



Collective
◇
Dreaming

Home for the Holidays

ALSO IN THE COLLECTIVE DREAMING SERIES

Perchance to Dream
Deflections of Loneliness
Away With the Fairy

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

BETH MCCOMBS

Copyright © 2009 by M. E. McCombs
Cover Art © 2009 M. E. McCombs

Torchwood is ©2006-2009 British Broadcasting Service Wales (BBC Wales). Created by Russell T. Davies. Produced by Russell T. Davies and Julia Gardner. Copyrighted material is used without permission of the BBC without any intention of profit from the work contained herein.

*The best of all gifts around any Christmas tree: the presence of a
happy family all wrapped up in each other.*

– Burton Hillis

PROLOGUE

Fingering the portfolio he carried, Ianto stepped into the house through the front entrance after waving a final goodbye to Tosh. He was still worried about her; however, he accepted her assertion that it was just a phase in her relationship with Tommy. Quietly closing the door behind him, Ianto set the portfolio on the hall tree in order to slide off his coat and hang it beside Jack's. The hall tree that appeared a few weeks before was just the start of the changes to his house since Jack had moved in. What had been a lovely, if half remodeled, Edwardian End-of-Terrace house was rapidly becoming a completely restored family home.

Ianto knew Jack had more plans for the house, including what the other man considered the most important piece of the remodeling, an en-suite bath for them. The only way to give them a private bath, short of moving up a floor, was for Ianto to sacrifice his lovely view of Roath Park to Misha, which would make their daughter very happy, and move

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

into the back bedroom. They could close off the small room next to that one, add a door in the wall between that empty room and the bedroom and have a good sized private bath. The sacrifice of the view was worth being able to luxuriate in a tub for however long he wished without interruption. Besides, Ianto knew if he ever did the unthinkable and got Jack pregnant, having their room on the top floor would be a nightmare. Better to save those rooms for guests or any future children they might have. "Future children, what am I thinking?" he muttered, picking the portfolio up again. "Never going to happen."

"What's never going to happen?" Jack called from the sitting room. "You do know what they say about saying never."

"No, I don't," he called back, crossing the hall and entering the parlor. Ianto walked through the formal parlor into the sitting room where Jack was sitting at his writing desk. The desk sat in front of the window and, with the curtain tucked back out of the way like it currently was, gave Jack a clear view out into the rear garden. Ianto looked out the window and smiled. Misha was outside playing under her daddy's watchful eye in their secured garden. "What do they say?"

"If you say something will never happen, you've pretty much guaranteed that it will." Jack smiled up at him while laying his pen aside. "So what have you set us up for?"

Ianto just shook his head, leaning down to steal a kiss from Jack. "Something that's not going to happen," he replied. "There's no way I'm getting you pregnant any time soon."

"Would that be such a bad thing?"

The slight hitch in Jack's tone told more of the other man's feelings than the softly spoken words said. Ianto crouched down by Jack's chair and rested his hand on the other man's leg. "No, not at all, but I would like us properly married first," he said softly. "Even if the records are

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

altered because of twenty-first century rules, I would know and I want any child we have to be legitimate.”

“You and the labels.” Jack shook his head, but the impish grin was back. “You know in a few more decades no one will care outside of the ultra religious types. Which you, *m’cariad*, definitely are not.”

“I have a present for you. Well, more Tosh and I both do, but still a present,” Ianto laughed, rising to swing the portfolio out from behind his back. “Everything the fifty-first century man needs to fit in with our out-dated ideals and labels.”

“Oh, you’re kidding me,” Jack grinned at him and snatched the portfolio from Ianto’s fingers.

“You’re as bad as a kid at Christmas, *m’gwr*.” Ianto just grinned back, held up his hands and watched the other man turn to set the portfolio down. He leant back against the nearby wall and watched as Jack began to flip through the contents. Driver’s license was examined, an eyebrow raised in his general direction over the birthdate, but the bank cards right behind got a big grin. Passport, birth certificate, medical records, school records, bank statements, all of them were quickly examined and set aside though the military records did get a surprised look cast in Ianto’s direction. He just tilted his head and semi-shrugged in answer; however, he knew what paper came next. Ianto began to worry his lower lip as he waited for Jack’s reaction to it.

There was silence in the room for several long seconds, just long enough for Ianto to start to worry he’d been too forward including that single page in the portfolio, when Jack looked up with the softest, sweetest smile he’d ever received from the older man. “We should finish this, shouldn’t we?” Jack spoke carefully, his eyes locked to Ianto’s. He reached across the desk for his Montblanc pen, a gift from Ianto years before and recovered from Jack’s office now. “Do you have a date in mind yet?”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“I was thinking Candlemas,” Ianto replied. “After the big holiday wedding rush but before the run on Valentines.” He straightened away from the wall, coming over to rest a hand on the back of Jack’s chair and watch him fill the paperwork in with only occasional glances to his newly acquired papers for reference. “We’ll have to arrange for Misha to be absent from school that day, but if we do it in the late afternoon, she’d only have to miss one or two classes at the end of the day.”

“I’d like that.” Jack leant his head back, smiling up at him.

Unable to resist the temptation of those lips, Ianto leaned down and kissed them, slowly deepening the kiss before pulling away with a smile of his own. “Maybe an evening ceremony at the castle? The rooms Tosh used for her wedding were lovely...”

“Hmmm,” Jack purred, nodding. “It was indeed. Candlemas at the castle. Sounds like a plan.” Jack filled in the last boxes, rescanned the page, and finally signed it with his usual flair. “Shall we take these over to the Registrar at lunch tomorrow?”

“Yup.” Ianto chuckled softly. “I still can’t get over how lovely your handwriting is now when it was such a mess on all the reports I had to rewrite and file for you.”

Jack threw his head back with a laugh. “This is a joy, something for us, not work,” he explained. He capped the pen in his hand and laid it back in its place. He shook his head. “After a century of required reports, I wanted them done as quickly as possible, but when I write for enjoyment or family, that’s a different thing.”

“That explains a lot actually,” Ianto retorted. “So which of us is going to tell Misha the news?” He glanced down at the desktop and blinked. “Jack? Why are you doing up a Christmas list now? It’s only the second of November, plenty of time...”

“Have you ever tried shopping in December? No, not plenty of time, not if you want to do it right,” Jack cut over Ianto’s questioning to

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

explain. “And this year I want to do it right, with proper gifts that mean something to the recipient.”

CHAPTER ONE

“Captain!”

“*Bore da*, Mrs. Jones.” Jack smiled across the lane toward the petite elderly woman. “I’m going to pick up the watch at the jewelers, do you need me to get you anything while I’m out?” he asked, crossing the lane to join her in the gate to her garden.

“No, Captain,” she replied softly. “I’m fine. I was just wondering if you’d like to give an old woman a hand making taffy.”

“You’ll never be old. And how many times do I have to ask, it’s just Jack.” Jack pouted at her. He couldn’t help it. She reminded him of Estelle with her feisty independence, her determination to continue living in that massive terrace house of hers. “I’d be honored to learn how to make taffy. When?”

“Friday, if you’re free. And I’ll call you Jack the day you start calling me Michal.” She smiled up at him. There was something just familiar enough about her smile to tease at the edges of his mind but

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

the connection slipped away before it could be fully formed. “Why don’t you bring the little one with you? It would be nice to have little ones around the house again.”

He took a step closer to her, some deep part of him aching to hug her and ease away the sudden sadness that crept over her. He didn’t understand why anyone would cut this woman off from her family. She was so sweet and loving. “If you don’t mind her, I’ll bring her.” He paused for a moment, tilting his head to consider her. “If it wouldn’t hurt, I’d love to know about your family, maybe see the old family photos. Memories are precious and all the better for sharing.”

“Only if you’ll tell me some tales of your own, Captain,” she replied, nodding her head toward his coat. “I’d really love to know how a man as young as you has one of those and wears it with all the ease of someone born to the military.”

He blushed. A woman who was physically twice his age checking him out and here he was blushing like a schoolboy. He shook his head and laughed. “It’s a long story, Michal, and you probably wouldn’t believe it if I told you.”

“You’d be surprised what I believe, Jack.” Michal Jones gave him a conspiratorial smile. “But that’s a story for another day. You best get to your shopping. You’re cutting it close, you know.”

“I started in November!” Jack all but wailed. “And I’m still not finished. It was so much easier when I could just give ‘boss gifts’ and not meaningful ones.” She laughed at him and he gave in to the impulse to hug her. He leant down, wrapped his arms around her and held on for a long moment. Just holding the elderly woman in his arms, he pressed his cheek to her hair and once again wished he could hold his own mother in his arms again. If only one more time, but she was long out of reach. Slowly, he released her and smiled, though he was certain it didn’t reach his eyes. “You sure you don’t need me to get you anything?”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“No, Jack. I have everything I need.” She shook her head with a soft laugh. “Be certain to latch the gate before you go.”

He threw his head back with a laugh and then grinned at her. “Know me well already. Go on then, I’ll watch until you’re back inside since you won’t let me help you in.” He leant on the gate, watching closely as she made her slow way up the walk toward the back door of her house. Only after she’d stepped inside, waving her hand out the door at him, did he close the garden gate. He checked twice to be certain it was secure before he returned to Ianto’s car.

“I so need to look into a car of my own,” he muttered, unlocking the door. “But what?” Climbing into the Freelander, he pondered the question of what he should buy for himself. “Something practical, no matter how much I’d love a sports car because it would likely have to do double duty as an auxiliary Torchwood vehicle. And then there’s carting around Misha.” He started the car and pulled out of the lane onto Pen-y-Wain Place.

He continued to worry away at the problem as he drove through Cardiff toward the City Centre and the jewelers. It wasn’t until he was stopped at a light and happened to glance down at the car beside him. And wanted it. Oh, did he want it. Maybe not in that particular color, a garish red, but that car was excellent. He took his time pulling away as the light changed, just so he could get a good look at the car thus determining what kind it was and hastily found a scrap of his Christmas list to scrawl a note on. He’d start looking into getting one as soon as his holiday shopping was done. For now, he had to deal with that most wonderful of holiday shopping events: finding a place to park.

Parking spot obtained, and damn if he didn’t wish he had the Torchwood SUV which would have allowed him a lot more leeway in parking, Jack hopped out of the car, tucked his list into his pocket and headed off toward the shops. First stop, the jewelers for Ianto’s pocket watch. Then, he’d wander a bit. He still had a hell of a lot of things to

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

pick up in the way of gifts for the team. No, not the team; they weren't just a team anymore, it was family.

With a happy grin on his face, Jack pushed open the door to the shop, pulled off his sunglasses and began to wander the place while waiting for one of the shopgirls to be free to help him. He paused before a display case, crouching down to get a better look at the contents, and nodded to himself. That was exactly what he was looking for, the perfect piece to give Misha at the partnership ceremony.

"May I help you, sir?"

Jack jumped, almost fell over backwards onto his arse, yet somehow managed to retain his balance and get back to his feet. He glanced over at the shopgirl and nodded. "Yes, I'm here to pick up a watch I had cleaned, but I also found something in this case I'd like to see."

"Of course, sir," she replied. "If you'll give me your name, I'll go find your watch and fetch the keys for the case."

Jack nodded and gave her his name. He watched her move away. Then he began hunting about for a piece of paper. He'd have to find out if they could engrave something he sketched out for them onto the bracelet's pendant. It wouldn't be easy, but it would be very meaningful to both him and Misha. His new daughter deserved to know that he thought enough of her to think of her as his beloved child in his own language. He pulled a pencil out of his inner coat pocket, leant on the case and began to sketch out exactly what he wanted on the heart shaped pendant while he waited for the shopgirl's return.

"Captain Harkness!"

The English accented voice brought a smile to Jack's face. He straightened and turned to greet the man coming toward him. "Mr. Johnson," he murmured, shaking the other's hand. "I wasn't expecting you to be in today."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

"I'm here every day of the holiday season," Mr. Johnson replied, accepting the envelope held out by the shopgirl who'd first greeted Jack. "Thank you, Carys. I'll tend to the Captain myself."

Jack took the envelope now being held out to him, opened it and tipped the contents out into his palm. A small box tumbled out into his hand and, laying the envelope aside, he opened the box. Nestled inside was the watch Michal had given him for Ianto's Christmas present, looking as pristine as the day it had been made. He nodded, more to himself than Mr. Johnson, and snapped the box closed again.

"It's in nearly mint condition, Captain. It just needed a few springs tightened and the dust blown out. May I ask where you acquired it?" Mr. Johnson asked quietly.

"It was a gift given to me for Ianto." Jack chuckled and shook his head. He slid the paper he'd been sketching on across the glass. "Can you put that design on that charm there?" he asked, pointing at the one in question. "I want the bracelet that it's on now, but the charm's for a later occasion. For now, I want the Christmas tree charm on the bracelet."

He waited patiently while his old friend studied the sketch before nodding and reaching for his keys to open the case. "It'll take some time. I'll do it personally." Once the case was opened, Mr. Johnson presented the bracelet to Jack with a smile. "This is a very popular piece, especially this time of year."

As Mr. Johnson continued to rattle off the specifications of the bracelet, Jack fingered it, tugging gently on the links, then a bit harder, before nodding and handing it back to the other man. "Perfect," he murmured with a smile. "Would you put the charm I mentioned on it before boxing it?" He tilted his head, considering, and then asked, "You wouldn't happen to have a gold Triquetra charm as well would you?"

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Of course,” was the near instant reply. “Do you want it added to this?”

“Please,” Jack responded. “It’s become a bit of a family thing. I can’t leave it off my daughter’s gift.”

“I’ll take care of that and write up your request. Do you have a date you have to have the engraved charm by?” Mr. Johnson pulled tags off the bracelet, setting them on a ticket which he quickly filled in with the necessary information so Jack could pay for the jewelry.

“January 30th. Will it be a problem?”

“Not at all,” Mr. Johnson replied with a smile. “In fact that’s plenty of time. It’s why I like you, Captain. You don’t come in the day before you need something and expect a miracle from me. I’ll take care of this while Carys rings up your purchases. Will you want the bracelet wrapped?”

“No, I’ll do that myself later, but thank you.” Jack watched the jeweler walk away toward the back before following Carys over to the till to pay for everything. His month old credit cards were certainly receiving a work out, but he couldn’t really complain. Not now. He had everything he’d ever wanted; well, nearly everything he ever wanted. All thanks to his Ianto. There were only two things he still wanted to have, but he’d resigned himself to never having those so in the end nothing mattered beyond the family they’d created now.

Shaking off his introspection, Jack accepted his credit card back from Carys. Then he took the carrier back offered him by Mr. Johnson, shook the man’s hand a final time and, slipping his sunglasses back on, headed out of the shop to wander through the rest of the shopping district in a vain attempt to find the rest of the items on his shopping list. There was one thing he definitely wasn’t going to do any time soon. Move the car. Finding parking this time of year was harder than chasing down a weevil blindfolded.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

His one small bag was soon joined by several others. He'd rapidly figured out the fine art of bag consolidation by watching several women tuck smaller bags into larger ones before taking off to do more shopping. Jack was soon doing just that himself in order to keep from being overwhelmed by his shopping. He really only needed one more gift on this trip, something for Ianto; however, he was having a hell of a time finding the right something. Then, just as he was about to give up completely, a tiny hole in the wall of a bookshop caught his eye. Grinning, he crossed the street and ducked inside.

He was soon merrily engaged in scanning the titles when his mobile beeped an incoming message at him. Juggling bags, and struggling desperately not to drop the one containing Owen's very expensive and very breakable present, Jack managed to pull out the phone to peer at the text message: What are you up to, Jack? Your excitement is distracting me from my meeting. Ianto XXX

It was his attempt to reply that finally did him in. Trying to text with one hand while walking down the aisle supposedly containing first edition Dylan Thomas books, he literally walked into someone. Looking up from what he was doing, he blinked in shock. "Doctor," he said, somewhat flatly.

"Captain."

The Time Lord's tone was just as flat as his own. Jack quickly finished up his message to Ianto, sent it, and tucked the mobile away in a pocket. "Don't tell me we're being invaded."

"Nope," The Doctor replied, popping the 'p' as he often did. "Doesn't matter if you are or not. I retired from that job." A hand was held out to him. "Dr. John Smith. I teach history at the university."

Jack raised an eyebrow, but shook the other man's hand. "Captain Jack Harkness, but you already knew that," he retorted. "I want to know how you could possibly retire. Aren't you the las...?"

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Not here, Jack,” John spoke right over his demand for an explanation. “Let’s go someplace, sit and talk. There’s a shop just down the way that makes a lovely afternoon tea.”

“Fine,” Jack snapped, not entirely certain he believed the Doctor... or should he start thinking of him as John Smith. “Let me get the book I came for and then we can go,” he stated, reaching past the Doctor in order to grab the book he’d been seeking for Ianto’s present.

CHAPTER TWO

“So, how can you possibly retire?” Jack asked as he settled in at the small table. He set his packages on the extra chair so they wouldn’t get damaged and stared across the tiny, snack covered expanse at the Doctor. No, John Smith, not the Doctor; the Doctor would never have sat this still and patient while sipping tea. “I mean, you’re the only Time Lord left, so…” he trailed off with an elaborate shrug.

“I died, Jack,” John replied. “I’m certain not long after that the Tardis died as well. I’ve had little nudges now and then, moments where I know something is waiting for me to make a choice, but I refuse to make it. By the time of my final life, I had so many regrets, Jack. Too many, really. And I don’t want to add to those. So, I’m not a Time Lord, me. Not anymore.”

Jack considered the other man for a long silent moment. There were so many layers to what he’d said and what he didn’t say that it took him a bit of time to formulate a proper response. “Whatever you

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

decide. For whatever reason you decide it," he finally said. "You're still my oldest friend." He raised his own teacup in toast. "I want you in my life. My family's life."

"Family, Jack?" John asked. He nodded towards Jack's hand. "So that's more than just affectation then?"

"Oh yes," Jack grinned. The grin softened into a heartfelt smile. "We're making it official in February." He reached for a biscuit and nibbled at it. "You remember Ianto? Dark hair, blue eyes, Welsh, looks good in a suit... he's agreed to marry me. We even have a daughter." Jack nodded to one of the bags on the chair between them. "The bear's for her. She collects them."

"I think I remember him. He was the one who set up the tow rope when we had to bring the Earth back after the Daleks." He smiled for a moment, remembering the excitement of having all his Companions in the Tardis at the same time, but the smile quickly faded as he remembered what had happened afterwards. What he had to do to the woman who was his closest friend, his sister in all but blood. "So he settled the intergalactic playboy down?"

"He loves me, Doc." Jack leaned back in the chair. His eyes half-closed as he thought about Ianto, about Misha, about the family they were gathering around themselves. "All of me."

"All?"

There was a distinct emphasis on that single word which brought Jack out of his thoughts to stare across the table at John. "All," he responded, nodding. His hand drifted up to curl over his collar, covering the currently hidden spot where Ianto had once again marked his neck the previous night. "He knows. And he not only accepted me, marked me as his, but allowed me to mark him in return. Do you know how rare it is for a pure human to truly accept someone like me?"

"You're either very lucky or he's very adaptable."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Both.” Jack grinned and sipped at his tea. He’d never drink store made coffee again. Ianto had totally spoiled him with that perfection the young man brewed. “He’s both.”

“So what’s his proper name? And tell me about this daughter you have now.” John grinned back at him. “I want to know everything.”

“Everything?” Jack laughed softly, reaching for another biscuit. “That could take quite a while.”

“I believe you told me once that men like us had nothing but time. So,” John trailed off with a smile. He let Jack pour him another cup of tea, fixing it for him, and presenting it across the table. Taking the cup, he sipped, sat it down and nodded to Jack. “Tell me about them.”

Jack leant back in the chair, fingers idly playing with the teaspoon, and thought about what to say to his oldest friend and mentor. Hell, if he were honest with himself, he’d just admit it; this man was his father for all intents and purposes. The Doctor had more a hand in making him the man he was than any other being in the universe. “You said you remembered him, my Ianto,” he chuckled softly, more to himself than to the other. “He’s gorgeous, loyal, resourceful, brave...”

“Ah,” John breathed the sound while sipping his tea. “I wondered. The girl was more openly concerned about you, but he was more intent on my answer.” The tea cup was set down again, a biscuit replaced it. “He’s beautiful and brave.” The biscuit was used to point at Jack. “I know your inclinations, Jack. You may flirt with everyone but you only fall for the beautiful and the brave.”

“Are you telling me I’m shallow?”

“No,” John scarfed down the biscuit, washed it down with a bit of tea, and then continued speaking, “You find beauty in many places. They all look different, but bravery is harder to find. Somehow you manage to find those who have both.” A smile was hidden behind the tea cup appearing only when it was returned to the saucer. “Those are the ones you fall for, Jack.”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Jack sat there for a moment, lazily reaching for another biscuit, and considered John's words. "You're right, I did do that." He grinned happily. "But not anymore. Not now that I have him." He lowered his voice, sitting up and resting his arms on the table before leaning toward the other man. "I trust him, Doc. With everything that I am. And I love him." He closed his eyes for a moment, opening them again to stare intently into the Doctor's hazel eyes. "I love him enough to reconsider my promise to myself to never again have a child."

He watched the impact of those words on the other man. Saw the startled widening of those ageless and aged eyes before the reaction was swiftly hidden away again. Jack felt himself begin to smirk as he saw things about him realigning in the Doctor's head. He'd told the previous version of the Doctor about the children he'd born and lost, of how he was never doing that again. Now here he was not only reconsidering that promise, but actually planning on doing just that. He'd love to bear Ianto a child, a physical manifestation of everything they felt for each other.

"You're serious?"

"As a heart attack," Jack nodded. "I love him that much. I'd take that risk for him." He dropped his gaze to the table, fingers twisting his ring around and around. Stilling the restless motion, he reached back and pulled out his wallet, flipping through his recently acquired cards to find his favorite picture of Misha. Their little girl all dressed up for her very first recital. While she had a lovely singing voice, a soft clear soprano, it was her piano playing that caught everyone's notice. Tugging it free of the plastic, he handed it across the table. "And then there's our Misha."

"She looks like Ianto." John handed the photograph back across the table to Jack, watching as the other man tucked it securely away. "Or what I remember Ianto looking like."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“She does. So much so that when I first saw her, I thought he’d married or something instead of waiting for me like he’d claimed when I first saw him again.” Jack shook his head slightly. He was actually embarrassed by his actions those few months ago. “She’s actually his niece, though some of the people around the estate he grew up on seem to think she’s his baby sister.”

“Not that we care one way or another.” Jack shrugged. “He took her in after her parents and older brother were killed. Later, he legally adopted her. When we marry, we’re going to arrange for my name to be added to the adoption record. She already calls herself Misha Harkness-Jones, so we’re going to have her name changed as well.”

“You have everything a man could want, Jack.” John set his cup down with a soft, almost resigned sigh. “Enjoy it.”

“I do.” He would have said more but a distinct beep from his wriststrap had him cursing softly in Raxacoricofallapatorian. “I need to get moving. I’m supposed to pick up Misha so she can go shopping for Ianto.” Jack debated for a moment, then rummaged in one of the bags he’d set on the chair. Pulling out an invitation he’d picked up just minutes before running into the Doctor, he handed it across the table to the other man. “We’re having a Christmas party,” he murmured, nodding to the invitation. “You should come.”

“Now, Jack, you know I don’t do domestic.”

“Doc, just listen for a moment,” Jack interrupted John’s refusal. “Rose created me using the vortex at the Heart of the Tardis.” He held up a hand to keep John from interrupting him. “I know you, Doc, likely just as well as you know me. Rose didn’t do it. The Tardis did. And she wouldn’t do anything if she didn’t know you’d approve of it. Maybe not immediately but eventually she knew you’d need me.” Jack grinned broadly. It had taken him years to figure it out, but when he had that raw aching wound in his soul had finally healed. “So, in many respects the Tardis was my mother. That makes you the closest

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

thing I have to a father now. So, come to the party, meet your granddaughter..." Jack trailed off, dropping his eyes when he realized that John was even more closed off now than before he started. "At least think about it." Jack rose, gathering his bags into his hands, and started away from the table. He'd done his best. He really, really hoped that the Doctor would come to the party.

"Jack!"

He stopped, turned back to look at the man now standing beside the table they'd shared. Jack tilted his head to one side in silent question.

"How old's my granddaughter?" John's lips curved into an almost shy smile. "Not going to show up for Christmas without a gift for her."

"Five," Jack answered with a wide grin. "Misha's five. Loves custom teddy bears from Build-a-Bear. She has one for every member of the family."

"I'll be there, then." John waved the invitation at him. "Just hope your Ianto isn't upset with you asking me."

"Oh, he'll be fine with it once I explain." Jack crossed back to the Doctor, wrapped his arms around him, and hugged tight. He pressed a quick kiss to the other man's cheek, murmuring, "Thank you. This means a lot to me." Releasing the other man, he nodded, turned and started off. "Time to collect the daughter. See you at the party."

CHAPTER THREE

“So, you’ve been nervous all evening.” Ianto’s voice drifted across the sitting room to where Jack sat addressing the invitations to their Christmas party. “Misha’s in bed now. Want to talk about whatever it is?”

Jack carefully capped his pen and set it aside. Turning, he clasped his hands in his lap and stared across the shadow laden room to where Ianto sat on the sofa drinking Irish coffee. “I ran into someone while I was out shopping,” he began, choosing his words carefully. “I invited him to our party.”

“Him?” Ianto asked. “As nervous as you are, I suspect I know who and that you’re now worried about my reaction to the invitation.”

Jack nodded. He was more than merely nervous. He was terrified. He swallowed, preparing himself to speak, and snapped his mouth closed when Ianto spoke before he could do more than open his mouth.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Since I know you ran Captain Hart off months ago, only one man would get you this worried over my reaction to his presence.” Ianto smiled at him over the rim of the coffee mug. “You found your doctor again.”

“He goes by John Smith now,” Jack replied. “Says he retired from the save the world gig in favor of teaching instead.”

“I didn’t think he could retire,” Ianto mused. The young man set his mug aside, carefully on a coaster, and rose. “I doubt his Tardis would allow it.”

“He says that while he feels something wants him to make a choice, he’s not doing so. He doesn’t want to do it.” Jack laughed softly, leaning back in his chair to look up at Ianto. “He also said the Tardis has died.”

Ianto felt the quickly suppressed surge of grief at those words. He wrapped his arms around Jack, allowing the other man to press his face into his stomach, and stroked his husband’s hair while the other man mourned the sentient machine. “I know what she meant to you, *m’gwr*,” he murmured. “It’s alright to mourn her.”

“For all intents and purposes she was my mother,” Jack whispered. “I can’t believe she’s gone.”

Ianto held Jack while the other man grieved for the machine what was both a home and a parent to him. He considered both Jack’s words and the feelings coming off his husband before he finally spoke. He kept his voice low, just barely above a whisper, and soothing. “If she was your mother, then the Doctor is your father,” he mused. “It’s good you invited him. Christmas is a time for family and he should get to know his grandchild.”

A start of surprise across their link had Ianto looking down in time to catch Jack’s startled look before the older man was on his feet. He pulled Ianto into a deep hungry kiss that said more than mere words how much Ianto’s quiet acceptance meant to him. He sank his fingers

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

into Jack's hair, barely cognizant of being backed across the room closer to the warmth of the fireplace, and moaned into the kiss. Suddenly realizing he was lying on his back with Jack straddling his thighs, Ianto broke the kiss to blink up at his husband. "Um..."

A chuckle answered his confusion. "I've been fantasizing about you on this rug since I bought the damn thing." Jack stroked his hand down Ianto's neck, leant down and kissed him again. "Stay right there... don't move." Then he rose, moving about the room to switch off the lights, and spoke to Ianto over his shoulder. "You naked on that rug with the firelight caressing your skin," Jack whispered into the deepening gloom.

"Hmm..." Ianto considered the mental image for a moment. It did sound intriguing. More so when he put Jack in the position he was currently in. "I'm not naked."

"Not yet." Jack smirked down at him before dropping to his knees and crawling up Ianto's body. "Give me time, *cariad*."

"I'll give you all the time you could possibly want," Ianto whispered. He arched his back to brush against Jack and stretched his hands above his head. He wondered if Jack would pick up on his unspoken signals even as he shifted again to bare his neck. The feral grin he got in response to his submissive display warned Ianto that Jack was now not only in the mood to play, but to dominate him. But was it enough? Would he finally get what he so desperately wanted from Jack? Ianto risked a glance up at Jack from beneath his lashes. Maybe, just maybe it was indeed enough. He was suddenly glad he'd changed out of his favorite suit when he'd returned from his meeting with the Queen over Torchwood's operating budget. Ianto shifted, started to move his hands down, and gasped when Jack pounced, shifting over him to pin his hands down again with a demanding growl.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Stay,” Jack snarled. He used his weight to pin Ianto beneath him and stared into those blue eyes once again staring so defiantly up at him.

“Make me,” Ianto snapped back up at his lover. He was tired of Jack holding back with him. Even with the mating bond and their well established psychic bond, Jack held back, kept a tight rein on his strength and his emotions, as if he was afraid of harming Ianto. Well, he was tired of it. If Jack wanted to be the alpha female of their impromptu pack, then by all that was holy, he was going to make Jack prove he deserved the position. “Come’n, Jack, make me.”

“Ianto...” Jack whispered. He was clinging to the last strands of his control. He didn’t want to hurt Ianto, but the younger man’s every move was pressing buttons he didn’t even know he had. He shook his head just a bit to clear it. “Ianto, you have no idea what you are...”

“Yes, I do,” Ianto hissed back. “So, are you man enough to take me, Jack?” He arched his neck, pressing his lips to Jack’s ear. “Are you *wolf* enough to take me? To make me your mate? Hmm?”

“You bastard.” The challenging words seared through his mind. They, coupled with the defiant look Ianto was giving him, snapped the last fine threads of Jack’s control. He dropped his head to take Ianto’s mouth in a demanding kiss. He broke the kiss only when Ianto was moaning into it. “Stay,” he snarled, backing off Ianto’s body to rise to his feet. He stalked across the room, tugging the tieback off the curtain and turned back toward Ianto. Ianto who had defied him, risen from the floor and started to leave the room.

Jack snarled, low in his throat, and raced after the other man. He caught him by the hall door. He wrapped one hand around the back of Ianto’s neck while the other grabbed the younger man’s wrist. Jack pulled, taking Ianto off balance, and threw him over his shoulder. It was but a few steps back to the rug where he rolled Ianto onto the floor and immediately straddled him again.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Ianto struggled beneath him. Twisting and writhing, but Jack ignored the struggles in order to catch his mate's wrists in his hands, wrap the decorative rope around his wrists and tie it off tight enough that Ianto wouldn't get free easily yet not impeding circulation. "I told you not to move," he hissed. Jack used his hold on the rope to stretch Ianto's body out taut beneath him. Both of them were panting and, from the erection pressing into his hip, hard and ready. "Now stay."

He watched Ianto intently. Stared into those defiant blue eyes until his mate relaxed and submitted to him, long lashes dropping to veil his eyes, then and only then, did Jack ease his hold on the other man. He slid his hand down Ianto's arm, teasing the skin with his nails, until he could curl both his hands into the neck of Ianto's t-shirt. Grasping it, he pulled, tearing the fabric and shoving the remains out of his way. Jack watched Ianto pant, his chest heaving as he breathed, and smirked.

Shifting his weight, he pinned his mate to the floor and rested his hands on either side of Ianto's chest. Holding Ianto's gaze, he slowly leaned down and closed his teeth around one already hard nipple. He tugged on the small bud, eliciting a sharp cry from Ianto. He soothed the small hurt with his tongue before repeating the action on the other nipple. Jack shifted his weight back to his legs in order to free his hands. Soon, his hands were equally busy, trailing down Ianto's chest to his waistband. There he flicked open the buttons on Ianto's fly to free his straining erection. Jack stroked Ianto's cock with the tips of his fingers, just enough of a caress to tease, before curling his hands around the waist of Ianto's jeans and stripping them off.

He wrapped his hands around Ianto's bare ankles and pressed his mate's legs apart. He ran his fingers up the insides of Ianto's legs, pausing to stroke the back of the young man's knees, and continued higher. He stroked and teased, deftly avoiding the younger man's cock and balls, until he heard a soft, almost submissive whine in Ianto's throat. Jack lowered his head, brushed his cheek over Ianto's inner

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

thigh, and flicked his tongue along the join of Ianto's thigh and groin. Every breath he took was laden with Ianto's scent, heavy and thick, and he could just feel the pounding of Ianto's pulse beneath his skin.

Glancing up, he watched Ianto stare at him, that defiant gleam still in those lust-blown blue eyes. He flicked his tongue over the femoral artery, some still sane portion of his mind knowing exactly what he was doing, and bared his teeth. He nipped gently, still watching, and then pounced, biting hard enough to just break the skin before worrying the spot between his teeth, drawing up a mark to remind his mate who he belonged to.

Ianto flung his head back with a muted scream of pleasure-pain as Jack's teeth sank into his skin. It took all his willpower not to give voice to the cries building up inside him as Jack's pleasure in marking him echoed through his mind. He didn't want to wake Misha, but *Duw* did this feel good. "Jack!" he cried, panting. A low growl rumbled against his skin. There was warning and desire in that growl, enough to send a shiver through his body, and Ianto moaned softly. Every inch of him was tense, desperate for Jack to just do something. "*Duw*, Jack, more."

Jack lifted his head and watched drops of blood well in the teeth marks left behind. He stroked one hand over Ianto's chest, playing with the hair and tweaking Ianto's nipples. Slowly, he lowered his head and licked up the blood, almost purring at the taste of his mate, and brought his hands down to rest on the floor on either side of Ianto's hips. Pulling slowly away, he brushed his cheek over Ianto's erect cock, taking a perverse delight in the keening cry the action pulled from his mate. Lifting his head again, he stared down at Ianto; his voice a hoarse growl when he spoke. "Turn over," he ordered. When Ianto merely blinked dazedly up at him, Jack snapped, "Now. Do it, Ianto."

A shiver raced over Ianto as he stared up into those blue eyes he so loved, saw the fierce hunger lighting them, and he swallowed hard.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Some still sane portion of his mind, the tiny little bit not totally drowned beneath Jack's feral desire, was glad he'd taken a few minutes after his shower to prepare himself for Jack. He didn't want anything to stop this; not now that he'd finally gotten Jack to the stage of properly claiming him as mate and partner. Ianto shifted, pulling one leg up to clear Jack's body where the other man still crouched over him, and rolled onto his stomach. He pulled his legs up under him and brought his bound hands closer to him. He knew, just knew, that he'd soon be pinned by Jack, and would need the support. Then, he looked back over his shoulder at Jack, deliberately letting both his need and his final defiance of his mate's nature gleam in his eyes. Everything he was wanted to surrender to the need building between them; however, he knew the minute he submitted, it would be over. It wasn't time to submit just yet.

While Ianto was positioning himself, Jack took a few minutes to shrug out of his shirt. He didn't bother removing his trousers, just loosened them enough to get them out of his way. He hissed as the slightly cool air stirred by Ianto's movements brushed his cock. Jack ached to take Ianto, but there was still one thing to demand of his mate. He reached out, brushing his fingers over the curve of Ianto's arse, and lower, growling throatily as he realized his mate was more than ready to be claimed by him. "Who am I, Ianto?" he snapped, running his hand back up Ianto's spine to thread his fingers through the thick strands of Ianto's hair.

"Jack!"

It wasn't enough. No, he needed a different acknowledgement this time. Jack teased Ianto, rubbing the head of his cock over his mate, but never thrusting inside. "My name," he snarled. "Say you're mine. And say my name."

"Yours," Ianto panted, thrusting his hips back into Jack's. He wanted to be taken. It echoed in the pulse of his blood in his veins,

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

burned through his body to pool in his stomach in frustrated hunger. "I'm yours," he heard his voice crack and knew he couldn't take much more teasing. "Raksha, please!" he cried, dropping his shoulders to rest his head on his bound hands.

He heard his mate surrender to him in the way Ianto's voice broke as he gave into his demands. Saw it in the way he dropped his body, submitting to anything he wanted from him. Jack wrapped his hands around Ianto's hips, holding him still and thrust deep, taking the younger man in one swift motion. He surged over him, sinking his teeth into Ianto's nape, another mark to proclaim his possession even as he held the other still for his taking.

And take him, Jack did. He held nothing back as he rode Ianto's body. He delighted in every cry he forced from Ianto's lips, the soft pants and keens, the almost screams when he hit his mate's prostate and the way the young man writhed in his arms, thrusting back into him. Ianto was his. Now and always. His. And never again would there be a doubt of that possession. Jack slid a hand around to stroke Ianto's cock, hard strokes in time to his thrusts. He could feel how close Ianto was to coming, hear it in the change of pitch in his moans until his mate went still and tense in his arms, his head thrown back as his spine arched and he came with a cry of Jack's name, his real name, just as he'd demanded of him.

Jack released his bite, a feral snarl coming from him as the tight clasp of Ianto's muscles on his cock forced his own orgasm from him. He dropped down onto Ianto, covering his mate's body with his own, and pressed his cheek to his back, listening to the other's desperate panting and racing heart. "Mine, you're mine now, Ianto."

"You okay?" Jack murmured some minutes later, brushing his cheek over Ianto's shoulder. He slowly pulled away to sprawl on the floor beside Ianto and turned his head to consider his husband. "*Cariad?*"

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Yeah,” Ianto purred back. He turned, their eyes met, and the dazed look in the younger man’s eyes had Jack smirking in response. “Oh, fuck yeah.”

“Give me your hands,” Jack ordered. He helped Ianto shift onto his side. Then he took Ianto’s hands in his and squeezed Ianto’s fingers before he untied the impromptu rope. Tossing it aside, Jack reached out and cupped Ianto’s cheek in his hand. He leaned over and barely pressed his lips to Ianto’s, flicking his tongue along the seam of his husband’s lips until Ianto groaned softly and yielded to the kiss. Jack deepened it for a moment, eased off, and then deepened it again in turns until they were both moaning into the kiss. Slowly breaking the kiss with a nip to Ianto’s lower lip, Jack murmured, “*Dw i’n dy garu di.*”

“I love you too,” Ianto murmured. “We should go up to bed...”

“Yeah, but I don’t want to move.” Jack laughed softly, delighting in Ianto’s mock glare at him. He rolled to his feet, offered Ianto a hand, and tugged his mate up into his arms. Ianto staggered a bit when he was vertical, leaning heavily against Jack with a soft hiss of pain. “What is it?” Jack demanded, leaning back a bit to run his gaze over Ianto’s body. He saw it then, the still oozing bite high on Ianto’s thigh, a livid bruise already starting to form around the spot. “Shit, Ianto....”

“Don’t.” Ianto shifted a hand from Jack’s shoulder to his chin, forcing Jack to look at him. “Don’t even think about going broody and guilty on me. I wanted it. I wanted you to let go and claim me properly so badly I could taste it.” He stared into those brilliant blue eyes, seeing the creeping edges of Jack’s well developed sense of guilt shading them, and sighed. “Don’t you get it? I not only wanted... I enjoyed every damned minute.” He concentrated and threw everything he’d felt when Jack had marked him into his beloved’s mind. Ianto barely had a chance to pull back from the contact before Jack was claiming his lips in another devouring kiss full of hunger, want, and

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

raw animalistic desire. They were both panting when the kiss finally broke.

Jack rested his forehead against Ianto's, struggling to catch his breath, and smiled. "I'm not even going to ask how you learned to do that." He held Ianto for a moment longer before pulling away. "Can you manage the stairs yourself? I'll clean up down here and join you in a bit."

"Think I can," Ianto murmured after carefully shifting his weight. "Don't be long?"

"I'm right behind you."

CHAPTER FOUR

“Don’t work too hard today.” Jack kissed Ianto lightly, a barely there kiss that was more tease than a proper kiss. “Have Owen look at that bite I left on you. We don’t need you getting an infection there,” he murmured.

“And put up with his remarks about our sex life?” Ianto retorted. “No thank you.” Catching Jack’s half-pout, half-frown, he sighed. “I’ll have Kate take a look when I get in. She at least doesn’t feel the need to do a commentary on our sex life whenever I ask for an exam.” He leaned over and kissed Jack much more thoroughly than he’d been kissed. “Have fun with the taffy making. I always did when I made it with mother before she was sent away. It was a holiday tradition.” He tilted his head to one side, remembering, and then shook the memory away. “I miss it, but you have fun with it.”

“Oh, I plan to.” Jack grinned and bounced up and down on his toes. It was disconcerting to Ianto to see how many of Jack’s mannerisms

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Misha was picking up to go along with the ones she'd taken from him. "We might even save you some."

"Brat!" Ianto shook his head, grabbed his coat and opened the door. "Give Misha a kiss for me."

"Will do." Jack watched Ianto leave before turning to the dishes. He knew Misha was playing quietly in her room until it was time for them to go over to Michal's. However, he also understood Ianto's reluctance to go up and see her. Climbing the stairs with that leg injury was a bitch, especially on the second day when Ianto didn't even have the lingering endorphins from sex to ease the pain. Jack had the sneaking suspicion that the bite would leave a faint scar when it fully healed, even with the immortality Ianto had acquired from him.

Jack pondered that thought. Ianto was immortal. He'd learned that in a rather spectacular way during a weevil hunt not long after Ianto introduced him to Misha; however, while Ianto healed rapidly, he didn't heal as quickly as Jack did from injuries, unless those injuries also caused his death. Thus, there were no scars from his rather brutal way of punishing himself after the events of Halloween but the claiming bite Jack had marked him with was taking its time healing.

But how had Ianto become immortal? Was it just the deep physic bond between them? Or was there another force at work here? The Doctor had mentioned something wanting him to make a choice, did Ianto's immortality have something to do with the decision he'd made when he decided to stay with Torchwood?

Jack sighed and set the last of the breakfast dishes in the drainer. He turned to consider the kitchen, dining room and the view of the rear garden through the dining room's French doors. Drying his hands, he tossed the towel onto the nearby counter and rested back against the sink. He let his thoughts wander where they would, but they always circled back to the same thing.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The odd sense of presence in the Hub, a familiar presence, that wasn't there before. Well, it had been there, but not so strongly. Or so familiarly. Jack dragged in a breath, ran a hand through his hair, and found himself blinking at his wriststrap. His supposedly broken yet still blinking right back at him wriststrap. "What the...?"

"Mainframe wants to talk to you, Daddy."

"What?" Jack jerked at the sound of Misha's voice. She stood in the kitchen door, pointing at his wrist strap, and nodded toward it.

"Mainframe wants to talk to you," she repeated. "All you have to do is go to her."

"And just how do you know this, sweetheart?" Jack crossed the few inches of space between him and Misha, crouching down in front of her, and watched her intently. There were no signs, outwardly at least, of her being possessed by an alien. Then he remembered Kate's words: Your daughter can talk to the mainframe without any interface. "Did she tell you this?"

"Yup!" Misha grinned at him. "She said that when you figured out she was there that..." she poked the wriststrap with her forefinger. "Would blink. You're supposed to take me with you. She already programmed it for you."

Jack looked from Misha to the strap and back again. There were only two ways his wriststrap could be remotely programmed. The Time Agency's central command could do it. So could only one other being. One he'd been told just the day before was dead. The question now was did he trust that this was the other being, the dead one, or was this the Time Agency out to take his adopted daughter from him. His indecision and confusion must have been obvious to Misha as she took a step closer to him, rested a hand on his wrist and looked up at him with a miniature duplicate of Ianto's 'I am deadly serious' look on her face.

"Mainframe said to tell you she was once known as Bad Wolf."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Oh my God!” Jack’s arse hit the floor with a solid thud. She couldn’t have said what she just did. Misha couldn’t possibly know about that. Even Ianto didn’t know about the Bad Wolf and how it related to him. He swallowed hard and blinked. He then reached out and shook Misha. “The mainframe said she was called Bad Wolf. You’re certain.”

“Ow! Daddy, stop it,” Misha squealed at him. “Yes, she did. Bad Wolf. She told me as soon as she knew you’d be coming. Wanted me to tell you when the strap blinked so you could take me to her.”

Jack stared at Misha. He couldn’t take his eyes off her while he scabbled about for his mobile. Finally getting his hands on it, he dialed Ianto’s own mobile from memory, waiting impatiently for the other man to pick it up. “Ianto, I need you to come back to the house and pick up Misha and me. We need to come into work with you.”

“Jack? Is something wrong with Misha?”

“No, nothing’s wrong with Misha. Something’s come up though. We need to leave her with Kate while you and I deal with a potential problem.”

“Mainframe’s not a problem!” Misha stomped her foot and pouted at Jack. “You’re not supposed to tell Tad!”

“Well, I am,” Jack snapped back at her. “And she should know me well enough to know I’d never take you to her until I knew exactly what she’d want with you.”

“Jack?” Ianto’s voice echoed through the mobile. *“What’s going on?”*

“Seems our Mainframe is likely an old friend of mine,” Jack replied. He knew stating the details over an open mobile connection was risky, but he needed Ianto to understand. “One that’s bigger on the inside, if you get my drift. She’s taken an interest in Misha.”

“Fuck,” Ianto hissed into the phone. *“I’ll be there in five. Meet me in the lane.”*

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

There was a click signaling the end of the call. Jack rolled to his feet, tucked the mobile away, and grabbed Misha's coat. "Come on, your father wants us to meet him outside." He struggled with her to get her in her coat and get it buttoned before grabbing his own and pulling it on. Jack growled softly as she continued to resist leaving the house, finally resorting to picking her up with a swat on the arse, and carrying her out of the house which he locked as he left. "You are a little brat sometimes. I'm not in the mood for it, Misha. This is important, potentially dangerous, and I am not letting you get hurt. You're too important to me."

She continued to glare at him even as he settled her in the Freeland and belted her in. Jack climbed into the passenger seat, looked back at her and sighed. "You sure I can't spank her sometimes? Never harmed me."

"I'm sure, Jack," Ianto responded, driving down the lane and turning onto Werfa Street in order to head back to the Hub. "I know all too well the potential extremes of corporal punishment." Ianto's hands tightened momentarily on the steering wheel before relaxing again. "So, how exactly did you learn this information about our mainframe?"

"Our daughter and this," Jack replied, tugging his sleeve back to show the still blinking wrist strap. "Seems the Mainframe programmed this at some point to take me to where she is. According to Misha, she wants Misha to go along."

"No way," Ianto snapped. "If the computer can now program your wrist strap, there's no way in hell I'm allowing Misha near her."

"Tad!"

"No, Misha. You don't get a say in this. The mainframe is alien. I want to know what it wants with you before I allow you in the same room with it."

"Not fair," Misha whined at them.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Jack looked back at her, saw the pout on her face and sighed. “Just one swat?” Getting a headshake in return, he continued his explanation for Ianto. “You remember what Kate said about Misha communicating with the mainframe. Seems the mainframe told her something that only a very small handful of people would know, something very important to me, and I haven’t told you about at all.”

“I know you have some secrets left to tell me, Jack. That’s fine. So what was it?”

“If the mainframe told Misha the truth,” Jack paused for a moment, taking in a deep breath and releasing it slowly. “If it was, then our mainframe is the Tardis.”

Brakes squealed as Ianto suddenly stopped the Frelander in the middle of the Plass. He looked over at Jack, total shock written on his face, and demanded, “What?! Our mainframe is your Doctor’s Tardis?”

“No, Tad,” Misha piped in from the backseat. “Mainframe’s your Tardis.”

Both men craned to look in the backseat at their daughter. She stared back at them with smug triumph written on her face. “What?”

“Mainframe is Tad’s Tardis,” Misha repeated, smirking at them.

CHAPTER FIVE

“Do you want to call him?” Ianto asked, leaning back against the office desk. They’d settled Misha with Kate, checked in with Tosh, and talked briefly with Owen. If anything went wrong with this excursion, their family would be taken care of. “I’m certain Tosh or I could find a contact number for him.”

“No,” Jack shook his head. “Not until we know for certain.” He crossed to Ianto, rested his hands on Ianto’s hips and then dropped his forehead to rest on the younger man’s shoulder. “He’s accepted that his Tardis is gone and from what he told me once a Tardis bonds to a Time Lord, they can’t bond to another...”

“So if the Mainframe is mine, she can’t be the one you think she is?”

“Yeah, but we won’t know for certain until...”

“Until we see her,” Ianto finished for Jack. “So, how’s this work?”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Jack took a breath and straightened away from Ianto. He lifted his arm and pointed to the strap. “We use this and hope we’re not being tricked. Only two things can remote program it. If it’s the Tardis, we’re fine. I’m not letting the Time Agency get us.”

Ianto reached back behind him and picked up a pair of pistols. Jack’s Webley he handed over with a slight nod before popping the clip on his pistol to check the load. Slapping the clip back into place, he curled his fingers around the butt for a moment, remembering all the other times they’d done this, and then tucked the gun away in the back of his waistband beneath his waistcoat. “Ready?”

Tucking his own gun into its holster, Jack nodded. Flipping the cover off the vortex manipulator, he held it between him and Ianto. “Put your hand on the manipulator,” he ordered softly. “And fair warning, it’s not the easiest way to travel.” He covered Ianto’s hand with his, started to reach for the activation button, but paused, leaning over their arms to kiss Ianto. “For luck,” he murmured, smiling. “Brace yourself.” Jack waited for Ianto’s nod, pressed the button, and silently prayed nothing went wrong as the vortex enveloped them.

Both men staggered a step when the vortex spit them out in the deep vaults of Torchwood’s Hub. It was lower even than the storeroom where Ianto had long ago hidden Lisa in his vain attempt to undo her conversion. Hands resting on their guns, they scanned the room for any threats, but saw next to nothing in the deeply shadowed vault. The only illumination came from large console topped with a glass pillar in the center of the room beneath the keystone of the cross vault above them.

“*Myn Duw*,” Ianto whispered. “Can you hear her, Jack?” He staggered a step, pressing a hand against the wall before shoving away from it. He moved across the small space, deftly dodging the railing someone had erected around the console, and jerked to a stop when Jack grabbed his arm. “She’s crying,” he whispered.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

He jerked free of Jack's hold barely containing the urge to glare at his husband. Ianto closed his eyes, struggling with the urge to cry, and staggered the few remaining steps to the console. He pressed his hands onto the edge of the console, the metal so cold it burned his palms, and gasped as he felt *something* press against his mind. The touch was gentle, yet insistent and very feminine. He risked a glance over his shoulder at Jack, but the other man was closed off to him. Bowing his head, Ianto closed his eyes and slowly dropped the shields he'd so painstakingly learned how to create at Torchwood London.

Fear, worry, anger, guilt... those were Jack's feelings. He was used to how those ebbed and surged over his mind. Buried beneath them, softer, lighter, were other feelings... *pain, loss, desperation, fear, hope...* "Talk to me, *eirian*," he whispered.

I am alone.

"Never. I'm here," he replied. "Jack's here."

Impossible child. The words brushed across his mind with the feeling of laughter following right behind. *Never listens.*

"I don't think he knows how to listen." Ianto smiled. "Why do you want to see Misha?"

Don't want to be alone. She, her friends, their children... the future defenders of time...

Ianto gasped, lifting his head to stare at the center pillar, and then he looked over at Jack. "Jack, you should listen to her."

"You seem to have it well in hand," Jack retorted.

Jealous resignation colored the older man's voice. Ianto barely restrained from rolling his eyes. "*Eirian*, you're right he doesn't listen," he said, shaking his head slightly. "She wants to make the children Time Lords."

"Children?" Jack gasped, climbing up to stand next to Ianto. He covered one of Ianto's hands with his own. "What children?"

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

MishaRhiannon, the first. She needs to be tested, but she is ready. And the others... Images flashed across both their minds, almost too quick to be captured, but not so fast that both men didn't recognize some of the potential children in question.

Jack closed his eyes, rested his forehead on Ianto's shoulder, and cried silently. "Beautiful, I'm sorry."

Impossible child... beloved child... You love my Time Lord?

"The Doctor? Of course," Jack murmured, knowing in his soul just what Tardis they were communicating with, and twisted his head to press a kiss against Ianto's neck. "But not like I love Ianto."

I meant IantoEmrys, not the other. He does not wish to defend the timelines any longer. In his heart, he wishes for peace... from war, from life, from everything. I ask again, do you love my Time Lord?

"He is everything to me, sweetheart," Jack said as he stepped behind Ianto to hug the younger man whose jaw was hanging open in shock. "If you're the Tardis I know so well, then how..."

It is possible, rare but possible, child. There was a lengthy pause before the ancient yet young voice returned to their minds. IantoEmrys woke me. He chose me. Together we.... Another pause came, this time the Tardis seemed to be weighing what she said before she continued. *I can travel no longer. I am no longer the Bad Wolf, but my kind are still needed to police time. For that we need the Time Lords. Will you help?*

The two men looked at each other. Each was certain his expression was a perfect copy of the other's: shock, awe, disbelief, wonder. Ianto stared deep into Jack's eyes, just watching, because he already knew his answer to the question. He couldn't leave this wondrous being alone, but he also couldn't answer the question yet either. "Jack?" Ianto murmured.

"I don't..."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“No, don’t answer yet.” Ianto shook his head, cutting off Jack’s sentence. “Go get *him*, your Doctor, and Misha.” He glanced back at the time rotor. “I’ll stay with her. There are some questions I need answered before this goes any further.”

Jack nodded. He knew his husband well. Reaching out, he cupped Ianto’s face in his hands, kissing him deeply. “Won’t be long,” he said. He kept his gaze on Ianto even as he programmed the wrist strap to take him back to the office. Pressing a kiss to the tips of his fingers, he pressed them against the console. “Back soon, Beautiful.”

Ianto waited for the flash of the vortex to ease away before turning back to the console. He knelt on the grating, spread his arms to encompass as much of the console as he could, almost hugging the chilled metal, and rested his forehead against the edge of the console. “You’re the voice in my head, aren’t you? The reason I know just when something important is about to happen,” he murmured. “How long have you been in my mind?”

Since the seer bound you to my child, IantoEmrys. The vortex lives in him. Now it lives in you as well. Together, you are the beginning... if you so desire...

“Can you truly release the Doctor? It will hurt him.”

The little one upstairs wants to be his... by the time he is ready to travel again, the little one will be ready as well. I can never travel again... I am bound to this place. I am Bad Wolf. I am the Mainframe. I am your Eirian... but I cannot be his Tardis again. Too much of what I was is gone. Ianto could feel her pain, her sorrow at the losses, and found him crying the tears she couldn’t shed. So I must let him go. It will hurt, but it is best.

“Rassilon...”

The softly breathed word interrupted his communion with the Tardis. Ianto slowly rose to his feet, turned around and leant back against the console. “Doctor,” he said, wiping his face with one hand.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

He smiled at Misha and held a hand out to her. “Come meet her, Misha.”

The Doctor followed by Jack carrying Misha joined Ianto next to the console. The Doctor stared, his eyes shadowed by so many unnamable things, at the time rotor. His hand trembled as he reached toward it only to stop with a pain-filled cry. Ianto reached over to take Misha from Jack, leaning close and murmuring, “She’s letting him go. He needs you.”

Ianto left the two alone, circling the console with Misha in his arms, so that they were on the other side. She didn’t need to be exposed to the Time Lord’s pain. Ianto sat on the grating, settled Misha in his lap, and rocked her. “So, just what have you been saying to the Mainframe?”

“Tardis, Tad. I only call her Mainframe in front of Obasan Toshiko, Modryb Kate and Ewythr Owen. They don’t know about her and wouldn’t understand.”

“Well, that’s telling me,” he laughed. “So, did she tell you what she wanted to do?”

“Uh huh.”

“And what was that?” Ianto stroked his daughter’s hair, absently pulling it back to idly braid the long strands while they sat talking. “Can you tell me?”

“She says I need to take a very special test.” Misha looked back at Ianto with a smirk. “And when I pass it, then Tad-cu will teach me everything I need to know. I’ll be his very first student.”

“Will you now?” The Doctor’s voice flowed down to them. A moment later the man himself joined them. He crouched on the grating facing the console unit. “So you think you can pass the test? How about you, Ianto Emrys Jones? Think you can pass it and truly be her Time Lord?”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Ianto looked from the Doctor to Misha and then leant his head back to look up at Jack. He considered for a long moment and then nodded. “If Misha can do it, so can I.”

“So be it.” The Doctor rose to his feet again. “You two stay there. Jack, don’t look at it. You know what it is...” The Doctor trailed off for a moment, and then continued, “Whenever you’re ready.”

Misha squirmed, but stilled when Ianto tightened his hold on her waist. He opened his mouth, fully prepared to question, when the console in front of him cracked. It creaked and groaned, slowly opening while a golden light edged out of it. It felt like the Rift, but warmer. Heat where the Rift was cold; life instead of death; love as opposed to hate. He could feel it, all of time, as solidly real as his daughter in his arms. Ianto pressed a kiss to Misha’s temple, hearing her gasp in surprise, and tightened his hold on her.

“*So many wondrous things... all of time...*” he thought, watching intently. A soft laugh escaped him when he saw a dark-haired child run toward him, followed by an unfamiliar woman, who held a hand out to him.

Beloved? Do you want me?

“Yes...” He breathed the word into the stillness, reaching out to take her hand, and then it was gone. The light, the woman, and he was alone, yet not. He could feel her, a connection as deep as the one with Jack, and smiled, sending her his love along that bond, “*Eirian... m’cariad.*”

Always, IantoEmrys... and thank you...

CHAPTER SIX

Ianto waved to Jack and Misha as the twosome crossed the lane behind the house. He opened the back door and waved the Doctor inside. “Is it normal to be so damned hungry after that?” he asked, opening the refrigerator to rummage about inside. “Can I get you anything?”

“Tea would be nice,” the Doctor replied. “I wouldn’t know. I was only a few years older than Misha when I had my initiation. And Ianto, call me John. I’m not the Doctor anymore.”

“How did...?”

“Time Lords are telepathic. We also have a low level empathic and telepathic bond with others of our kind.” John settled into a chair at the table. “It’s going to take me some time to get used to having you and Misha in my head.”

“Is it that odd?” Ianto turned from the cooker to look back at John. “Not being the last of the Time Lords?”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“No. I’m glad to not be alone, but the things we need to do now...”

“No,” Ianto glared over at John. “I want Misha to have a proper childhood. School, play, all the normal things a child does, not constant training.” He closed his eyes. “I want her to have what I didn’t have,” he murmured softly.

“Ianto?” John’s voice was closer. “By Rassilon, what happened to you?”

His voice was closer. It warned Ianto just moments before John wrapped his arms around him, pulling him into his chest. Ianto shivered, shaking with remembered pain, and swallowed before speaking. “I was a disappointment to my father and barely acknowledged by my mother. She ended up in an asylum before I was seven. That’s when he started pushing me, constantly pushing me, to be better than him. I don’t want that to happen to Misha.”

“Child, what is Misha to you?” There was confusion in John’s voice. “Biologically, I mean. I know you and Jack have both claimed her as your child, but what is your actual relationship?”

Ianto twisted free of John’s hold. He turned and began making up the tea while he figured the best way to answer the question. Finally, he turned again, holding a teacup out to the Doctor. “Misha’s my niece. My sister Rhiannon’s youngest. Why?”

“That can’t be...”

Before the Doctor could finish, Misha came running in the back door. She held the door open for Jack who was carrying an elderly woman in his arms. Jack set her down in a chair at the table, crouched next to her and pointed toward the kitchen where the other two men stood. “Honest, Michal, look,” Jack said. “Ianto’s in the kitchen.”

“I can’t,” the woman, Michal apparently, replied. “I can’t look and be disappointed again.”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Jack, what’s going on?” Ianto demanded. Ingrained habit had him filling another tea cup and bringing it to the table. He set it beside their guest. “And who’s this?”

“Michal Jones,” Jack replied. “And I’m positive, based on her nearly scalding herself with boiling water, that she’s your grandmother. She fainted when she saw Misha.”

“I told you, Jack, your Misha looks like my granddaughter,” Michal snapped. “But all little kids look somewhat alike.”

“Actually, Misha looks more like me than Rhiannon,” Ianto interjected. “Enough that there was a split between Rhiannon’s friends about whether Misha was my daughter or my sister.”

Ianto watched the woman look up at him. Her eyes, the same stormy blue as his own, went wide and a hand covered her mouth as she gasped. Pure, raw shock was etched on her face, quickly erased by pain before hope replaced that. Her free hand reached out toward him, stopping only inches from his skin, and trembled. Ianto gently took her hand, squeezing her fingers, and raised an eyebrow at her in question.

“You look like him,” she whispered, her trembling increasing. “Rhiannon’s boyfriend who bounced in and out of her life for years. Always the same though, no matter how far apart his returns were. She even saw him after she married that council boy. If that pretty little girl is her child.”

“Ma’am?” Ianto asked warily. He didn’t understand any of what she was saying. None of it made sense to him, but that newly awakened part of him told him this was vitally important. “I don’t...” he trailed off and looked helplessly at Jack.

“Tristan Ifan Emrys Jones,” Michal began, glaring at up at him from her chair. “I may be an old lady but I do believe I can recognize my great-grandchildren when I see them!”

Ianto stared at her. All he could do was stare. He staggered a step away from Michal, backing into someone his mind instantly recognized

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

as the Doctor, and blinked. “No one’s called me that in years. Not since...”

“More than likely, not since your grandfather dragged you kicking and screaming from my house on Christmas Eve,” she finished for him. “I never saw you again. Your cries that night haunted me for decades.”

Ianto felt his knees go weak; he slid to the floor beside her chair. He didn’t know what to think. The implications of what this woman was saying were making his head spin. He bowed his head, closed his eyes and wrapped his arms around himself. He rocked back and forth, totally confused, and feeling more than a little overwhelmed. He felt someone – Jack – wrap their arms around him and he leant into the embrace. Ianto twisted, burrowing into Jack’s arms, and whimpered.

“Excuse me,” John’s voice cut across the confusion in Ianto’s mind. It cleared his head enough to listen, but he couldn’t move, not right now. “Forgive me for interfering in what is obviously a family matter, but who was Misha’s father?”

“Emrys Jones, the Scholar, it’s obvious from looking at her,” Michal replied, talking right over Ianto’s head. “Rhiannon gave him the name Emrys. He told me he was a scholar studying the Welsh for a paper. He dated her off and on for years.” Ianto looked up in time to catch Michal shaking her head in disgust. “He got Rhiannon pregnant when she was fifteen, got all huffy with a bunch of weirdly dressed people who did something to her to make her forget all about him, and then they took him away. He didn’t turn up again until...” She paused and looked down at Ianto. “I’m sorry, *m’wyr*, that you’re learning this like this.” Then she looked up at the Doctor again. “He turned up again about seven years ago. Waltzed into my garden like he owned the place asking about Rhiannon and didn’t believe me when I told him I hadn’t seen her in years though I heard she’d married.”

“Rhia was my mother?” Ianto gasped out. He shook his head, desperate to deny the words, and clung tighter to Jack. He felt Misha

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

press against his side and, just a moment later, Jack gathered her into their hug. “But...”

“My son lied to you. He and his wife adopted you within minutes of your birth. He wanted a son. Rhiannon’s ‘accident’ gave him one without having to admit that his wife was going mad.”

“Ianto? *Cariad?*” Jack murmured. He looked up from Ianto at a soft sound from the Doctor. John’s expression was shuttered, but there was something in his eyes, a hint of the dangerous man he’d known as the Oncoming Storm, as he gazed over Ianto at Michal. “You okay, *cariad?*” Jack asked again.

“No. Oh, fuck no, I’m not okay,” Ianto snapped. “I’ve found out my entire life seems to be a lie. Finding my grandmother is wonderful, but she’s not that is she? And my sister I adored for so long, who all but raised me, was really my mother. This day is just a disaster.”

“Is it really, Ianto?” The Doctor asked before Jack could reply. “Remember what happened earlier.”

Ianto twisted about to look at John, absently tugging Misha into his lap as he did so, and stared. “You know something, don’t you?” he asked quietly. “Something about this man who seems to have been my father.”

“Yes.” John looked over at Michal. “Mrs. Jones, by any chance did The Scholar have a watch. It would look like a fob watch, probably silver or silver-gilt, with elaborate engravings.”

“He gave a pocket watch to my husband, Ifan, as a gift one year.” She smiled. “I gave it to Jack to give to his nice young man, not knowing that man was my great-grandson. Why?”

“Jack, can I see it?”

“Not at the moment,” Jack replied. He nodded to the people mostly in his lap. “I’m not getting up to fetch it. Not when these two need me.”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“I wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t important,” John replied. He was almost bouncing in place, excitement echoed off him, and Jack shook his head in response. “Please, Jack.”

“It’s in the bag on the buffet. Little gray box, says Johnson’s on it.”

John all but leapt in the direction of the bag in question, rummaged through it to find the box, and pulling it out with a triumphant cry. He opened it, dumped the contents into his hand, and looked at the pocket watch from all angles before nearly dropping it with a strangled sound that was part sob, part scream.

The sound galvanized Ianto into movement. He handed Misha to Jack, climbed to his feet and crossed the room to join the Doctor. He gently took the watch from the other man’s limp hand to set it aside on the buffet. Then he wrapped John up in a tight hug, knowing somehow the man was grieving an ages old loss, and waited for the other man to speak. The tableau held for quite some time, no sound breaking the tense silence while John mourned. Finally, he looked up, gazing from Ianto to Misha to Jack and back, his gaze lingering longest on Ianto before he looked back at Jack again, his voice a harsh whisper when he finally spoke, “You naming Misha my granddaughter was more accurate than you’d ever have guessed, Jack.”

“Wha...?”

“No, Jack,” Ianto spoke right over Jack’s attempted question. “If we’re going to have any more stunning revelations about my life, I want to hear them in comfort. Would you take our guests through to the sitting room? I’ll bring the tea along in a minute.”

Jack knew what Ianto was doing. He needed a few minutes alone to compose himself again. Jack really didn’t want to leave his husband alone, but he also knew he needed to be a good host. Before he could say anything though, Michal spoke instead.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Jack, would you be a dear, run over and lock up my house? This will likely take a while and I don’t want it left open,” she asked quietly. “I’m certain Misha can show us the way to the sitting room.”

Misha nodded eagerly causing everyone in the room to laugh. The laughter also served to break the developing tension. Jack set his daughter on her feet, rose and kissed Michal’s cheek. “Of course, I’ll be back in a few minutes. Don’t start the explanations without me.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jack came back through the house, locking up as he went, and entered the sitting room. He set Michal's keys on the end table next to her before scanning the room to find out where everyone else had settled. Misha was on the floor, happily coloring in front of the now lit fireplace, and John had taken up residence in Jack's desk chair. Ianto, however, looked lost and alone where he curled up on one end of their sofa. Adding the confused mix of emotions bleeding off him that Jack could sense via their bond and Jack knew instantly what he needed to do. Discarding boots and coat, he settled on the sofa and held a hand out to Ianto. It said a lot about how Ianto was feeling when he crawled over to Jack and curled up against his chest.

Jack cast a glance across the room to the Doctor. The Time Lord sat slumped over with his hands clasped between his knees, turning the fob watch over and over in his hands. Jack waited patiently for the

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

older man to look up from the watch, but before he could say anything, the Doctor quietly cleared his throat and began to speak.

“Like I said, Jack,” John said softly. It was obvious to everyone he was trying not to cry. “Yesterday, when you said Misha was my granddaughter, you were more correct then you knew.” A sigh escaped him as he held up the watch. “This belonged to another Time Lord. He called himself the Scholar as he was always seeking out something new to learn. It wasn’t really his name; we all chose our names after we graduated the Academy.”

“So, what was his name?” Ianto murmured the question without lifting his head from Jack’s chest.

“So long and complex even his own father couldn’t properly pronounce it.” John snorted a laugh. “I blame that on his mother. Her name was just as bad, but typical for Gallifreyan names. I think everything but the kitchen sink was included in some of them.” John half shrugged, reached behind himself and set the watch on the desk. “Why do you think I always go by John Smith when I have to use a proper name?”

“I always thought you were just unimaginative,” Ianto replied.

“Be civil, Ianto. Don’t forget,” Michal interjected before Ianto could continue. He glanced over at her without really moving from where he lay on Jack’s chest. “Your name is Welsh for John and almost as common as John Smith.”

“*Ie, hennain*,” Ianto replied, blushing. He lifted his head to stare in John’s direction. “He was your son, wasn’t he?”

There was a long silence, long enough to start to edge into uncomfortable, when John finally nodded in response to Ianto’s question. “Yes, he was,” John looked down at his hands again. After another lengthy silence, he looked up and directly at Ianto. “I knew the High Council tried him for breaching one of the greater laws, but never knew which one until now. He escaped briefly, but came back when

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

the War began.” Here the Doctor paused again, his eyes closing, and pain echoed through Ianto’s mind causing the younger man to whimper and clutch at Jack. As quickly as the pain came, it disappeared, cut off completely as John focused on Jack. “My war, Jack. You know which.”

Jack shuddered, his hands running down Ianto’s back to sooth his husband, and nodded. “I know. You don’t...”

“Yes, I do.” John bit the words out before Jack could finish. “Especially when my actions, or lack of, left a doorway open for the Daleks to threaten my grandson.” He cast a pleased smile in Ianto’s direction. “Though I’m quite pleased to know he not only fought them twice but won.”

“Three times. Twice before and once here.” Ianto shifted a bit so he could watch the room. He was keeping a sharp eye on his great-grandmother just in case they needed to retcon some of this conversation from her memory. He wouldn’t do that unless she reacted badly to the revelations being made though. “I survived Canary Wharf twice.”

John blinked several times at that revelation. His grandson was indeed resourceful if he could survive that horror twice and not lose his sanity. “I’m sorry,” he murmured, sensing a deep pain in Ianto directly related to Canary Wharf. “The Time War... it was...” he paused, thinking, and then shifted his focus. “Close your eyes, Ianto.” He waited until the young man had before he continued, “Now, imagine...” John reached out to Ianto along the reawakened empathic bond which connected all Time Lords, sending him images to go with the words he spoke. “They used to call it the Shining World of the Seven Systems. The second sun would rise in the south, and the mountains would shine. The leaves on the trees were silver, and when they caught the light every morning, it looked like a forest on fire.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

When the autumn came, the breeze would blow through the branches like a song ...”

Ianto shivered, the faintest hint of a smile drifting onto his face, and Jack, sharing the echo of the images through his own bond to Ianto couldn't help but murmur, “It was beautiful.”

“It was...” John whispered, and then continued the explanation. “And on the Continent of Wild Endeavour, in the Mountains of Solace and Solitude, there stood the Citadel of the Time Lords. The oldest and most mighty race in the universe...looking down on the galaxies below...sworn never to interfere...only to watch... and then there was a war.” The images changed, darkened, and the shadows of the Daleks could be seen ghosting across the shimmering land. “A Time War. The Last Great Time War. My people fought the Daleks, for the sake of all creation. And they lost. They lost. Everyone lost. They're all gone now. My family, my friends, even that sky.”

John shook himself out of the memory, staring over at Ianto and Jack, before looking down at Misha, still coloring innocently on the floor. “The Time Lords and the Daleks destroyed in a single moment of fiery conflagration. Two great races wiped from history. For years I thought I was the only survivor. Then Jack, Martha and I met Harold Saxon. Saxon, who...”

“Oh, don't even go into that,” Jack interrupted.

“I know about Saxon.” Ianto looked up at Jack, stretching a bit to press a quick kiss to Jack's lips. “What he did to you, our friends and the world, but I managed to survive him as well with the Mainframe's help.”

John raised an eyebrow of his own at that revelation and made a mental note to talk further with Ianto about how long he'd been so close to the Tardis. “Saxon and I, until now, were the only Time Lords remaining. Saxon suicided, refused to regenerate.” John looked down again for a long moment. If there was a second great regret in his life

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

after the loss of Donna, it was how he'd abandoned Jack to try to convince the Master to regenerate just so he wouldn't be alone. "Now there's you and Misha, Ianto. Not only Time Lords, but my grandchildren."

"So," Michal spoke from the depths of the armchair she claimed. "What you're saying is that my great-grandchildren are half-alien from the same race as that bloody brilliant but thoroughly insane prime minister."

"Um, yes," John replied. "I have to say you're taking this awfully well."

"I knew there was something off with Emrys from the moment Rhiannon introduced him to me and asked if he could live in my home. Besides, I live in Cardiff, home of Torchwood," Michal smirked at them all. "So finding out Ianto and Misha are half-alien, not so much a surprise. Just tell me they aren't directly related to that insane one."

"Not directly, no," John replied. "Saxon, long before he claimed his name of Master and even longer before destroyed the Earth, was a friend of mine. Likely the closest friend I ever had as a child, but the initiation at the Academy," here he paused to look directly at Ianto. "That was the test you and Misha took today. On Gallifrey, the children were taken from their homes at the age of eight. You stand before the Untempered Schism, a gap in the fabric of reality through which could be seen the whole vortex, all the raw power of time and space. Some would be inspired, some would run away, and some, some would go mad." John looked away, shaking his head, and sighing. "I survived the Academy only to run later, but the Master. It drove him insane. His insanity devouring his mind more and more with each regeneration." He glanced over at Jack. "I never should have tried to save him, Jack. He was too far gone. What he did to you that year was glaring evidence of that."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“No!” A black crayon sailed across the room to bounce off John’s forehead. Misha stood on the hearthstone, hands once again on her hips, and glared at everyone before turning an even harder glare on John. “You don’t talk about Koschei like that!” She stomped over, lowered her voice so it would carry no further than the eldest Time Lord, and hissed, “You just never tried to understand him... or love him... so don’t talk about him like you know him!”

“Misha!”

“No!” She kicked John in the shin and ran out of the room. All of them could hear her pounding up the stairs, pelting down the hall, and the slam of her bedroom door.

Ianto sighed, sat up and shook his head. “I’ll go talk to her,” he began only to be interrupted by Michal.

“No, let me,” Michal said, rising slowly. “Just tell me where her room is. You look exhausted, Ianto. Just rest here. I’ll get her settled down.” She gave him a hopefully look. “If you’ll let me that is.”

Ianto looked from Michal to Jack. Silently, he asked his husband, “*Do you trust her, m’gwr?*” The smile and barely visible nod he received in response reassured him and he looked back at his great-grandmother, nodding to her. “Misha’s room is the one at the end of the hall at the back of the house.” He rose slowly to his feet, crossed over to her and tentatively hugged the old woman. “You’ll come to the party?”

“Of course,” she murmured to him. “You finish your talk with your grandfather, but don’t think I didn’t catch your reaction when I mentioned Torchwood. We will talk about that soon, young man.”

“*Ie, hennain,*” Ianto replied, releasing her and resuming his spot on the sofa. He watched her leave the room, listening with half an ear as Jack and John talked in one of the many alien languages the two men knew. Part of him wanted to interrupt, ask what they were talking about, but the rest of him was a confused mess of realizations, emotions

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

and exhaustion. All he could think as he drifted off to sleep with the rumble of Jack's voice in his ear was, *how does my daughter know Saxon?*

CHAPTER EIGHT

Absently, Jack hummed along with the Sinatra Christmas song echoing through the parlor. He shifted pieces of greenery on the mantel arranging the holly boughs amongst the evergreens, occasionally leaning back to see if the arrangement looked right, before twitching a piece into a different spot. Pausing, he looked down at Ianto who was crawling around the floor trying to settle the tree skirt into place. “How’s it going down there?”

“It’s not.” Ianto settled on his knees and glared up at Jack. “Every time I think I have it perfect, I find another wrinkle.”

“It’s Edwardian velvet piecework, *cariad*,” Jack replied, climbing down from the stepladder in order to back across the room and consider the mantel from a distance. “It’s going to wrinkle. The fact that it’s in as good a shape as it is...”

“Considering how you stored it, it’s a miracle.”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Hey!” Jack pointed a finger at Ianto, but smiled anyway. He recognized the teasing tone in the younger man’s voice. He considered Ianto for a long silent moment before asking, “So, how are you getting along with Michal?”

“I’m not.” Ianto shook his head, leaning forward again to twitch a bit of the tree skirt. “Misha adores her as you well know, but...” he sighed, shaking his head again. “I’m getting along better with John than I am her.”

“I would have thought you’d get along better with her,” Jack mused. “After all you do have a few memories of her as opposed to having just met John.”

“There’s no baggage with John, *m’gwr*,” Ianto murmured, sitting up again to reach for one of large boxes strewn about the room. He lifted the lid off the box, drawing in a startled breath, and lifted one of the ornaments out, cradling the delicate glass in his hands. “There’s a ton of it with Michal, not the least of which the fact that everything I ever thought true about my childhood is a lie.” He handed the ornament up to Jack to hang on the tree and reached for another one.

“You’re not even trying, Ianto.” Jack started hanging the ornaments, each one teasing at his memories, bringing images of Christmases past to the front of his mind. “She just wants to get to know you. And she adores Misha.”

“It’s just hard, Jack.” Ianto paused in what he was doing to rest his hands on his knees. “The few memories I have of Michal; well, I always called her Mam-gu and she made me cocoa and told me stories.” He brushed a hand over his eyes. “But that wasn’t real. The memories are tainted by the knowledge of why my father pushed me so hard, why he called me the things he did when he was drunk, and, especially by the fact that two women who should have defended me from him never did, just let him do what he wanted, especially Rhiannon.” He looked up at Jack and hissed, “She was my mother,

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Jack, and even if she couldn't acknowledge that, she left me with him when she married Johnny. She knew what he was like and she left me behind!"

Ianto clenched his hands. All he wanted to do was throw something. Just to hear it shatter into millions of tiny shards like his heart and his memories were so shattered. He had no idea what was real and what was a lie. He shoved the box in front of him away so he didn't give into the temptation of grabbing one of the antique hand-blown ornaments and flinging it across the room.

"She left me, Jack!" He tilted his head back and stared up at the other man. "Not once in the eight years between my father... grandfather's... whatever the hell he was... death and her own, did she tell me she was my mother. As much as she treated me like her child, the rebellious oldest who never listened, she never once told me she was my mother. Why did she lie to me all my life?"

Jack dropped to his knees, pulling Ianto into his arms, and rocked him. He couldn't say anything; he had no idea why Rhiannon wouldn't tell Ianto. All he could do now was comfort his husband while he once again mourned her.

"She lied to me, Jack," Ianto muttered between sobs. "Even when she lay dying in my arms, she lied to me."

"I'm sorry, *cariad*," Jack whispered. "I don't know why she lied to you. If I could go back and change it, I would. You know I would..."

"I know." Ianto's breath hitched in his chest as he struggled to control himself. "It hurts, Jack. It hurts so damned bad." He wrapped his arms around Jack and buried his face in the other man's neck. "It's like she died all over again. I know I'm being unfair to Michal, but I can't... I can't treat her like she's family when all I can hear is her telling me that the sister I'd adored all my life is really my mother."

"Tad!"

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Misha came running in, literally barreling into them, and pressed herself against Ianto's side. The Doctor had warned him that his emotions would bleed over onto Misha, affecting her just as much as they did him. Apparently his claiming her as his daughter gave them another psychic connection on top of the low level Time Lord link all three of them now shared. Misha would not only know he was upset, but likely what caused the upset and if she could help him recover from it. The Doctor had taken great pleasure in describing how his granddaughter, Susan, and his daughter, Jenny, had both brought things to his attention right when he needed them too because of such links. He surreptitiously rubbed at his face, scrubbing away the tears as best he could before he twisted about to look at her. "Did you have fun at your *hennain*'s house?"

"Uh huh... but Tad, don't be upset about Mama," Misha stopped, her head tilting to one side in a manner so like Jack's, Ianto couldn't stop a small smile from forming on his lips. "When the nag... nah... naj... Oh, those snake things came; Mama said you'd save me." Misha screwed her face up, clearly trying very hard to remember the exact words Rhiannon had said. Ianto wanted to stop her, but Jack's sudden squeezing of his hand stopped him from speaking. "Mama said 'Find Ianto... he'll save you, *cariad*...' then she coughed really hard and dropped me outside, but I still heard the rest. She said '*balch o m'maban*'... then told me to hide until I saw you."

"Oh God," Ianto breathed, reaching out to gather Misha to him. He held her, pressing his cheek against her hair, and started crying again. From the careful way Misha had recited the Welsh, he knew it was exactly what she remembered as best as she could remember it. And the words, even years after the fact and second hand from the sister who'd become his daughter, meant the world to him.

A soft sound from the doorway brought Ianto's head up from where it rested on Misha's hair. Standing there, every inch the dignified elder,

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

but clearly uncertain of her welcome, was Michal Jones. He stared at her, at the tracks of her tears, and all he could do was whisper brokenly, "I'm sorry." He shifted Misha over to Jack, slowly rose to his feet and held out his hands to her, "I'm so sorry, *mam-gu*. I blamed you."

"It's fine, *m'gwr*," she whispered, crossing the space between them to hug him. Her hands stroked down his back and she kissed his temple. "You needed to blame someone. I was there."

Both of them stared at each other, so at a loss for words, and Ianto was ready to cry again when a crash broke them apart. In the silence after the crash, Misha's voice meekly said, "oops".

"Oh good," Jack grinned happily even as he lifted Misha out of the shattered glass. "I've wanted that monstrosity to have an accident for decades!" He twirled Misha about before setting her in the armchair. "Alexandra gave me that. For an Empress, she had no taste. *My Queen* always sends me a case of Balmoral whiskey. Now she has taste."

"Your Queen?" Ianto shook his head, waved his hand toward the sofa, silently offering Michal a seat. He smirked. "I don't think so. *I* was offered one of the latest corgi pups."

"Were you?" Jack raised a brow, tugged over the small trash can from by his desk and began picking up the larger pieces of glass. "Well, I gave her Rigellian diamond... oh, two years ago."

"Jack!" Ianto stared at his husband in shock. "You gave Her Majesty something that fell through the Rift?"

"Yep. She seemed to like it."

The unrepentant grin on Jack's face had Ianto slapping his forehead in despair. "No wonder she keeps giving me disappointed looks when it comes to gifts." He screwed up a scrap of paper and threw it at Jack. "You get to find her one this year."

"Sure... I think, unless you moved it, there's an uncut Centarian Ruby in the secure archives."

"You have a..."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Ianto was certain their impromptu game of one-upmanship would have continued for hours if it wasn't for Misha piping up from her chair in that longsuffering tone that women everywhere seemed to have been born with and no man could ever learn to say, "Daddies..."

CHAPTER NINE

Ianto knelt to light the fireplace, listening to Misha chattering a mile a minute to Michal and Jack in the kitchen, and smiled. It had been an interesting week for them. He and Michal tentatively danced through tears and laughter to find a balance between family and friendship. He liked to think they'd found that space, a bit deeper than friendship but not yet family. They were on the road to family though, if he could just get over his reservations about her. Rising, he used the long match from the fireplace to light the candles on the mantel. Soon the heady scent of cinnamon spiced vanilla blended with the scents of rich juniper and burning wood.

Shaking out the match, Ianto tossed it into the fireplace. He braced his hands on the edges of the mantel and breathed deeply of the now spiced air. He bowed his head and stared into the flickering flames in the grate. He used the firelight to calm himself down again. As much as he adored the idea of having family, blood family, around again,

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

there was this tiny voice in the back of his head constantly screaming at him to 'take Misha and run'. Ianto kept forcing it down; however, it would never completely go away. He swallowed, closed his eyes, and forced that nagging voice down with the other horrors he buried in the depths of his mind.

"Is everything alright, Ianto?" The Doctor's voice drifted on the edges of his conscious mind. It was just there enough for him to hear without causing one of Jack's possessive-jealous fits. He straightened away from the fireplace, smirking as Misha ran down the length of the hall, her screamed "I'll get it!" quickly echoed by Jack's "Don't run in the house!"

"Ewytir Rhys! Uncle Andy!" Misha's high pitched squeals announced their visitors to the entire house and possibly the neighborhood around them. Yet even her delight in seeing her 'cousins' could not compare to her greeting of the Doctor. She raced for their newly-discovered grandfather, screaming, "Tad-cu! You came. Daddy wasn't sure you would!"

Ianto stepped out into the hall in time to be smothered in hugs from Rhys's children and watch John catch Misha as she launched herself at him. Compared to everything he'd heard about the Doctor from Jack, and from reading the archives, the man currently swinging his daughter up into his arms after twirling her about was so different as to be a different regeneration entirely. He waved the children into the parlor-sitting room and gave both Rhys and Andy quick hugs of greeting, nodding absently to Andy's request to speak to him privately, and smiled a welcome to John.

"Someone's excited," John said, setting Misha back on her feet and handing her the bag he was carrying. "How are you holding up, Ianto?"

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

"It's getting better slowly," he sighed, stepping forward to hug John. "I feel like I'm mourning Rhiannon all over again, but I'm getting there."

"And Jack?"

Ianto couldn't restrain the eye roll. His hand automatically dropped to rub the mark on his hip causing him to wince before he dropped his hand. "Possessive. Extremely possessive," he murmured, looking back down the hall to where Jack was now leaning on the wall watching them with an intent stare. "And I don't know why."

"I do." John waved a hand at Jack, making a point to step away from Ianto, and smiled. "He's claimed you, but you haven't claimed him." He shook his head forestalling Ianto's half-formed protest. "You claimed him as a human, Ianto. Not as a Time Lord. We connect to our spouses very differently and very deeply. He knows it's missing, even if he doesn't know exactly what it is that's missing, and reacting to it."

"And just how am I supposed to..." his voice trailed off, totally at a loss as to what to ask. He got a slightly embarrassed smile in return.

"Read your Christmas present," John replied, holding a book out to him. "She may not be much more than just the console room now, but the Tardis can still make things appear when asked. I had her print that up for you."

"Thank you," he replied. He smiled over John's shoulder. "Tosh!" Ianto stepped around John to hug his best friend. Just beyond her, her husband snorted before stalking into the house headed for the parlor. Owen and Kate followed closely after, rounding out the guest list.

"Miss Sato, it's so good to see you again. You look lovely," John enthused.

"Thank you," Tosh murmured, looking between John and Ianto, and shook her head a bit. "Ianto, you should know that Tommy's applied for a divorce and listed you as a co-respondent. He claims we're

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

having an affair. I received the papers today.” Her voice shook with threatening tears, but before Ianto could move to console her, John was pulling her close to him.

“Shh,” John said softly. “He doesn’t deserve you, this Tommy.”

Ianto growled, left the consoling to the Doctor as he seemed amazingly good at it, and stalked into the parlor. All he wanted to do was retrieve his gun from the study and hunt down the bastard making his Tosh cry. Their affair may be long over, but Tosh was still special to him. They’d been through so much while he waited for Jack and he was not going to allow the displaced soldier to hurt her. He was one step away from Tommy who was talking intently to Michal and Rhys when Andy placed a hand on his chest and pushed him back away from the small cluster of people.

“Don’t do it, Ianto,” Andy spoke in his ‘I am reasoning with the suspect’ voice. “I really don’t want have to arrest you in front of Misha.”

“Do you know what he’s done?” Ianto snarled the words to Andy. His whole body vibrated with his tension and anger as he struggled to stay where he was and not go after Tommy Brockless. He felt someone wrap their arms around him. It took him a solid minute to realize it was Jack holding him so tightly. “He made her cry. I told him at their wedding if he ever made her cry I’d find a way to make him regret it.”

“*Cariad*, has she asked you to do this?” Jack’s far too reasonable voice murmured in his ear. Ianto gave a quick headshake and got a kiss to his temple in response. “Then let it go for now. Tommy’s a damned good field agent. We need him for that. Since they can clearly work together, they must be having a mostly amicable divorce.”

“He said she’s having an affair with me,” Ianto hissed back. “As if I would, or even could, cheat on you without you finding out. That’s what has us both upset. Yes, we had an affair but it was over years ago.”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Jack's hold tightened on him. Ianto knew that it was now to keep Jack from going after Tommy. "Son of a bitch," Jack whispered. "I should have let you hit him. You have a hell of a right hook."

Both men stared, and Ianto's jaw dropped in shock, as Michal turned a vicious glare on Ianto before she hugged Tommy and kissed his cheek. The older woman patted Tommy on the opposite cheek, nodded and shooed him out the door toward the front entrance. As they passed Ianto and Jack, Michal's glare returned, now accompanied by softly hissed words. "You should be ashamed of yourself, Ianto Jones." Neither could believe Michal was treating the displaced soldier like he was her best friend returned from the dead. Ianto twisted in Jack's arms, pressing his face into his husband's neck and dragged in a sobbing breath. It felt like she was betraying him despite his every attempt to reach out to her in the aftermath of their previous week's revelations. He felt Andy move away from him, but couldn't be bothered to look up. He just clung to Jack.

"*Na ama.*" The hissed words in perfectly pronounced Japanese brought Ianto's head up from Jack's shoulder. He stared at his closest friend as she pulled out of John's hold to turn on his great-grandmother. "He has tried to accept you without prejudice, putting aside his own pain to insure you have a good relationship with Misha, and you comfort the man who casts aspersions on his name? On the name of his husband? How dare you?"

The entire room fell silent, even the children were now staring at the two women in the hall. Ianto could feel Jack's slight depression as his longed for family Christmas fell apart around him; however, Ianto could do nothing more than hug the other man tightly and hope things got better before the day was over.

"Thomas needed comfort as much as you did," Michal responded. "In fact, in my eyes he needed it more as he is the one betrayed by his wife. You may not have had a physical relationship with my great-

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

grandson, but it's obvious even to this old woman that your heart belongs more to Ianto then to your husband."

Tosh tensed. Ianto could see her reaching for a gun she wasn't carrying. Kate stepped up behind her to rest a hand on the other woman's shoulder. Kate murmured something nearly inaudible to Tosh, but it had Toshiko relaxing just a tiny bit. Owen, his 'give me a reason' glare firmly in place, moved to Kate's right to stare down Michal. The soft sound of movement behind him, accompanied by hissed orders, told Ianto that Andy was taking up another flanking position while leaving Rhys to guard the kids. Ianto barely smiled as he realized his team, his real family, was moving to defend him from his own great-grandmother's accusations. Jack also tensed, fully prepared for a fight, but to Ianto's complete shock it was John who took control of the situation.

"Enough." The voice was hard, flat and implacable, with none of the cheery warmth that normally characterized John. Now Ianto could believe the man had born the title Jack had once told him about: The Oncoming Storm. "I've known many a woman like you, Michal Jones. Bitter, angry, betrayed, and determined to make all others feel the same as you. I won't have you tear apart my grandson's chosen family. Not for a love affair doomed before it started nor as punishment for events long before his birth. It wasn't the daughter-in-law who went insane, but the son. A madness he seems to have inherited from his mother. I see it in you. I've only seen one other as crazed as you, but he at least didn't cloak his madness in the guise of love." John stepped around Tosh, reached out a hand and pressed it against Michal's temple. "Sleep," he ordered, deftly catching Michal as she went limp in response to the command.

"What...?" Ianto stared to ask, but broke off the question when John shook his head.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Not now, Ianto,” John spoke, his voice still cold and hard. He looked over at Owen. “You’ll want to sedate her before you move her to someplace secure. And your wife, it is wife isn’t it? She should check out Misha. It wasn’t just peppermint oil in the cocoa, Ianto, and I won’t have you or Misha harmed by someone damaged by the Rift, even if she is more functional than most of the souls Jack rescues.”

“Oh God,” Ianto whispered, collapsing against Jack and pulling them both to the floor. It was but a moment before Tosh was wrapped around him, with Misha squirming her way into the hug, however, it was the touch to his hair, a brush of fingers against his temple that had him looking up into surprisingly warm hazel eyes.

“When you look into it, which I know you will, you’ll discover she once worked at a Saint Teilo’s when it was the asylum and not the military hospital it was later.” John looked strangely sad as he watched Owen carry Michal out of the house toward his car. “The Rift was always very active on that spot. Not a proper fissure like what came later, but little tears in the fabric of time where one period bled over into another.”

“Those can drive anyone to madness,” Jack interrupted before John could continue his explanation. “Especially if you don’t realize and drift between times. We had a few cases in the aftermath of the 1918 side of the Brockless case.” Jack stroked Ianto’s hair but leant his head back to stare up at the ceiling. “I remember her now. Michal Siana Bowen. She was a nurse in the asylum, but drifted through the fissures before the 1918 closure. Harriet interviewed her, didn’t see any obvious problems, and got her a job as a nursing trainee at Saint Teilo’s while it was the military hospital. We kept tabs on her, but after about six months, roughly the same time Tommy was shipped back to the front, she disappeared from the hospital.” Jack shook his head and sighed. “I knew her smile was familiar, but I thought it was because she was related to you, *cariad*, not because I’d met her before.”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“But what about...” Ianto paused, cleared his throat, and began again. “If the Rift drove her into a state of functional insanity which my grandfather apparently inherited, what does that say about me?”

“If you were going to go mad, the initiation test would have done it,” John said with a grin. He was waving the sonic screwdriver over Ianto and peering at the results. “You’re perfectly normal for a half-human Time Lord.”

“A what?” Rhys demanded.

Ianto dropped his head onto Jack’s shoulder, whimpering. Of the many ways he expected his friends and family to find out he was half-alien, this was certainly not it. He repeatedly shook his head before finally lifting it to look at Rhys. “Time Lord, Rhys,” he said softly. “So all the jokes about my being an alien, well, apparently they weren’t jokes after all.”

“Certainly explains your pocket watch obsession,” Rhys retorted as he leant back against the pocket door separating the parlor from the sitting room. “Which made you very easy to shop for, just so you know.”

“Good to know,” Ianto replied. He cast a smile at Rhys, suddenly grateful that nothing seemed to faze the other man. He just accepted the explanation as given and moved on to the next thing. Of all of them, Rhys was the most normal. He risked a glance at Jack and tilted his head in question at the doorway, smiling mischievously. “Jack...”

“Hey, Rhys?” Jack drawled lazily.

“Yeah, mate,” came the absent response. The Welshman was clearly more focused on watching the kids play in the sitting room than on Jack. Which Ianto knew he would come to regret in a moment.

“You know you’re standing under the mistletoe with Andy. Gonna do something about that?”

Ianto began to smirk as he watched Rhys sputter and shake his head in denial only to have the smirk wiped away by Andy’s quiet, “What

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

the hell,” before the detective wrapped a hand around Rhys’s neck and pulled him in for a kiss that turned quite lengthy and quickly began to border on the pornographic. Ianto’s jaw dropped when the kiss broke only to be restarted by Rhys to the cheers of the various children.

“Well, didn’t see that coming,” Ianto murmured, only to be grabbed himself by Jack for a kiss of his own while Jack’s voice drifted across his mind, “*The Doctor told me more than once in that other world that Time Lord genes are dominant. And whatever happened to Michal because of the Rift wouldn’t be inherited by you, it wouldn’t damage the DNA. You’re fine, Ianto, and always will be, m’enaid, m’cariad.*”

CHAPTER TEN

Jack settled on one end of the parlor sofa. Immediately, Ianto curled up against him. From the minute vibrations of the coffee Ianto was clutching so tightly, Jack knew this was Ianto's way of seeking reassurance without saying a word. He was falling back into the role of Torchwood's Commander; Jack hated when Ianto felt forced to take on that role in their home. The children, minus Misha who was still being examined by Kate upstairs, were crawling about the floor playing with Jack's vintage train set up under the tree. Rhys and Andy were being almost sickeningly cute as they cuddled in the oversized armchair feeding Ginevra and occasionally trading kisses. Those two were adorable together. On the opposite end of the currently open space, the Doctor and Tosh were all but cuddling on the sitting room sofa and were deep in technobabble regarding the Doctor's sonic screwdriver.

The sound of Misha's giggles as she skipped into the room brought Jack out of his musings. Ianto straightened next to him, the shift from

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Ianto Harkness-Jones to Brigadier Ianto Jones complete. Ianto's voice held that edge he took whenever he was worried about the response from the team medics as he spoke, "How is she, Kate?"

"She'll be fine, Ianto."

"That isn't what I asked," he snapped in response. "How is she?"

"Ianto..." Jack began, gently taking the coffee mug from Ianto's hand to set it aside. "I think ..." he trailed off at the sound of the front door. He rose and stepped around Kate to stand in the hall door. He watched, all but glaring, as Owen came into the house. Right on his heels, carrying a large equipment case from the Hub, was Tommy. "What is he doing here?" Jack demanded, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Let him explain," Owen replied. Their chief medic slapped a folder into Jack's chest. The resulting dust cloud caused both of them to cough. "I thought we'd need that, stopped to get it and ran into him. He made a damned good case for coming back with me."

"Fine, but I reserve the right to retcon him back to infancy if he steps an inch out of line."

"Sir." Tommy nodded in response to Jack's demand. He then looked over at his commanding officer. The glare on Ianto's face was enough to chill him to the bone. "I apologize, sir. It's no excuse for my actions, but the solicitor said it would be better this way." He shook his head, stepped around both Owen and Jack to move further into the room. "I don't know how things like this work here," Tommy said as he dropped his gaze to the floor for a moment before looking up and directly at Ianto. "So I went along with the solicitor's suggestions."

"We'll discuss that later, Thomas." The whole room seemed to take on a chill in reaction to Ianto's words. "I would like to know why you returned when you should have known neither Jack nor I would be particularly welcoming of your presence after the spectacle earlier."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

All Jack could think at that moment was how like his grandfather Ianto sounded; the thought had him turning on his heel to look between the two men. Yes, their appearances were vastly different, but the eyes were the same, hard and chill with a banked rage the likes of which Jack saw only rarely from either man. Though at the moment, the Doctor's version of the expression was softened by a smug little smirk.

"Yes, sir," Tommy responded. It was clear from Ianto's tone that the idle seeming statement was actually an order for an explanation. He set the equipment case he was carrying down beside him, clasped his hands behind his back and endeavored to focus his thoughts. "Once I realized where I recognized Mrs. Jones from, I came to the conclusion that there was every possible chance she would not limit herself to her usual actions." He paused, lowering his gaze to the case at his feet for a moment, and then continued, "At the time I first met Michal Jones, I wasn't exactly in my right mind, but soldiers still talked regardless. Rumors about the 'interesting' deaths some of those she was asked to tend to never seemed to end. I felt it best to err on the side of caution, acquire one of the scanners, and return here with it. Just in case Mrs. Jones felt the need to leave more dangerous items in any gifts she'd purchased for you or Miss Harkness-Jones."

"Uncle Tommy," Misha's voice whipped through the room causing everyone to shift their focus from the drama between the Commander and Tommy to her. "My name's Misha. You know that, silly."

Tommy inclined his head just a bit. "I do believe your name is Misha Rhiannon Harkness-Jones," he replied with a hint of a grin. "Or was it some other little girl who got their Obasan Toshiko to hack the Adoption Register at the Home Office?"

"Shh..." Misha hissed. "You weren't supposed to say anything. It was going to be a surprise!"

"You hacked the Home Office, Tosh?" Ianto stared down the length of the room at her. "Couldn't you have given us all a raise or

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

something while you were in their system?" Everyone laughed, even the kids, which helped Ianto to relax again. He considered Tommy for a moment, shook his head and sighed. "You can relax, Tommy. I'm not going to kill you or anything."

"Your husband, and that is still a disturbing thing to say, might though."

"Ianto just gave you a reprieve," Jack snapped, his fingers flicking through the folder Owen had given him. "Don't abuse his trust. You'll have me to deal with then."

"Yes, sir," Tommy barely restrained his urge to salute. He reached down for the case and cast a hopeful look in the direction of Tosh. "Would you give me a hand with this, Tosh? I know the kids would love to get their hands on the presents soon." She didn't move from her spot by the stranger Tommy hadn't been introduced to you. If anything she leaned back into him, as if this man would protect her from him. He set the case down again and sat on it. Tommy sighed softly. "Really didn't want to get into this in public," he muttered. He looked up sharply when a hand came down on his shoulder.

"Well, mate, sometimes we don't have a choice in that," Rhys said quietly. "Best to have plenty of support if you want to survive the battles ahead."

"So, I can count on you then?" Tommy asked Rhys before refocusing on Tosh. "Tosh, you know much of what I have to say because you were there for some of it. I've lived one hundred and fifteen years, but the bulk of those were in single days with ever changing people. You and the Captain were the only constants. Usually the people changed every year." He clasped his hands together, bowing his head to stare at them for a moment. "You were the closest thing I had to a girlfriend. You talked to me, Tosh. Didn't treat me like an experiment just because I was only alive for one day for a battery of tests. When Ianto brought me back two years ago, he said

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

you needed me.” He looked back over his shoulder at his commanding officer, but just as quickly turned around again. “Two years of this time isn’t enough to overrule twenty-four years of etiquette and training, Tosh. I tried to make you fit with what my mind said a woman’s proper place was, but all I did was destroy the friendship we had. And I miss that friendship.”

“I do love you, Tosh, but I don’t think I’m in love with you.” Tommy paused, swallowing hard, and absently twisted his wedding ring on his finger. “I don’t think you’re really in love with me either. We clung to each other because we needed someone we knew we could trust.” He looked up again to smile at Tosh. “I so wish we still had that.”

“You’ll always be a friend, Tommy,” Tosh began, breaking off almost immediately. Tommy watched her, saw how she was thinking hard before she resumed speaking, “And I do love you as a friend, but I don’t know if I can forgive you for pulling Ianto into our problems. You could have caused problems for him and Jack... and you know how long Ianto has been waiting for Jack.”

“I told you the solicitor said it would be best this way what with all those disappearances of yours and Ianto’s.” Tommy tried to keep the bitterness out of his voice as he spoke. It was those disappearances, and her refusal to tell him anything about them, which had been the final push for him to seek out a solicitor.

“What are you talking about?” Tosh demanded. Her eyes went to Ianto, silently asking him if it was time to talk, and caught his quick headshake in response. “Tommy, we...”

“The last time you two went off together. I followed you.” Tommy rose from his seat, glaring between Ianto and Tosh, before forcing the anger down again. “I saw you with him, Tosh, at that cottage in Pontypridd. It sure didn’t look like Torchwood business.”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Ianto,” Jack’s low growl cut over anything Tosh could have possibly said. She shivered in response to it and wrapped her arms around herself.

“Tommy,” Tosh whispered, “what have you done?”

“It was Torchwood business, Tommy,” Ianto snapped, rising to his feet. He stepped over to Jack and closed his eyes when Jack backed up a step out of reach. He took several deep calming breaths before opening his eyes again. “I didn’t tell you, *m’gwr...*”

“Don’t...”

“No, listen to me.” Ianto took another breath. He wanted a drink, but the secret they’d held onto for nearly seven months was out. “We found Grey. He’s here, a somewhat traumatized child, and we took him to one of the other survivors of Canary Wharf. Dr. Butler worked in the psychology division, dealing with alien trauma, and has been fostering him while we attempted to figure out if you two should meet.”

“My brother’s here?”

The disbelief in Jack’s tone pulled at Ianto’s heart. He hated hiding Grey from Jack, knowing how important family was to his husband, but he didn’t want either Grey or Jack harmed if their meeting would exacerbate Grey’s trauma. “Yes. Grey’s here. He arrived a few months before you. Those aliens who attacked Boeshane, the ones you told me about that one time, they’d captured him, but apparently he managed to escape after only a few months.” Ianto took a cautious step forward and, when Jack didn’t move away, wrapped his arms around the other man. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you, but I remember what he was like and I have no way of knowing what he remembers from there. Or if those memories would affect him when he does finally meet you again.”

“Who’s Grey?”

Ianto and Jack turned surprised looks on John having completely forgotten their audience. Ianto raised an eyebrow in question; however,

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

it was Jack who answered the question. “My younger brother. There was an attack on the colony where we were born. My father told me to watch him, run and hide, but in the panic of the escape I lost him. Years later, my ex-partner found him, brought him to Cardiff, but the time he’d been in the alien’s possession had destroyed his mind.”

“He was a psychopath,” Owen interjected. “Let’s be honest about it, Jack.”

“Yes, he was. I can admit that now,” Jack responded. “The two of them destroyed half the city and buried me alive under Cardiff for nearly two thousand years.”

“Have the TARDIS test him then,” John said after a moment of considering silence. He ignored the chorus of protest in favor of watching Jack and Ianto. “That’s what the test does, Jack: you can stand it, run away or go mad. If he’s mad already, we’ll know immediately. If not,” John shrugged and grinned at everyone. “Well, then she’ll have another prospect for her little project.”

“I couldn’t...” Jack started to protest, but paused as the realization of what the Doctor was proposing dawned on him. “You think my brother could be a Time Lord.”

“He’s your brother, isn’t he?” John rocked back and forth on his feet. “And you, in your own way, are the most Time Lord of us all, Face of Boe.”

“Come’n, Daddy, he’ll be fine,” Misha piped in from where she was now laying on the floor, coloring with Ceri. “Let Tardis help Uncle Grey. She says she can.”

“Fine, but I...” A loud beeping from the hallway interrupted Jack’s demand. Ianto cursed in Welsh and ran for the alarm pad by the front door while Jack snapped a vicious and creative phrase in Raxacoricofallapatorian before taking off in the direction of the kitchen. “Dinner!”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Tosh laughed at the way the two men ran off. They looked so funny when they ran anyplace. Turning to Tommy, she said softly, "I think we should finish our talk in private. I'm certain Ianto will let us borrow his study."

"Oh God, yes," Tommy replied, relieved. "You don't know what it does to a man of my generation to air the dirty linen in public."

"Well, now that the domestic is out of the way," Andy interjected, coming over to drape his arms over Tosh and Tommy's shoulders. "Let's have a party, yeah?"

"And someone order pizza," Jack said, rejoining them. "Dinner..."

"Didn't survive the domestic," Ianto finished, leaning against Jack's side in the doorway.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

“So, got a minute?” Andy asked.

“I suppose I can spare one.” Ianto looked up from where he was reading the book on Time Lord Marriage rituals to smile at Andy. He considered the man, watched him watch Rhys playing on the floor with Jack, John and the kids, and shook his head at their antics. He returned his gaze to Andy. “So how long have you loved Rhys?”

“Almost three years,” Andy replied, sprawling on the sofa. “Who’d have thought he’d be interested? Or be down there with those two acting like a kid.”

“He’s finally allowed to be himself, Andy.” Ianto set the book on the end table and shifted about to face the other man. “Gwen’s not holding the kids over him, making him watch his every word or move.”

“Hmm,” Andy continued to watch the quintet on the floor, two kids and three men acting like kids. “What do I do, Ianto?” he asked softly.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“How do I know he’s not just using me to make himself feel better before moving on to another woman?”

“You don’t.” Ianto smirked at the startled look Andy threw him. “When I began my relationship with Jack, I was for all intents and purposes newly widowed. My girlfriend and I had been together for the better part of two years, reached the stage of seriously discussing marriage and children, and she was murdered by the Cybermen at Canary Wharf. He had no idea if I was just using him for comfort or seriously cared for him.” He looked over at Jack; his husband was currently playing the role of rampaging alien blowfish, pushing a car about the floor with exaggerated vroom noises while being chased by Torchwood, actually Bran with a miniature SUV. He shook his head, barely containing the laugh as the ‘blowfish’ whipped around the leg of the coffee table with its car on two wheels only to be cut off by ‘Torchwood’ who went straight ahead. “It was months before I was willing to admit that I had real feelings for him. He didn’t admit to loving me until we met again here.” Ianto sighed softly. “It’s a risk, Andy. You have to ask yourself if the time with him is worth the pain of possibly losing him later.”

“For you it was then,” Andy half-asked half-stated as he leaned toward Ianto. “I love him, Ianto, and I love those kids. The thought of losing them tears me up, but...”

“You’re afraid to say anything either.” Ianto nodded to him. “I know that feeling well. I propositioned Jack using a stopwatch over the dead body of a colleague.” He smirked at the stunned look on Andy’s face. “Even if it was public, you at least got mistletoe and a chance to laugh it off if he didn’t appreciate the overture.” As Andy’s mouth worked several times, Ianto started to snicker, the sound getting louder and louder until he all but fell off the sofa in hysterics.

“You broke my Ianto,” Jack mock wailed from the floor.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Ianto managed to pull himself together and crawl over to Jack. He smiled, cupped his husband's cheek and kissed him. "Poor baby," he teased. Lowering his voice to a whisper, he shifted to murmur into Jack's ear, "Don't pout, I'll show you just how unbroken I am when all the guests are gone."

Jack moved back with a grin and a clap of his hands. "Right, gifts!" he called cheerfully. "Everyone gather round."

"You propositioned him, didn't you?" Tosh murmured as she stepped around him to take a seat on the sofa by Andy. She giggled at Ianto's blush. "Yup, you did."

"Stop teasing the teaboy, Tosh," Owen grouched, finding a spot on the floor and leaning back against Kate's legs. "Give me presents!"

Jack shook his head and handed a box over Owen to Kate. "For you, favorite medic," Jack purred in his flirting voice. He ducked out of the way of Owen's reactive smack and offered his other medic a box. "And for you, don't drink it all at one time."

Jack continued to hand gifts around, occasionally passing them via Ianto or John, until everyone had gifts and was merrily ripping paper off. Ianto looked pointedly from his empty hands to Jack and back before pouting at his husband. Jack laughed softly, leaning over to kiss the pout away, and murmur, "You get your present later, *cariad*." He pulled away with a small smile. "Someone stole your party gift and I didn't get the chance to wrap the replacement." Jack handed Ianto the first edition of Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales* stacked on top of another wrapped gift.

Ianto tore into his gift with all the enthusiasm of the children and no regard for Jack's painstaking wrapping job. From the remnants of the paper, he pulled another first edition Thomas book. This one was *18 Poems*. He carefully set the books down under the tree, reached over and dragged Jack to him for a deep kiss. "Thank you," he murmured

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

when he pulled away to allow Jack to breathe. “I’ve wanted these for a long time.”

Before Jack could respond, John’s voice drawled through the gathering. It was clear from the volume that he was delivering a hint to everyone even if his words were addressed to Misha. “So, now then, I think I need to go see what’s under my Christmas tree. Would you like to come help me look, *cath fach*?”

Misha’s squeal told of her delight at the idea. Within seconds of the squeal, she was throwing herself at Jack, arms around his neck, begging, “Please, Daddy, please? Can I stay with Tad-cu, please?”

“A sleepover, Doc?” Jack asked with a smug grin. “Thought you didn’t do domestic.”

“Things change, Jack,” John replied. “You should know that.”

Jack glanced around the room, at the people gathered there watching him, and nodded. “Yeah, I do.” He smiled up at the older man with a broad, if mischievous smile. “Speaking of change, do I call you Dad or Grandpa?”

“Rassilion...” John sighed before shaking his head and pointing a stern finger in Jack’s direction. He hadn’t even thought of *that* complication in their families. “You are still a wicked man, Jack, but whichever you desire.”

Jack grinned and bounced to his feet. “Well, if you’re going to stay with your grandfather, we need to do a little packing. Don’t we, sweetie?” The answer he received wasn’t, but a delighted squeal as Misha raced out of the room and up the stairs. Jack shook his head, started to follow, and then paused in the doorway. “I know you lot... so, if I’m not back down here when you all leave, I’ll see you all on Tuesday.”

Tosh scrambled up, tripped over Andy’s stretched out legs, and fell into Jack. She blinked up at him, shook her head, and giggled. “Sorry,

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Jack. I was just coming over to say goodbye. Must have had too much eggnog.”

“So I see,” Jack murmured, hugging her tight. He glanced at the others, debated, and nodded. “Andy, could I ask you and Rhys to see Tosh home...”

“I’ll do it, Captain,” Tommy interrupted. “I haven’t moved out yet, so I can take her home and get her settled. She and I still need to finish our talk anyway.”

Jack considered long and hard, looked at Ianto who gave him a quick nod, and then nodded to Tommy. “Alright, you take her,” he said, pressing a kiss to Tosh’s temple. He waited for Tommy to pick up Tosh, gathered up their things for them, and followed Tommy through the house to the front door and further out to their car. He helped him get Tosh settled in, handed over their gifts, and nodded. “We’ll talk about your role on the team on Tuesday. It may be a good idea for you to take a few weeks off, get a new place and definitely a new lawyer.”

“I’ll look into it, Jack. Good night... and Happy Christmas.”

Jack smirked at Tommy, looked back at the house, and then back at Tommy. “Oh, it will be. I’m planning on it being a *very* happy Christmas.”

“Sir!” Tommy shook his head with a laugh. “I may never get used to freely discussing sex. See you on Tuesday.”

“Tommy, one more thing, wait to talk to Toshiko until she’s awake and sober. It’ll be better that way.” Jack smiled at Tommy’s nod, nodded in answer and headed inside just in time to accept farewell hugs from Bran and Ceri before getting a ‘manly’ hug from Andy with a murmured, “Thanks for the help with the mistletoe.” Jack just nodded, hugged Rhys, and watched them leave before turning to Kate and Owen. He kissed Kate’s cheek, murmuring, “enjoy the weekend off”,

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

and shook Owen's hand, again ducking Owen's smack. "I could always take back the whiskey."

"Not on your life, Jack," Owen retorted. "But thanks, it's a wonderful gift."

"I thought you'd appreciate it." Jack waved at them, stepped inside, and sighed as he closed the door. A sound on the stairs in front of him had him looking up at Ianto and Misha as they came down from the first floor. "All packed, sweetie?" he asked, totally unsurprised to see the now appropriately dressed Jack-bear tucked under her arm while Ianto carried a bulging backpack in his hand.

"Yep!" she chirruped at him. Misha skipped over to him, held her arms up and he grinned, crouching down to hug her tightly. "Thank you for the bracelet, Daddy," she said, holding up her arm to show him the object in question now on her wrist.

"You're welcome, Misha," he murmured, pressing his cheek to her hair. He didn't want to let her go, even if she was staying with one of the most trustworthy men he knew and only a few minutes drive away on Cyncoed Road. He knew he couldn't keep her sheltered forever, but it was so hard to let her go on this traditional childhood rite of passage. It was Ianto, crouching down to hug her himself, who whispered a reassurance and temptation in his ear at one time.

"She'll be fine, Jack. John won't let anything happen to her," Ianto murmured. "Besides think of all the things we can do in an empty house."

Jack lifted his head from Misha's hair, nodded, and slowly released her to rise to his feet. "Be good for your grandfather?" When Misha had solemnly nodded up at him, Jack looked to the Doctor. "You'll..."

"I will." John answered the half asked question just as solemnly as Misha had nodded. He came over to Jack crouched down and picked Misha up to rest on his hip. "Oh, you're going to be way too big for

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

this soon, *cath fach*. Say goodnight and we'll go see if you have any gifts under my tree."

"Night Daddy. Night Tad." Misha waved to them both before yawning hugely.

"And I think that's my cue," John murmured, accepting the bag Ianto handed him. "Call me tomorrow when you want me to bring her back. Or just come by, whichever you prefer."

"We'll come by," Ianto replied, stepping closer to hug both John and Misha. "We'll bring breakfast. Say about ten?"

John nodded and headed out to his car. Neither Jack nor Ianto could move away from the door until the Doctor had loaded Misha into his car, securing her in what was clearly a recently acquired car seat, and drove off. It was then, as he slowly closed the front door that Ianto took in a deep breath and spoke again.

"Jack, about Grey," he began somewhat tentatively. "I'm sorry I hid him from you." Ianto reached for the alarm panel, keying in the new security codes, and bit his lip while he waited for Jack's response. When silence was his only answer, he turned to face Jack. "Forgive me, please?" he whispered.

Jack looked up from where he was sitting on the stairs. "I understand why you did it but it does bother me a little," he said finally, holding out a hand to Ianto.

"Talk to me, Jack." Ianto took the other man's hand and tugged Jack to his feet. "Don't let this come between us."

"It's not you," Jack murmured, pressing his cheek to Ianto's for a moment. He then kissed the side of Ianto's neck delighting in Ianto's responsive shiver. "It's me. Sometimes I feel like you want to wrap me up in cotton wool to protect me."

"When it comes to Grey, I suppose I do," Ianto murmured back. He took a step back, just so he could look into Jack's eyes, and let the other man see exactly how serious he was. "I know how much he hurt you,

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

m'gwr, and how much you love him. I didn't want you hurt again if he wasn't just what he appears to be - a very scared, traumatized child."

"I know." Jack leant forward, kissing Ianto lightly, and smiled. "Which is why I can forgive you so easily this time, but please..."

"Stop trying to protect you," Ianto concluded for him.

"Exactly." Jack considered Ianto and chuckled to himself. It said a lot about them both that they were able to talk it through without throwing a fit or threatening each other. "So, what were you reading so intently earlier?"

"My Christmas present." Ianto smirked at him. "Want to discover what I learned?" he asked, raising an eyebrow and smirking. "No stopwatches required this time..." he trailed off suggestively.

CHAPTER TWELVE

“Oh, hell yeah,” Jack murmured. He pressed Ianto backwards until the younger man was pinned between him and the hallway wall. Then, he kissed him. He took his time brushing his lips over Ianto’s in teasing caresses until Ianto moaned softly, hands coming up to tangle in Jack’s hair. Only then did Jack deepen the kiss, sliding a leg between Ianto’s and pressing up into his mate’s developing erection. Once he was certain he’d melted Ianto’s brain cells into incoherency, Jack pulled away to smirk at him. “But, Ianto,” he murmured, slipping a hand between them to cup Ianto’s cock and give it a brief squeeze. “You’ll have to catch me first.”

It took a solid minute for Ianto’s brain to catch up to the fact that – one, Jack had stopped kissing him and two, Jack had just run off for the dining room after challenging Ianto. “Jaaacck,” he called after his husband. “That was so not fair.”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“But fun!” Jack yelled back at him from the depths of the hallway. There was laughter and joy in Jack’s voice, enough that Ianto wasn’t going to call a halt to the impromptu game. They both needed to relax before they went to bed. This was the perfect way.

“I’m coming to find you, Jack,” Ianto purred, stalking down the hall toward the dining room. “You better be ready.”

Laughter echoed down the hall. Ianto shook his head, toed off his shoes and socks, and tucked them off to one side so the sound of him walking wouldn’t give him away. His shoes always echoed on the hardwood floors. The fact that he couldn’t hear Jack moving told him that the other man had at least removed his boots. The dining room was dark and shadowed, but a darker shadow detached itself from the far corner by the fireplace. Jack dodged Ianto’s grab for him, ducked down and slid into the kitchen. Ianto followed, running after him, only to pull up with an ‘oof’ as he bounced off Jack’s braces, loosely tied between two cabinet doors and blocking the arched entrance into the kitchen. “Oh, now that’s cheating.” Ianto called after Jack as the man grinned at him and went out the kitchen door.

“I always cheat,” Jack yelled back. “Isn’t that what you said when we got caught playing naked hide-n-seek?”

“Bringing *her* up is just asking for a spanking when I catch you, Jack,” Ianto snapped, finally giving up on freeing the braces. He ducked under them and headed through the kitchen.

“Maybe I want one,” Jack purred from behind Ianto, dropping a kiss to Ianto’s nape before dancing out of reach and running for the sitting room’s hallway door.

“You only had to ask!” Ianto shook his head, struggling not to laugh, and started stalking down the hall after Jack. “I mean it, Jack. Just ask... when have I *ever* protested giving you something you wanted? Especially in bed?”

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Weelllll,” Jack drawled. “There was that one time with the Vampyroteuthis...”

“It had tentacles, *m’gwr*,” Ianto snapped. “I was not having sex with what looked like a glorified octopus!”

“Spoilsport,” Jack replied. “Where’s your imagination?”

Oh, now that was a challenge if Ianto ever heard one. He leant against the sitting room doorframe, gathered his thoughts and concentrated on sending one very graphic image to Jack. The gasp that bled into a groan told him he’d succeeded in sending Jack the image of the other man tied spread-eagle to their bed while Ianto massaged every part of Jack but his cock.

“Oh, that’s so not fair, Ianto,” Jack panted. “That’s really cheating.”

“Is it?” Ianto raised an eyebrow in Jack’s general direction. He pushed off the door and started stalking through the sitting room. “I was just answering your question as to where my imagination was. You didn’t like the answer?”

“Oh, I liked it.” Jack tugged off his shirt and threw it at Ianto. “Too much...” he said, whirling about and running out the parlor’s hallway door.

Laughing, Ianto caught the shirt. “Well, I could always do that if you wanted,” he called, tossing the shirt onto the sofa as he passed it.

“Still have to catch me!”

It was with no surprise at all that Ianto found Jack’s vest on the newel post, the white cotton hanging from the top of the pineapple carving as if to tease him with where Jack had run off to. Upstairs or down the hall was the question. Ianto closed his eyes, concentrating for a moment, and then smirked. “Believe me, Jack, when I’m ready for you to be caught, you will be.” Slowly, he climbed the stairs, shrugging out of his sweater as he went, and continued to send various graphic images of things he wanted to do to his husband. He didn’t

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

even need to find Jack's trousers hanging over the railing of the spilt landing to know where the other man was, the soft flickering light shining out of their bedroom gave his location away far more readily.

"Candles, *m'gwr*?" Ianto asked, leaning against the door to watch Jack where the older man knelt in the center of their bed. Jack was nude, his cock already leaking, and watching Ianto from beneath his lashes. "I wasn't expecting that touch of romance after the merry chase you led me on."

"What, did you think I was going to grab you and ravish you as soon as you stepped into the room?" Jack retorted.

"Well..." Ianto drawled mischievously. He slid his hands down his bare chest to rest on the waist of his jeans, fingers toying with the button. "I was hoping."

Jack laughed. The sound held none of the pain of their earlier troubles and all of Jack's joy in life. Ianto found himself smiling deeper in response to it. "Maybe next time, *carriad*," Jack said. "After all you did promise to show me that you weren't broken by falling off the sofa." He shifted on the bed, leaning back on his hands and exposing his whole body to Ianto. "And you did say you were going to show me what you learned from that book."

"Oh, you look so fucking hot like that," Ianto murmured. He considered the room for a moment. It was plenty warm enough for what he was thinking of doing now that they were both relaxed and happy, but the stage wasn't quite set yet. Ianto pondered for a moment, crossed the room and trailed a finger down Jack's chest stopping just before he reached his lover's cock. "Trust me, Jack?"

"Always," Jack whispered in response.

"Then lay back for me," Ianto whispered back. He took a step back from the bed, flicked open the button on his jeans and stripped them off. Tossing the denim away, he rested a knee on the bed, leant over and pulled open a drawer in his nightstand. A quick rummage

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

produced the tiny bottle of oil he was looking for, which he concealed in his hand as he crawled up the bed and over Jack. Pressing a gentle kiss to Jack's lips, Ianto murmured, "Comfy?"

Jack squirmed beneath him for a moment. Then he nodded. "Yeah." There was a brief pause before Jack murmured, "Well, mostly," with a pointed look at his erection.

Ianto laughed. He ran his free hand down Jack's side and over his hip to just barely graze the tips of his fingers over Jack's cock. "We'll get to that soon, *m'gwr*," he purred. Ianto sat back on his heels, just surveying Jack for a long silent moment, and then he smiled. "Oh, yes, very hot indeed," Ianto said. "Now, you need to relax for me."

And with that, Ianto flicked open the bottle of oil he'd grabbed. Pouring a bit into one hand, he closed it and dropped it by Jack's hip. Rubbing his hands together to warm the liquid, he smoothed his palms over Jack's chest. He hummed as he stroked his lover, his husband, and delighted in the feel of Jack's smooth skin beneath his hands.

"Ianto?"

"Shh," Ianto replied. "Trust me." He waited until Jack relaxed into the bedding again before continuing the seemingly innocent massage. Ianto leant over Jack, brushed their lips together and slowly deepened the kiss. As he went to lift his head away, Jack followed him, holding onto the kiss until they were both gasping for breath. Ianto smoothed his hands down, following the lines of Jack's body, and rested his hands in the hollows of Jack's hips. "I want you to lie there, relax and trust me, okay?"

"Okay." Jack watched Ianto reach for the discarded oil bottle. "I want you, Ianto."

"I know you do." Ianto could feel the intensity of Jack's gaze as he poured a bit of the oil on Jack's cock before curling his hand around and stroking slowly upwards. "I can feel it, Jack. Can you feel me?" He switched hands on Jack's cock, stroking slowly upwards with one

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

hand then down with the opposite hand. Ianto continued the downward motion, trailing oil coated fingers down to Jack's balls, cupping them in his hand and rolling them in his palm. "Can you feel how hard I am for you? How much I want to bury my cock in you, feel you all around me?" he purred, continuing his slow fisting of Jack's cock.

"Yes... yes..." Jack moaned in an almost dreamy tone. "Want you to fuck me."

"Soon, Jack," Ianto replied. He released Jack's balls to trail his fingers down to his anus. Pressing lightly with the tip of one finger, he massaged the muscled ring until it relaxed and let him slip the tip of his finger inside bringing a startled gasp from Jack's lips. "Very, very soon."

Ianto kept up the slow teasing motions while he worked to prepare Jack for him. He bit his lip to keep from throwing away all sense and just taking Jack. He wasn't going to ruin this moment for a bit of passion no matter how much he wanted to just bury his cock balls deep in his husband, especially as he could feel the continual rise of Jack's desire as it surged through the links already established between them.

One finger became two then three. Ianto crooked them slightly, finding Jack's prostate with practiced ease, and massaged it. The wordless cry that ripped from Jack's throat at the intimate caress caused a reactive moan to slip from Ianto. Still he managed to retain enough sense to tighten his hold on the base of Jack's cock to prevent him from climaxing as Ianto took his arousal ever higher before easing off only to increase it again.

"Ianto!" Jack's back arched, his eyes closing for a moment before opening again to stare at Ianto. He spat a vicious curse. His body shook with frustrated arousal. "Fuck me, Ianto," he managed to gasp out between his moans.

Ianto knew he'd pushed Jack as far as he dared without losing control of the situation. He licked his lips and nodded. "I plan to,

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

m'gwr," he murmured. Taking his hands from Jack's body, he found the oil again, slicked his own cock and moved over Jack. "Look at me, Jack," he demanded softly, waiting for Jack's lust-blown eyes to meet his before he eased his cock into Jack.

"*M'gwr, 'ti yw f'calon i. 'Ti yw f'enaid i. 'Ti yw f'bywyd i,*" Ianto whispered, punctuating each statement with a kiss and a gentle thrust of his hips until he was completely sheathed in Jack's body. He reached out, carefully, with his mind brushing against Jack's formidable shields, and begged in a broken whisper, "Let me in, Jack. Be mine forever."

Jack stared up at Ianto for a long moment. His eyes drifted closed veiling his thoughts. Ianto could almost feel him considering what was being asked of him before those eyes, as dark with lust as to be nearly black in the dim light, opened again. Then Ianto felt it, the shift of Jack's shields as he dropped them layer by layer until there was nothing between their minds just as there was nothing between their bodies. He felt the weight of years, all the loneliness, and Jack's hunger to be accepted just as he was with no reservations. Ianto gasped softly, but didn't back away from the connection, just threw himself into it, holding nothing back from Jack, and reached out to catch Jack's hands in his, entwining their fingers. He bowed his head, kissing Jack deeply, and then rested his forehead on Jack's. He wanted to watch Jack, see his emotions in his eyes, and feel it all as their mutual passion ebbed and surged through his mind and body.

Ianto used the leverage of their clasped hands and began to move, slow gentle thrusts which quickly turned hard and demanding when Jack wrapped his legs around Ianto's hips. The only sounds in the room were their panting breaths, moans and Jack's occasional surprised cry when Ianto shifted the angle to strike his prostate. And all the while the physical connection had nothing on the mental one building higher and higher in their minds. Everything crested together when

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Jack's long held back orgasm crashed over him instantly dragging Ianto with him as the pleasure roared through Ianto's mind with all the intensity of a Cape Verde Hurricane.

It was the feel of Jack's fingers shaking as they stroked his hair that roused Ianto. He lifted his head from Jack's shoulder, blinking down at Jack, and smiled briefly. "You okay?" he asked in a scratchy voice.

"I was going to ask you that," Jack replied. Wonder filled Jack's voice, but the smile on his face was the soft gentle one Ianto knew was his alone. "You were out far longer than me. I was starting to worry."

Ianto hummed. "Sorry," he whispered and kissed Jack. "I wasn't expecting that to happen when I married you again." Then he blinked, muttered beneath his breath for a moment, and shook his head with a laugh. "You know, there's definitely no getting out of it now, *m'gwr*. We've managed to get married three times without a single legal ceremony."

Jack shook his head with a laugh which trailed off rather rapidly. Then he looked at Ianto, his hand coming to rest on Ianto's cheek as he asked, "Is it so bad being so tied to me? I remember laughing as a child when we read about the old traditions. Three times..."

"Is forever." Ianto closed his eyes for a moment. "And if I tell you something three times, it is the truth. It's the same tradition as the one about true names comes from and why I was so happy to learn yours."

"Going to tell me yours?" Jack asked carefully. "I mean, I've heard two different names for you. I'm not sure..."

"It's Ianto," he said, shifting off Jack to lie beside him. Ianto propped himself up on one elbow and reached out to rest his hand over Jack's heart. "When we first found out I was adopted, I called a friend in the Home Office, had her pull my original birth certificate from before the adoption. Rhiannon named me Ianto Emrys Jones. She didn't list my father at all. So that is my true name."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Jack grinned, twisting over to kiss Ianto, and murmured, “Ianto Emrys Jones... *cariad o Raksha*...”

“Always, my Jack,” Ianto replied. “*Byth a beuyndd.*”

EPILOGUE

He stopped at the top of the stairs. For a moment the temptation was there to go down the hall where the other slept, but no, he had a mission to accomplish. One he'd apparently already succeeded at given that he'd just left her in the end result of this little bit of gift-giving. Instead, he crossed the hall to gently ease the half open bedroom door wider. He slipped through the gap into the room beyond moving slowly in order to not wake the little girl curled up in the middle of the massive bed.

She was a pretty child. Long hair just losing the blonde tones of babyhood to edge into brown, it would be years before she had the sun-streaked nearly black hair he was more familiar with. Still he could see hints of the woman she'd become in the little girl asleep in front of him.

But why her? Why the Freak's daughter? Of all the billions upon billions of souls in the universe, why was he attached to this little girl?

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Attached enough to not only give her a key to his Tardis, a trust he'd never bestowed on anyone before, but to tell her his real name.

She whimpered in her sleep. A tiny noise, yet so full of fear, and clutched her teddy bear closer to her chest. Her little noises upset him, stirred a piece of his soul he'd long thought gone forever, and he reached out to brush his fingers over her temple. "Hush, *f'achubiaeth*," he whispered. "I'm here. No one will harm you." He found himself reaching out, momentarily sharing her nightmare, and was shocked when in the dream she ran to him, hugging him and murmuring his name, his real name. He eased onto the edge of her bed and hummed softly, an ancient Gallifreyan lullaby old before his birth. Once he was certain she was deeply asleep again, he leant down and pressed his lips to her temple, murmuring to her in the same language.

A flash of gold on the nightstand caught his eye. Sitting up, he recognized it. The bracelet, her bracelet, the bracelet that told him she was his. Reaching out, he slowly lifted the chain from the table, fingering the charms, a Christmas tree and an hourglass. He knew without asking who had given her the latter. Pulling out the key, he fixed it to the bracelet, pressing his fingers to the metal and silently asking it to shift its shape to be something more fitting for a child's charm bracelet. "*When she is ready, show her the way to your lock, but hide until then,*" he told the key's sentient metal. Only when he felt its agreement did he release the key, letting it dangle from his fingers, and gathered the bracelet up into his hand to dribble it back onto the nightstand.

Slowly rising to his feet, he tugged the duvet up over Misha, his Misha, and pressed another kiss to her temple. "Sleep, little one," he whispered. "No one will harm you while I live." Again he moved slowly and carefully over the hardwood floors to the door, pausing with his hand on it as he went to leave, and looked back at her. She'd moved, one hand coming from beneath the covers to rest on the spot

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

he'd been sitting in, her fingers curling as if to seek his presence. "You're the night of my salvation, the light of my soul, and the flame in my heart. I'll see you soon, Misha Rhiannon," he said, pulling his screwdriver from his pocket and pressing the button which would take him back to his Tardis. He had a lot of work to do before he could return for her.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

BETH MCCOMBS

Previously published under a pseudonym as an erotic romance author, Beth McCombs has returned to her roots as a fan fiction writer in an attempt to recover from a severe bout of depression-induced writer's block. She still hopes to be published again someday, but isn't pushing herself in any direction instead she writes for the pure joy of writing.

Beth lives in South Alabama with her husband and young daughter. In her spare time, she studies history, anthropology, and mythology.

You can email Beth at beth@memccombs.com or visit her website at www.memccombs.com.