers were flying over Obasan Tosh's keyboard. It was clear she wasn't even listening to her. "Now, sit down and be patient. I'll listen to you in a minute."

Misha twisted about, looking for Ewythr Rhys, but he was nowhere in sight. The faint sounds of crying, not as high pitched as the baby's told her where he'd likely gone. Off to find Ceri who'd gotten lost in the Hub. "Modryb Kate! This is important!"

"And so is what your fathers are doing, so just wait a moment," Kate replied, before reaching up to her earpiece to press it. "Yes, Ianto, everything's fine. She's just having a typical 'pay attention to me now' moment. I can handle it. Roads are clear, so Jack can drive like usual."

Misha growled softly to herself. The longer it took Modryb Kate to pay attention to her the worse things would be. She could feel that. She always knew when something bad was going to happen, had ever since Koschei had rescued her from Mr. Manger just before the snake-alien attacked her home and killed her mother. Resting her hands on her hips, she started tapping one foot against the concrete floor and set her face in a stern mask. It always worked for Tad, so it should work for her now.

## *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

“Yes, Ianto,” Modryb Kate continued. “I know how to handle my niece. I’ve been watching her for how many years now? You focus on the fairies and surviving Jack’s driving, leave the children to Rhys and me.” Modryb Kate turned to face her, all smiles, but the smiles faded as Ewythr Rhys ran into the room with Ginny cradled in his arm and Ceri clinging to his other hand.

“Where’s Bran?” He demanded of Modryb Kate. “Ceri and I can’t find him.”

“That’s what I’ve been trying to tell Modryb Kate, Ewythr!” Misha turned her glare on him. “He sneaked out the door to the garage. We need to find him before Jasmine does!”

Modryb Kate quickly moved away toward the garage door. She was speaking rapidly to Tad on her earpiece while shoving the door shut again. Misha knew the tone her aunt was using; it was the ‘I’m worried but don’t want Misha to know I’m worried’ voice. When she returned, she handed Ewythr Owen’s PSP to Ceri, sitting her on the sofa with it, and then pointed to Tad’s computer. Her hand clasped on Misha’s shoulder, urging her into the chair. “Misha, you have homework to do. Why don’t you start it?”

“No!” Misha twisted free of Kate’s loose hold. “Listen to me! I need to be there. We’ll lose everything if I don’t get there to talk to Bran!” Misha glared up at Kate. Why did everyone but Daddy and Koschei treat her like she was stupid just because she was a kid? “You need to take me there!”

“Misha Rhiannon Harkness-Jones,” Kate’s voice went to that low stern register she always used when Misha was in trouble. Or she was yelling at Ewythr Owen over something silly he’d done. Like the time when he’d forgotten to lock Janet’s cell and she’d gotten into the one with Daffyd. Oh, was everyone mad that day! “You do not speak to me, or any adult, in that tone. Now, sit down in that chair until you are willing to apologize for your manners and speak properly to me.”

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Misha stomped a few steps away. She avoided the indicated chair, hopped up on the invisible lift, and whirled to stare at Modryb Kate again. She kept staring, even as her aunt began to head toward her with the ‘you are getting stern talking to’ look in her eye, and yelled, “Mainframe! Turn the lights off and lock the Hub if you agree with me. Modryb Kate won’t listen!”

The sudden darkness enveloping the Hub hid her smirk. She listened as Ceri squealed while the adults yelled at her before attempting to scream at the Mainframe. Misha waited a full minute, counting the passage of time in her head, before calling, “Okay, undo it please.” Carefully making her expression as neutral as possible, Misha waited for the lights to come back up, stared over at Kate and crossed her arms over her chest. “Now will you take me to the school so I can stop Bran from leaving?”

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

“Bran!” Misha tumbled out of Tad’s car before it completely stopped. She had to get to him. If she didn’t, really bad things would happen to everyone. She ran across the fields toward the trees. “Bran! Don’t leave me!”

Panting, she stumbled to a stop, blinking in surprise at how ugly the fairies he was so enraptured with really were, and rested her hands on her hips to glare at him. “Bran, don’t leave me. You promised to never leave me. That I wouldn’t have to face the juniors or seniors alone,” she began, words tumbling over each other in her haste to get them out. “You’ve never broken a promise before. Why would you break this one?”

The fairies hissed at her. Jasmine glared viciously at her. Even as shivers raced over her body, Misha kept her focus on Bran. She had to convince him of what she was saying, that she needed him, his sisters needed him. “Please, Bran. We need you. Ceri needs you. Ginny

### *AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

needs you.” She took a step closer to him, daring to reach out and lay her hand on his arm. “I need you. I need my best friend. Please, don’t leave me, Bran.”

She could see him wavering. His eyes taking back on the lively sparkle that he’d inherited from his own Tad. They weren’t the dull lifeless orbs that had so dominated his face for the last few months. Jasmine tugged on his other arm, pulling him toward the forest, and said, “Come away. Come with us.”

Misha felt hands on her. Cold, clammy, they pulled at her hair, causing her to squeal in pain. She heard her Tad shouting behind her. His yells echoed by her Daddy’s yells. She thought she heard a gunshot, followed by a squeal from one of the fairies surrounding her, Bran and Jasmine, but knew if she turned to see what was happening she’d lose the battle for Bran’s soul.

Jasmine suddenly moved. Hampered by the fairies clinging to her, Misha couldn’t avoid the sudden attack from the older girl. She fell backwards to the ground, the breath knocked out of her by the fall, and Jasmine immediately leapt on her, sitting on her stomach. She was pinned to the ground by both the former Chosen One and the fairies who grabbed her wrists to keep her from defending herself. Still, Misha somehow managed to get a hand free, batting away Jasmine’s own hands when the girl attempted to strangle her.

“Let her go!” Bran’s voice echoed from behind Jasmine. Such familiar words from more than one attempt to bully her on the playgrounds where he’d leapt to her defense. His arm came around the other girl’s chest, pulling her back and off Misha’s stomach. “I said let her go, Jasmine.”

Misha panted, struggling to catch her breath, and curled into a ball as he pulled the girl completely off her body. She twisted away from the other fairies, slowly rising to her feet, and watched intently as Bran

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struggled with Jasmine until he could pin the other to the grass beneath him.

“No. If this is how you settle things, then no,” he hissed down at Jasmine. “There are other ways, Jasmine. I refuse the offer you’ve made me.”

Misha watched him crawl backwards off Jasmine to stand and glare down at her. His hand came out to one side, another familiar gesture from many a playground battle, and she took it. Letting him pull her to his side, she turned her own glare, so well learned from her Tad, onto Jasmine. “Go. Your kind are not welcome or wanted here,” she snapped. “Find another Chosen One.”

“No!” The hissed chorus came from the surrounding fairies. “He belongs to us!”

Misha knew, with a sudden clarity, exactly how to stop them. She tightened her hold on Bran’s hand, took a half step forward and hissed softly at them, “He belongs to me, *geist*. To the TARDIS. You can *not* have him.”

She watched the words she spoke make their impact on the creatures. Saw them shrink back from the mere mention of the TARDIS and knew they had won this round. They’d won a reprieve from these creatures for some time while they sought a new chosen one. One by one they bounded away into the forest, shimmering into their more fanciful form as they went, until only Jasmine stood before them. The girl, if you could even consider her that anymore, inclined her head in uneasy acknowledgement of their victory before she too shimmered into the familiar fairy and flitted away into the shadows.

As soon as they were gone, she turned and hugged Bran only to shriek as she was smacked away from Bran by his mother. The woman’s hand striking her already injured face. She felt arms come around her, carry her away from where *that woman* was checking over Bran as if she was really concerned about him. Misha struggled for a

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moment, but calmed when she recognized the sound of her Daddy's voice in her ear. She let him carry her to Uncle Owen, but craned her head to watch over his shoulder as her Tad stalked across the grass to confront her attacker.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

Ianto reached down and wrapped a hand around Gwen's arm, pulling the woman to her feet. He spared a glance at Bran, smiling, and softly ordered, "Why don't you go show your father and sister that you're alright. I need to speak to your mother."

"Ewythr Ianto, will you...?"

"I know everything, Bran," Ianto replied. He nodded in Rhys's direction. "Go on."

"Why didn't you know about this, Ianto?" Gwen whined. "You're Torchwood. You're supposed to know these things and stop them before it gets to this."

Her voice really grated on Ianto's already stretched nerves. When the fairies attacked Misha, he thought his heart would stop. Then he had to watch Jack take a shot, stopping one from shoving its arm down his daughter's throat knowing that if Jack's aim was the slightest bit off the bullet would strike Misha instead and likely kill her instantly. That

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had been even more nerve wracking. Now this *gwrach-y-rhybin* dared to imply that Torchwood, his Torchwood, hadn't done its job. How dare she?

"This is all *your* fault, Gwen Cooper," he snarled. "If you'd given half the love and care you give your daughters to your son, he never would have felt they were his only chance at love."

"You can't talk to me like..."

"I can talk to you however I wish, especially now that your actions nearly cost my daughter her life," Ianto continued talking right over her interruption. "You agree to be sectioned. Long-term secure care, no contact with the children or Rhys and you'll agree to a divorce on whatever terms he wants. Or I will see you forgotten in a cell for the rest of your life." He paused and took in a steadying breath. "I'll be watching. I'll see that you have updates on their lives, but no contact until they are ready to contact you."

Gwen stared at him. Her eyes went almost comically wide and shimmered with what Ianto now knew were very convenient tears. "But Ianto..." she whined at him.

"No, those are the terms," he snapped. It was taking every bit of his control, as well as constant reinforcement from his husband, to keep from shooting her. Ianto settled on crossing his arms, his gun resting against his shoulder as he spoke to her. "No negotiation."

"All right. Can I at least say goodbye?"

"I think they're too afraid of you at the moment, Gwen, but maybe someday you can say hello." He softened his tone, smiled just for the briefest of moments. Shifting, he slid his gun back into its holster tucked beneath his left arm. "I hope somewhere under all that hatred is the woman we all loved once. Maybe you can find her again."

Ianto turned to one side. He'd seen Owen wander up to them, staying just back out of hearing range while they talked. He knew from that one move that Misha wasn't seriously hurt from the smacking nor

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in the attack by the fairies. That was one less thing for him to worry over at the moment. “Owen, take Gwen over to Providence Park...”

“Ianto?” she interrupted him. “Can I go to the island instead?”

“What?” Ianto asked in surprise. “Why there?” He found himself actually curious as to why she’d want to go to Flat Holm instead of the fairly comfortable, for an asylum, Providence Park.

“I need to do something with myself or I really will go insane,” she replied with a hint of her old self. “At least I can be of use there.”

Ianto wasn’t certain at all about that idea. Putting Gwen in close proximity to those damaged souls was just asking for trouble, but at the same time there was little chance of her escaping from the island like she could Providence. It did show that she was truly committing herself to the sentence he’d given her. It was Owen, however, who actually cast the deciding vote, in a manner of speaking.

“I can arrange for a psychiatrist friend of mine to treat her, Ianto,” Owen murmured. “In fact, it might be a good idea to have one on staff anyway. There are some patients there who, with proper treatment and medication, could be gradually reintroduced to society.”

Ianto considered for a moment. Owen did have a point. Tossing the various pros and cons back and forth in his head for a few minutes, he finally nodded and tossed Owen his keys. “Use my car, take her there and then come back to the Hub for the big debrief.”

Ianto waited until Owen and Gwen walked away, Gwen slowing to take a last long look at her children, before he turned to face his own family. He reached out a hand to brush Misha’s hair back, smiling, and murmured, “You were very brave confronting them, *m’genethig*.”

“You’re letting her off awfully light considering all that she’s done,” Jack said as they watched the car start to pull away. “I would have shot her. Then we’d never have to worry about her causing problems again.”

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“It was tempting, *m’gwr*,” Ianto replied. “If anything had happened to Misha, I probably would have let you and damn the consequences. Still, there may come a time when her children will want to see and speak to her. This gives them that chance.” He turned a feral smile of his own on Jack. “Besides, I’ve just given her the worst possible punishment ever. I’m making her face herself, her actions, and the consequences of those. That’s the worst possible punishment she could ever receive.”

“Oh, you are evil,” Jack murmured.

“I learned from the best.” Ianto rested a hand on Jack’s free shoulder and leant over to kiss him. He ignored the playful little ‘ew’ that came from Misha, lingering in the kiss for a moment, before he pulled away. “I know you want to get the kids to someplace secure for a while, at least until all those protective instincts of yours have calmed, so why don’t you and Rhys get Andy to give you a ride back?”

“You’ll handle clean up and cover up then?”

“Yep,” he replied. “As soon as we’re done, we’ll debrief at the Hub...”

“And then head home? I think we need some quiet time, just us.” Jack tilted his head a tiny bit to indicated Misha on the us. “Provided the Rift’s quiet, of course.”

Ianto nodded, kissed them both, and watched them head off to join Rhys. *Duw*, did he love them, all of them, this family he’d formed out of a barely comfortable with each other team he started with four years before. He knew one suggestion he would put to his husband when they were finally alone – a family Christmas at home for all of them – they needed that bit of merriment after the upheavals of this year. And they still had three months to go before the holidays.

*AWAY WITH THE FAIRY*

## **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.

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