



Let's Hear it for the Boy by LilFerret

Fandom: Torchwood

Summary: It didn't seem fair, making a sixteen year old kid leave school to get a job, but that's exactly what had happened.

Rated: NC17/Adult

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Characters/Ship: Jack Harkness/Ianto Jones

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Author Notes: AU. No, seriously...like...what are aliens?

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Chapter 1

Watching the bottle spin around Jack couldn't help the grin that spread from ear to ear. While he knew playing the game broke every rule his parents had laid out, he couldn't care less. He was curious, and it was his tenth birthday, after all. Why shouldn't he get the games he really wanted?

"Better not land on me," Owen remarked, sitting directly across from Jack. "You try to kiss me and I swear I'll pop you one!"

"Oh Owen," Gwen said, giggling. "You said you wanted to play."

"Not with Jack!"

"Ooh, the bottle's stopping!" Tosh exclaimed, loudly.

"Shh! My parents don't know!" Jack whispered.

The bottle slowed to a stop, coming to rest with the opening facing a suddenly flustered Ianto Jones. Jack's grin widened.

“Aw, no fair,” mumbled Gwen, folding her arms and pouting. “Owen’s right. It should only be girls.”

“My game, my rules,” Jack replied. He looked back over at Ianto, who was doing his best to fade into the background. “You’re it, Ianto.”

“I-think maybe Gwen and Owen have a point,” the boy said, his face coloring a healthy pink shade.

“Nuh uh,” Jack said, shaking his head. He crawled on hands and knees, around the bottle, past his other friends, and stopped in front of Ianto. “You have to let me kiss you. Those are the rules.”

Ianto frowned, looking at Adam to his side. “Remember, Ianto, you wanted to play,” the boy told him.

“Yeah,” Suzie piped up, giggling next to Toshiko. “No fair backing out now.”

Jack winked at Ianto, watching the boy squirm as he got closer. When he was just centimeters away he closed his eyes, pressing forward until his lips met the Welshman’s. It lasted only a couple of seconds but when he pulled away he had to catch his breath at the other boy’s nervous smile.

Ianto Jones was the cutest boy Jack had ever met, and he’d finally kissed him.

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“Jack, you can’t be serious,” Gwen argued, hands on her hips. “Why can’t you just ask me to the dance?”

“Because, Gwen,” Jack replied, stretching. “I want to ask Ianto.”

“And how do you think the headmaster’s going to react to that?” she asked, scowling. “You trying to get kicked out of school?”

Jack rolled his eyes. “There are no rules about non-students getting invited to our dances. I know, I checked.”

“That’s hardly the point,” she replied. “There is etiquette to consider.”

“And you think because Ianto Jones isn’t a girl the school is going to complain?”

“I know that many people will.”

“Well that’s their problem, Gwen,” he said, shrugging. “I’m not responsible for other people’s hang ups.”

“Jack...”

“Let it go, Gwen.”

“And what about his clothes?” she questioned, grabbing his arm as he tried to walk away.

“What about them?”

“Well,” she started, eyes widening at his pointed glare. “He’s not exactly...trendy, is he?”

Jack shook his head. “So you’re a snob now, is that it?”

“No, I’m just saying...”

“Look, Gwen,” Jack interrupted, placing his hands on her shoulders. “Ianto is my friend. He’s your friend too, remember? Since we were little kids. And if I want to invite him to our dance, that’s my decision. You can’t talk me out of it. Now come on,” he added, releasing her arms and nodding his head toward the group at the other end of the gymnasium. “We have practice.”

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Ianto blushed, ducking his head. “That’s...nice of you, Jack, but I don’t think I can.”

“Why’s that?” asked Jack, snatching a chip off Ianto’s plate.

He sighed to himself. Ianto’s work shirt was a deep red, and it complimented his blush perfectly. A fact he’d have pointed out if the conversation hadn’t just turned sour.

They were sat in their favorite chip shop, occupying their favorite booth, and Jack had finally asked Ianto to the dance. He knew his friend would blush – he’d been a blusher as long as Jack had known him, and that was most of his life – but he didn’t think he’d turn him down.

“I have to take care of my mam in the evenings, remember?”

Jack’s shoulders slumped. He’d forgotten. Ever since Ianto’s parents had divorced and his sister had run off with her boyfriend, Ianto had been the sole caretaker of his ill mother. It didn’t seem fair, making a sixteen year old kid leave school to get a job, but that’s exactly what had happened. Ianto worked during the day, so they could pay their bills, and at night he watched after his mother. She was worse at night.

“Yes, sorry,” Jack acknowledged, frowning. “I’m sorry, Ianto. It slipped my mind.”

“It’s alright, Jack,” Ianto said, smiling.

They sat in silence for a few moments. Jack looked around the shop. He hardly knew anyone there anymore. Ianto and Tosh were the only two left, and they never even got to work together anymore. Tosh worked part time, a couple nights a week, and Ianto, of course, had switched to days.

“Do you miss it?” he asked his friend, turning his attention back to the Welshman.

“School, you mean?” Ianto asked, and Jack nodded. “I do. I was looking forward to University.” He was silent a moment and Jack waited. “I suppose that’s just a dream, now.”

“It doesn’t have to be,” Jack told him, covering his hand with his own. He rubbed his thumb over Ianto’s. “Just because you can’t manage Uni now, doesn’t mean you can’t in the future.”

“Jack, my mam needs constant care. You know we can’t afford it full time. I can barely pay for what we have during the day.”

“I hate that it’s all on your shoulders, Ianto.”

“There’s no one else.”

“Rhiannon is older. She should be the one handling things for your mother.”

“I wouldn’t trust her to do it, Jack, even if she’d stuck around. With that Johnny in the picture, there’s no telling where our money would go.”

Jack nodded, squeezing Ianto’s hand. “Does she even keep in contact anymore?”

“No. I haven’t heard from her in months.”

Jack frowned again. “Even if she was running from the problems at home she should be calling her baby brother.”

“You’re awfully protective, Jack,” Ianto said, smiling again, softly. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, Ianto,” Jack replied, grinning back. “I just wish there was more I could do, but considering I don’t even have a job myself…”

“I don’t expect my friends to solve my problems.”

“I know, but… I’ve been thinking, Ianto.”

“That’s a bit dangerous, Jack.”

“Ha ha,” Jack drawled, shaking his head, but still grinning. “What if I helped you out sometimes? You know, with your mother.”

“Jack, no...”

“Come on, Ianto,” Jack argued, releasing his friend’s hand and stealing another chip. They’d gone cold but he ignored that fact as he shoved it into his mouth. “It could be fun.”

Ianto’s brow furrowed, watching Jack pointedly until he swallowed. “Fun?”

“Yeah, fun. You and me. I could help look after her and you could help me with my coursework. It’s getting close to exams.”

“So you want me...for my mind,” Ianto concluded, drawing out the last word in his strongest accent and pointing to his head. His eyes twinkled at Jack and he wore a slight smirk.

Jack tried not to squirm in the booth. Ianto’s Welsh vowels drove him insane. It didn’t matter that he’d known him since they were four, when Jack’s family had moved to Cardiff. Twelve years later and that voice with its accent made him want to do things he could only dream about. And dream he did.

“It’s not my fault your mind is sexy, Ianto Jones.”

His friend blushed to the roots of his hair. “Jack...”

“What? You started it.”

“You could come over tomorrow, if you like,” Ianto said, changing the course the conversation had taken. “I work until four, like today, but it’s the weekend, so we’ll have more time to...revise.”

Jack’s eyebrow rose. “So soon? Why Ianto, if I didn’t know better I’d think you had an agenda.”

“Me?” Ianto looked incredulous. “You suggested it.”

“Ah, yes, but you want to start tomorrow.”

Ianto blushed yet again. It really was endearing. “You don’t have to...”

“Don’t be silly, Ianto. I want to. I’ll meet you there around five. How’s that?”

Ianto smiled. "Perfect."

"Alright," Jack said, sighing as he got to his feet and threw down a few pounds for his share of their meal. "I better get going. Gwen wants to practice a few moves for the cheer competition next weekend."

Ianto's smile faded, shoulders drooping. "And I need to get home to Mam."

"I'll see you tomorrow afternoon, Ianto," Jack said, squeezing his shoulder. He started to walk away and then stopped, turning around. Ianto still sat with his shoulders slumped. "Hey Ianto?"

The Welshman turned to look at him, expectantly. "Yes, Jack?"

"Sure do like that shirt."

Chapter 2

Jack waited outside the small house Ianto and his mother occupied. To be fair it was more of a multi-family home, split by one shared wall. But it was a home, and Jack had always found it cozy and inviting.

The door opened and a smiling Ianto Jones greeted him. “Hi Jack.”

“Hey Ianto.”

“I haven’t really had a chance to clean up properly,” the boy told him, wincing. “Be careful when you come through.”

Jack nodded, stepping into the house. The usually immaculate hallway was stacked high along the walls with newspapers. He puzzled over that but didn’t say a word. When they got to the lounge Ianto led him through a maze of boxes. They hadn’t been there the last time Jack had visited, and he wondered just when the clutter had started. If it was anything like the shows he’d seen on the telly it probably started when Rhiannon left with Johnny. It was traumatic, and fit the bill perfectly.

“Sorry,” Ianto said, waving his arm around. “I don’t...It’s Mam, she...”

“It’s okay, Ianto,” Jack interrupted, holding up his hand. “You don’t have to explain anything to me.”

Ianto sighed, and his expression was sad. He looked tired. “I’ve just barely gotten home. Had a chance to shower and change clothes, but nothing else.” He indicated the couch, where enough space had been cleared for two people. “Go on and have a seat. I’ll get us something to drink.”

Jack did just that, setting his book bag by his feet. He looked around the room and his heart broke for Ianto. He already had to work full time – at a chip shop where he wasn’t making much money – and watch after his mother because of her manic depression, paranoid delusions, and schizophrenic tendencies, but now it appeared she’d added hoarding to her list of ailments. It was too much for one teenager to handle. Ianto would definitely be in need of his help.

Ianto returned with two glasses of ice water and Jack took his with a thanks. His friend took a seat beside him, the space so small that their thighs were touching. Jack swallowed his water more quickly than he intended, choking on it. He set the glass on the table.

“Jack, are you alright?” Ianto asked, placing his glass beside Jack’s.

He coughed, trying to dislodge the water from his windpipe. "Yes." He coughed again. "I'll be...fine...thanks." His coughing fit went on for a bit longer, and Ianto patted his back.

"Can you breathe?" His friend looked extremely worried.

"I'm good. Thank you, Ianto." He smiled, trying to reassure the other boy. He coughed once more and then wiped his eyes. "Wrong tube."

"I assumed," Ianto said, smiling. "So...what work did you bring with you?"

Jack followed Ianto's gaze to the bag on the floor. "Oh, just some Chemistry and Trigonometry."

"Just?"

"They're my hardest courses," Jack admitted, shrugging. "With exams coming up soon I can't afford not to understand the material, but...I don't have a lot of time with cheer practice."

"That'll teach you to become a cheerleader, Jack."

"Yeah, yeah. Look, I get to hang out with the prettiest girls in school and besides, I'm good at it!"

"Like Gwen?" Ianto asked.

Jack raised an eyebrow. "You mean do I consider her one of the prettiest girls in school? Sure. She's gorgeous." Ianto nodded, looking down at his hands. Jack frowned, not sure what to make of that. "I'm not the rugby type, Ianto."

"I know. Pity, that." Ianto smiled again.

"So you think you can help me?"

"To like rugby? I suppose."

Jack started to correct him but caught Ianto's joke a second later. "Very funny."

"Yes, I can help you, Jack."

"Great!" he exclaimed, reaching for his bag. "There's this one problem in chapter..."

He was interrupted by a cry from the back of the house. "IANTO! Ianto? Oh my heavens, Ianto!"

The boy jumped up off the couch, calling, "I'll be right there, Mam!" He glanced back at Jack. "I'll only be a minute."

"Go, Ianto. Don't worry about me."

Ianto hurried off, leaving Jack sitting on the couch. He pursed his lips, wondering if they'd get anything done that evening. No, that wasn't fair, he thought to himself. He'd suggested coming over. He knew what Ianto had to go through. He berated himself for being selfish.

When Ianto returned he looked worried, but he sat down beside Jack anyway and pointed to the bag. "Alright, let's work on revising."

"Ianto, are you okay?"

"Yes," he answered quickly, nearly before Jack had finished his question. "Yes, I'm fine."

It had been a good fifteen minutes and Jack had heard the muffled conversation, though he hadn't been able to make out the words. He wanted to ask what it was his mother needed, but felt he'd be invading Ianto's privacy. He'd tell him if he wanted to.

Grabbing his trigonometry book he opened it to the chapter he had marked. Ianto leaned closer, and Jack found he could feel the boy's warmth near his cheek. He had to close his eyes for a second to regain his composure.

An hour later and Jack thought he might be even more confused about his coursework than he'd been before. He rubbed his forehead, groaning.

"It's not that bad, Jack."

"I'm never going to understand this," he replied, closing the book. "Why do I even bother? I'm not cut out for University anyway."

"You still need to pass your courses, regardless. That is, if you don't want to repeat them."

"And be in school forever? Ugh."

"Then more revising, less moaning."

Jack rubbed his face, tilting his head to look at his friend. "You're a slave-driver, Ianto Jones."

"Maybe, but I'd give anything to be where you are now."

Jack bit his lip. "Yeah, sorry. I wasn't thinking."

Another cry came from Ianto's mother and they both frowned. Ianto sighed. "I'll be back."

"Do you need my help, Ianto?"

"No. No, I can handle it."

He headed to the back of the house again and Jack reopened his book, eyebrows furrowing as he tried to understand what Ianto had showed him.

A couple hours later found Jack and Ianto finishing up some chemistry revision. Jack felt he was much stronger with chemistry than with trig. Maths was never his best subject. Science was a little more doable.

"And right there you just use this formula," Ianto explained, pointing. "Once you have that completed the problem is done."

"Why do these problems need to involve several formulas?" Jack asked, half meaning it to be rhetorical.

"Why ask why?" Ianto answered, eyes twinkling.

"Don't start speaking in riddles, Ianto, or I'll completely lose my mind."

"Well, you wouldn't be the first person I know."

"Damn, Ianto, I didn't mean to be insensitive."

"You weren't," Ianto assured him, shaking his head. "I was just making an off-color joke. At Mam's expense, unfortunately."

"It's really difficult, isn't it?" he asked, closing his chemistry book and slipping it into his book bag.

"It is, yes. Some days are good, and she doesn't have an episode. But most days..." He trailed off, not finishing his sentence. "When Rhi left it was like she became ten times worse. And then the hoarding started."

"I can help you clean it up," Jack offered.

"Oh no. If you mean take anything out of here, that's out of the question."

"Ah. Because of her attachment, right?"

"Yup. I tried to get rid of the newspapers," he said, rolling his eyes. "She nearly tore my head off. She needs professional help with that, and, well, with my income there's no

way. We can barely afford her care during the hours I'm at work, and the woman's a glorified nanny. She can't help with Mam's conditions."

"But her medicine is paid for, right?"

"Yes, and her visits to the doctor. It's just a specialist I'd have to pay for, and there's no budget for that. My tad wasn't working, last thing I knew, so there's no money there. Not that he'd send it if he were."

Jack's mind was reeling. If Ianto had to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table by working, and his mother wasn't going to get better, he'd end up taking care of her for the rest of her life. Jack was well aware that Ianto's father was a deadbeat, sending them nothing to help even his son. The last he'd heard the man couldn't be located. For all they knew he could have ended up dead in the streets from drinking too much.

"If I were working I'd help," Jack said softly.

"I wouldn't take your money, Jack," Ianto argued. "You know that."

"But it would still be nice to know I could."

Ianto nudged Jack's shoulder with his own. "Thank you, Jack. For the sentiment."

"Of course, Ianto."

They sat in silence for a while, each lost in thought, until Jack's stomach growled. "Hey," he said suddenly, slapping his knees. "You hungry?"

"A bit, yes. I could try to find something here to make?"

"Nah, I was thinking Chinese."

"Um, Jack, I can't. No money. I only get takeaway when I'm working, as it's on discount."

"No, I'll pay for it, Ianto."

"Jack..."

"I won't take no for an answer."

"You don't work, and you shouldn't be spending your allowance on me."

Jack glared. "Seriously? Ianto, you're my best friend." Ianto still looked unconvinced. "Who else am I going to buy food for?"

“You’re girlfriend?”

“My girl...what?”

“Gwen Cooper, remember her?”

“Ianto, she is not my girlfriend. Just my friend.”

“Does she know that?”

“You think I’d ask you to the dance if I had a girlfriend?”

“Well...” Ianto huffed, shrugging. “I figured you were inviting me along.”

“I was inviting you with me, Ianto. Only me.”

“Like...a date?”

Jack chuckled, turning his hands palm up in surrender. “Yeah. Kinda. Sure. Why not?”

Ianto sputtered. “Jack, I’m not gay.”

“Neither am I, Ianto.”

“So then...why?”

“You remember when we were ten, and we played spin the bottle at my birthday party?”

Ianto blushed. “Yup.”

“Remember when I kissed you?”

“Jack...yes...yes, I remember.”

“And remember when Owen and Gwen complained because Gwen wanted the kiss and Owen was adamant he didn’t?”

“Is there an end to this stroll down memory lane?”

Jack growled. “I’m getting there. The reason everyone was there playing was because I really didn’t care if they were male or female. To me there’s no difference between guys and girls.” Ianto’s eyebrow shot up his forehead. “Okay, yes...there’s that difference. But I mean I’m not attracted to people based on what sex they are.”

“So you’re...bisexual.”

“I guess, yeah. If you want to put a label on it.” He shrugged again, folding his hands.
“I thought you knew that, Ianto.”

“I suppose I never really thought about it.”

For some reason that stung Jack a bit. “Well, it’s moot, really, since you don’t think you can go.”

“Yeah.”

“Anyway, Chinese?” he asked, hopefully.

Frowning, Ianto nodded. “Alright.”

“Great!” Jack pulled out his mobile, ringing his local favorite. They were cheap and they delivered. Which meant he didn’t have to leave Ianto.

He decided he didn’t want to delve too deeply into that thought. Ianto clearly wasn’t interested in him as more than a friend. Maybe he’d ask Gwen to the dance after all.

Chapter 3

Chinese food containers littered the table and Ianto groaned, holding his stomach and looking beseechingly at his friend. “Why did I eat so much, Jack?”

“Because it was good,” Jack explained, smiling. He patted his own stomach. “Really good.”

“I haven’t had Chinese in ages,” Ianto admitted. “I’d forgotten exactly how much I love it.”

“That’s one of my favorite restaurants.”

“Mam loved her mushroom chicken, Jack. Thank you again for buying.”

Jack grinned. “Thank you for helping me revise.” He pointed at his books. “Now that I understand the material a little better I might actually pass.”

“Good,” Ianto said, smiling back at him. He looked down at his watch. “Oh, Jack, it’s awful late. You won’t get in trouble, will you?”

Jack checked the time as well and shrugged. “Wow, I didn’t realize the time. But nah, no worries, Ianto! My parents won’t mind. Too bad I didn’t think ahead and bring spare clothes or we could have made it a sleepover.”

“We still could,” Ianto said softly, looking up at Jack. “If you like. I’m pretty sure my clothes would fit you, and we can wash yours in the mean time.”

“Really? I don’t want to inconvenience you,” Jack said, concerned.

“It’s no problem, Jack. Besides,” Ianto added, smiling, “I’d like it too.”

Jack beamed. He’d been having so much fun spending the afternoon with his best friend that time had completely slipped him by. It was only just after ten, but he’d normally not stay that late at a friend’s house if he was planning to be home by his curfew of eleven.

“I’ll just call my mother and let her know,” he told Ianto, taking his mobile out of his bag. He made the quick call, got the all clear, and put the mobile away. “That’s that.”

“We should probably find you something to wear.”

“Good idea.”

Ianto started to get up and then huffed a breath out, sitting back down. “I forgot, Jack. We can’t get to the bed in the spare room any longer. Mam’s things are everywhere.”

He looked crestfallen and Jack nudged his shoulder. "It's okay, Ianto. I'll sleep on the floor."

"The floor is covered too, Jack."

"I meant in your room."

"Oh."

"If you're not comfortable with that..."

"No, Jack, it's fine. I just can't imagine that will be very pleasant."

Jack shrugged, getting to his feet. "I've slept on the ground before while camping out. It's not that big of a deal."

Ianto nodded, getting up and heading back into the hallway. "Come on then. We'll get you pajamas and then throw your clothes into the wash."

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"I can't believe you've never been outside of Wales, Ianto," Jack told his friend. He was lying on floor beside his bed, propped up on his elbow. "Not even to England?"

"Never," Ianto confirmed, looking down at him. "Are you sure you're alright down there?"

"Sure," said Jack, curling up under the warm blanket he'd been given and laying his head on a soft pillow.

"You could sleep up here..."

Jack's eyebrows rose. "Why Ianto, I thought you didn't like me that way?"

"W-what? No, I...I just meant..."

"It's okay, Ianto," Jack laughed. "I'm just teasing you."

"I just don't like you sleeping on the floor," Ianto explained.

"Well, is there enough room?" Jack asked.

"Should be. It's a full size."

Jack rolled to his feet, picking up the blanket and pillow. He moved over to the bed, climbing up from the end since the bed was pressed against the wall. He placed his pillow beside Ianto's, lay down and covered himself with the blanket again. He had to admit, Ianto's bed was extremely comfortable.

"Better?" he asked his friend.

"Yup."

Jack yawned, covering his mouth. "I didn't realize I was so tired."

"It's close to midnight, Jack. Maybe we should try to get some sleep."

"Yeah, I think you're right," Jack agreed, watching as Ianto turned out the light on his bedside table. "Goodnight, Ianto."

"Goodnight, Jack."

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Jack awoke knowing two things without a doubt: One, there was an incredibly warm Welshman pressed up against his back, and Two, he had somehow, during the night, managed to find himself under the covers.

He couldn't remember climbing under the sheets. He must have done that automatically in reaction to being cold, since it was a bit chilly in the room. But even so, that didn't explain Ianto's legs intertwined with his, and his arm around Jack's middle.

Jack was frozen to the spot. If he moved, Ianto was bound to awaken and be embarrassed that he'd decided to cuddle his friend in the middle of the night. If he didn't move, Ianto would eventually wake up anyway and he'd still have the same reaction. Jack wasn't sure what would be worse. Of course, if he stayed still, he could pretend he was asleep and save Ianto from having to have that conversation.

Deciding lying still was his best course of action, Jack took the time to think about the man behind him. He had feelings for him. Always had, if were honest with himself. He'd known since they were little kids that Ianto was special, and that he held a place in his heart. He wished that Ianto felt the same way, but he knew sexuality wasn't something you chose. If Ianto didn't feel like that about guys, Jack would just have to get over him.

He was starting to think about the upcoming week, and about asking Gwen to the dance, but he really didn't want to. He wanted to go with Ianto.

Suddenly there was movement from behind him. He laid still, eyes closed.

“Jack?” Ianto asked softly, shuffling backward until he was on his own side of the bed. “Are you awake?”

Jack hesitated. He’d already decided to pretend to be asleep. But he found he just couldn’t lie to Ianto. “Yeah, Ianto. I’m awake.”

“Sorry,” his friend told him. “I guess I’m a bit of a cuddler.”

Jack chuckled, rolling onto his back and turning his head toward Ianto. The boy was blushing. “It’s okay, Ianto.”

“Are you hungry?” Ianto said, changing the subject. “I could make some breakfast.”

“I could eat,” Jack replied, smiling.

“Good.” Ianto slipped out of the bed, moving toward the door. “Toast and coffee okay?”

“Sounds perfect, Ianto.”

His friend nodded, heading out of the room.

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“So did you ask him?”

“Yeah, I did,” Jack said, placing a book in his locker. Gwen had cornered him the moment they were out of class.

“So? What was his answer?” she asked, following beside him as he headed to the chemistry lab.

Jack heaved his book bag higher on his shoulder. “He’s not sure he can go, Gwen.”

“Well that’s a shame, it is,” she said, pouting. “You know the new boy, Rhys Williams? He’s going to ask me to go with him.”

Jack smirked. “Did he say that?”

“Didn’t have to,” she replied. “His friend Lisa told me.”

“Sounds like gossip, Gwen Cooper.”

“Maybe, Jack, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t true.” They arrived at the lab and took their seats. “Now I just need to know whether to say yes, or...”

“Or?”

“Well, I thought, since you don’t have a date, and neither do I, maybe you could ask me and we could go together.”

“Gwen, I told you Ianto doesn’t think he can go. He didn’t say for certain.”

“So you’re just going to keep pining away, are you Jack?” Gwen shook her head, opening her book. “He’s not right for you, you know?”

“No, I don’t know,” Jack said, frowning. “He’s my friend, and yes, I happen to like him more than platonically, so in what way is he wrong for me?”

“He’s not like us, Jack.”

“What? I told you how I feel about other people’s opinions. Please don’t become one of those people.”

Just then their instructor entered the classroom, bringing all discussion to a halt. Jack was glad, not wanting to get into an argument with Gwen but seeing himself heading down that path.

He watched as the man wrote long equations on the board, but his mind was elsewhere. Deciding that he and Gwen were just going to end up fighting, he was rather glad Rhys planned to ask her to the dance. It would save him having to ask her. If Ianto couldn’t go then neither would Jack. Though he hadn’t given up on the boy yet. Waking up cuddled with him had felt too right.

Jack had an idea that just might work.

Chapter 4

The next couple of days dragged on for Jack. He was able to get over to see his friend at work that Wednesday, spending a good half hour watching Ianto serve customers, clean up the shop, and prepare goods for purchase behind the counter. Ianto took a ten minute break with him, during which they chatted, but it wasn't nearly enough for Jack.

With the cheer competition that coming Friday, however, Jack didn't have a chance to stop by Ianto's that afternoon or any others that week. Practice kept him extremely busy. If he wasn't fine tuning his moves for their cheers, he was ensuring the rest of the team was just as ready.

By the time Saturday rolled around Jack was a bundle of nerves. He'd competed before, but for some reason he felt more anxious than ever. Part of it, he knew, was that he simply did not want to fail his team during their performances. The rest, he was sure, was due to the fact that when he got his allowance again he'd have just enough money saved up for what he had planned for the following weekend.

When it came time for their first cheer Jack and Adam, the only two boys on the team, lifted the girls flawlessly. Their back flips were spotless, the girls' movements were perfection, and the crowd roared for them. Their second cheer went even better, causing Jack to grin like the Cheshire Cat.

While Torchwood Institute did not take the top prize that day, Jack still felt proud of his team. They'd really put in the effort. He congratulated the winners, then looked out into the crowd. He wished Ianto could be there to see he and their friends take second place. While Ianto had never been in cheer, and was, instead, a rugby player, Jack knew that his friend would be proud of them. Of him.

"You are coming 'round to mine after this, yeah Jack?" Gwen asked him, interrupting his train of thought.

He shook his head, offering a smile. "Nah, I think I'm gonna head over to Ianto's and see if he needs anything."

Gwen's brow furrowed. "Really? Jack, everyone is coming over. My parents have arranged a party, knowing we'd place top three." She leaned closer, sliding her arm around Jack's and whispering, "We can play spin the bottle, Jack."

Jack chuckled, squeezing her arm before extricating himself. "It sounds like an amazing time, Gwen."

"So you'll go, then, yeah?"

"Not this time. Sorry."

Gwen's eyes got even more round than normal. "Well why not? Why is Ianto more important than me?"

"Gwen, it's not a matter of importance," Jack soothed, cupping her face. "But he needs me right now. I need to be there for him."

"I need you too, Jack!"

Jack sighed, pleading with his eyes for her to understand. "Another time, okay? We're all going to be at the dance next Friday night, right? We can all hang out there."

"Who's we?" she asked, frowning.

"You, Rhys, me and Ianto. And the whole group. If I'm not mistaken Owen is going to ask out that pretty blonde girl. Katie, I think it is?"

"Yeah, Katie. But Jack..."

"I've got to go, Gwen," he told her gently, kissing her forehead. "I'll see you at school Monday!"

With that he hurried off, half afraid Gwen would take off after him. He adored the girl, he really did, but she'd become even more clingy since they'd moved on to sixth form. He wasn't sure if it was because she'd developed deeper feelings for him, or if she'd simply grown bored of their usual flirting. She'd made it pretty clear in the last few months she wasn't interested in remaining just friends. He wished now, not for the first time, that he'd lain off the flirtatious banter through their childhood and just let her know he wasn't interested in her that way.

Jack stopped at his house, excited to tell his little brother about his second place accomplishment. Since his own parents were in the states visiting friends until Tuesday Gray had been left with just Jack and their nanny. Of course, she hadn't really been Jack's nanny in quite some time, but he loved the woman all the same.

"Jack! Jack! Jack!" Gray chanted, running at him the moment the door opened. "Jack, guess what Cerys made for me? Look!"

"Oh, wow," Jack replied, grinning broadly as he lifted his brother up. The boy was getting so big now it was becoming difficult. "That's a wonderful hat, Gray. It suits you!"

The boy was sporting a crocheted beanie in a deep, rich blue shade. It almost appeared to be a phone box. Yes, that was it. A police call box.

"Cerys?" he asked, stepping into the lounge with his brother on his hip. "Why is Gray wearing a police call box on his head?"

“It’s the TARDIS!” Gray exclaimed, hugging Jack’s neck.

“The what?”

“TARDIS,” Cerys explained, chuckling. “It’s a new toy in the shops, but since your parents have indicated they would rather he not have one, I’ve made him a replica instead.”

“Isn’t she clever, Jack? Cerys, you’re so clever!”

“Yes she is, Gray,” Jack agreed, winking at Cerys. The elderly woman was a miracle worker. When no one else could get Gray to stop sulking over something as simple as a toy he couldn’t have, Cerys could. “Very clever.”

“There’s a sandwich for you in the refrigerator, Jack,” the woman told him, tilting her head toward the kitchen.

“Thank you,” he told her, setting down his brother and grasping him by the shoulders. “Guess what, Gray? Your big brother took second place in the competition today!”

“Really?” the little boy asked, hands on hips. “Where’s your trophy?”

“Oh, you don’t get a trophy for second place,” Jack explained, reaching into his cheer bag. “But I did get this.” He pulled out the ribbon, pinning it carefully to Gray’s shirt. “There. If you’re really good for Cerys tonight before bed I will let you wear it tomorrow, too.”

“Oh my gosh!” Gray was beaming. He ran over to his nanny, showing her the ribbon. “Look, Cerys!”

“I see, young man,” Cerys acknowledged, smiling. “Very nice. And well done, Jack.”

“Thanks,” he said, shrugging. “My team did most of the work.”

He grabbed his brother and gave him a kiss on the cheek and a quick cuddle – which gained him a disgusted sound from his brother – and then jogged up to his room. He needed to shower, change and had a lot of planning to do and a couple of calls to make before he could eat a late lunch and head over to Ianto’s.

tw tw tw tw tw

Jack was excited to tell his friend about his plans, and, of course, about the results of the cheer competition. He called to let him know he was on his way, and knew he could have mentioned the second place win, but he figured they needed to talk anyway, so why not just do so in person?

Ianto let him in after a couple knocks, and Jack had to bite back the moan that threatened to spill from his throat. The boy was wearing a deep red button down shirt tucked neatly into snug black jeans. The look was completed with a matching black belt with silver studs and a pair of black boots.

“Hi, Jack,” Ianto said softly, his eyes telling Jack he knew exactly what the outfit had done. “Come on in.”

“You, uh...” He swallowed, trying again. “You look great, Ianto.”

“Thanks, Jack,” his friend replied, leading him through the house. Jack raised an eyebrow when they didn’t stop at the lounge but instead kept moving toward Ianto’s bedroom.

“We revising in here, today?” Jack asked, as casually as he possibly could.

“Yup.” Ianto took a seat on his bed, pulling off his boots, then indicated them with a nod when he dropped them to the floor. “I was rearranging things in the lounge.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah. Mam’s resting, so I figured I would make good use of my time.”

“I see,” Jack said, nodding slowly.

“You going to sit down, Jack?”

Jack smiled, moving to sit on the bed a few feet from Ianto and kicking off his own shoes. He pulled his legs up and sat cross-legged, facing his friend. “So...”

“So...” Ianto repeated.

“You always move things around in a nice shirt and jeans?”

Ianto blushed slightly. “Well, I...”

“Never mind, Ianto,” Jack interrupted, taking pity on the boy. “The team took second place in the competition.”

“That’s great, Jack!” Ianto’s face fell. “I’m sorry I couldn’t be there to see it. I’m sure you and Adam did amazing.”

“Gwen too,” Jack reminded him. He caught the briefest unreadable look cross Ianto’s face before it was gone.

“Yes, of course. Well,” Ianto said, smiling. “Chemistry or trigonometry?”

Jack licked his lips, wondering whether he should press the issue of the Gwen oversight with Ianto. Deciding to bypass the issue for now, he shrugged. "Oh, I dunno. I was thinking first we might talk about Friday."

"Friday?" Ianto asked. "What's Friday?"

"The day that comes after Thursday, most commonly," Jack quipped, grinning. Ianto shot him a look. "The dance, Ianto. Friday is the dance."

Ianto glanced away. "Oh, right. Did you decide to take...Gwen...then?"

Jack frowned. Hadn't they had this discussion? Yes, he was pretty sure they had. In fact, he'd told him flat out he wanted to take him, alone, not as a third wheel to he and Gwen.

"No," Jack assured him, folding his hands in his lap. "I still want to take you."

Ianto ducked his head. "Jack, you know I have to take care of Mam. I can't go."

"But if you didn't have to," Jack said, biting his lip. "Then would you go?"

"I don't even attend that school any longer," Ianto said, shaking his head. "I don't attend school at all."

"Ianto..."

"And besides, Jack, it's a moot point, remember? I do have to take care of her. There's no one else."

"What if I told you there was?"

Ianto looked up, worry all over his face. "Jack? What did you do?"

Jack offered him his best smile. "I hired someone to care for her for the night. She can be here when the normal care leaves, and stay until midnight."

Ianto's eyes flared with something Jack had never seen before and it made him wince. He watched his friend get off the bed, walk to the other side of the room and then back again, one hand on his hip and the other on the back of his neck.

"Why would you do that, Jack?" he asked, looking over him. "I take care of my mam at night. That's the way it's been since Rhiannon left!"

"I just..." Jack stopped, taking a breath. "I wanted to help, Ianto. You take care of her every night, and all day on the weekends."

“I asked you not to spend your money on me, Jack.”

“I know. But...I really wanted you to go to the dance with me.”

Ianto shook his head. “I can’t...go to the dance with you, Jack.”

Jack’s heart sank. He didn’t care about the money. He had hired the woman, but hadn’t given her any payment yet. He could always cancel. But now it appeared he shouldn’t have even tried. Ianto didn’t even want to go with him.

“Would you go if it wasn’t with me?”

“I don’t even belong there.”

“Yes you do, Ianto. And I mean it. If I...” His chest hurt, just thinking about what he was going to suggest. “If I found you a date, a girl, would you go?”

Ianto looked at him questioningly. “You want to set me up with someone?”

Jack swallowed. “Honestly? No. But if it means you’ll go, and I can see you there, I’ll do it.”

“And who would you go with? Gwen?”

Jack winced again. “She has a date already,” he said. “I’d find...someone...I guess.”

He was looking down and didn’t see Ianto’s expression. “I don’t feel right about this.”

“You don’t have to be seen with me, if it makes you uncomfortable,” Jack told him. “I didn’t realize it would, but...”

“Jack...you idiot.” He looked up, seeing Ianto shaking his head. He was smiling softly. “I don’t want to go to the dance with some girl.”

“Some other guy, then?” His heart clenched. “You said you weren’t gay, so I assumed...”

Ianto walked over to him, smacking him gently upside the head. “You’re not listening to me, Jack.”

“Ow!” he groaned, rubbing his head. Although, to be fair, it really didn’t hurt. “What was that for?”

“I’m just worried about leaving my mam for the night. I’ve never done that. And I don’t like that you’re going to spend that kind of money just so that I can go to the dance.”

“So, it’s not being with me that makes you uncomfortable?”

“Of course not!”

Jack looked sheepish. “Oh.”

Ianto smiled again, sitting next to him on the bed and rubbing at the back of Jack’s head. “I didn’t really hurt you, did I Jack?”

Jack smiled back, shaking his head. “No.”

“Good.”

“So...will you go with me, Ianto? To the dance?”

Ianto frowned. “What would I wear? I don’t exactly have anything fancy.”

“I like what you’re wearing,” Jack said softly, nudging his friend’s shoulder.

Blushing, Ianto looked up at him under his lashes. “Really?”

Jack smirked. “Oh yeah. Red is definitely your color.”

Ianto turned his head, turning an even deeper shade of pink. “Okay,” he said. “I’ll go.”

“Really?” Jack asked, eyes wide. Ianto nodded. Jack leaned in and pressed a kiss to Ianto’s cheek.

“Right,” Ianto murmured, smiling as he scooted a bit further away. “So...revision?”

“Revision,” Jack agreed, grabbing his bag and hauling it up onto the bed.

“I’ll go get us a couple cold drinks,” Ianto said, jumping off the bed.

Jack watched his best friend hurry out of the room and grinned. It was so easy to make the boy blush.

Chapter 5

Checking himself in the mirror, Jack let out a long breath. He turned around slowly, trying to see his entire outfit. He made sure his light blue dress shirt was tucked properly into his dark blue jeans, and that his tan belt and braces were buckled and positioned just so, respectively.

“You trying to impress a girl, Jack?” Gray asked from his position, cross-legged on Jack’s bed.

Jack turned, grinning. “What do you know about trying to impress someone, little man?”

“I’ve seen it on telly!” Gray replied, nodding and smiling.

“You have? What kinds of things have you been watching?”

“Movies, Jack,” Gray told him, shaking his head. “Don’t you know anything?”

Jack pounced, tickling his little brother until the boy was in a fit of laughter and pleading for him to stop. Ruffling the child’s hair Jack chuckled, stepping away and over to his wardrobe.

“Since you know so much,” he teased the boy, “Tan boots or black boots?”

“Tan boots. You want to match, don’t you?” Now the boy was being smug. “And who is she? I didn’t know you had a girlfriend, Jack!”

“That’s because I don’t,” Jack told the precocious seven year old. “I’m not taking a girl to the dance.”

Gray looked puzzled. “So who are you impressing, then?”

Jack beamed. “My best friend. You remember Ianto, right Gray?”

“Ianto! The one with the button nose!”

Jack tried not to laugh. “Yes, that’d be him.”

“He gave me coffee, Jack, remember? With lots of milk.”

“Actually, he gave you milk, with a tiny bit of coffee,” Jack corrected. “Because coffee isn’t really good for a growing boy.”

“You’re a growing boy. You drink it!” Gray was pouting.

“And when you’re my age you can drink it too.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

Jack winked at him, pulling out his tan boots and taking a seat next to his brother on the bed so he could put them on. Their mother knocked lightly on the doorframe and Jack looked up, smiling.

“Gray, you’re not bothering your brother, are you?”

“Nuh uh!”

“He’s really not. He’s being very helpful.”

“Alright then,” she conceded, stepping into the room and kissing them both on the top of their heads. “You look very handsome, Jack.”

Jack grinned. “Think Ianto will agree?”

“He’d be a fool not to. What time will you be home?”

“Well, I’ll be dropping off Ianto by midnight, so not long after that.”

“Okay. Have a good time, honey.”

“Will do. Thanks!”

She left them alone then, heading back downstairs. Jack stood up, checking his image one more time and running his fingers through his hair. Did he need a haircut? It seemed kind of long.

“Is Ianto your boyfriend, Jack?”

Jack sighed. “No. No, he’s not, Gray.”

“But you want him to be, huh?”

A small smile crossed Jack’s features. “Yeah, kinda do.”

“A girl at my school has a girlfriend!”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Molly. She’s really nice, and her girlfriend is too. They’re in grade six.” He was silent for a moment and Jack took a seat next to him again. “Sometimes the other kids are mean to them.”

“That’s not very nice,” Jack said, frowning. “Is it only because they’re girls?”

“Yeah.” Gray’s eyes looked sad. “Cerys says that love is love no matter what. Is that true?”

Jack’s smile returned. “Yes it is, Gray. Love is love. It shouldn’t matter who you love.”

Gray nodded. “I think so too. And I think you love Ianto.”

Jack found himself blushing, a very rare occurrence. “Why do you think that?”

“Cause of the way you talk about him all the time. And you smile a lot when he’s around.”

“I like him a lot, yes,” Jack admitted, shrugging. “But I don’t know about love, yet. I guess we’ll see.”

“I bet he loves you too.”

Jack chuckled, pulling his baby brother into a hug. “You know an awful lot about an awful lot, little man.”

“I’m smart!”

“Yes, you are.”

tw tw tw tw tw

Stepping up to Ianto’s door, Jack found he was suddenly extremely nervous. He had butterflies in his stomach and couldn’t stop touching his hair. If he kept it up he’d mess it all up, and that wouldn’t do at all.

Knocking softly Jack waited. A few moments later Ianto opened the door and Jack grinned, seeing Ianto dressed in his new favorite red shirt. The boy had chosen to wear blue jeans instead of the black, but his belt and boots were the same.

“Hi Jack,” greeted Ianto, smiling.

“Wow, Ianto,” Jack replied, eyes wide. “You look...wow.”

Ianto blushed crimson. “Thanks, Jack. You look great too.”

Jack coughed. “You, uh, ready to go? Did the lady from the care center get here?”

“Yeah, she’s with Mam now, actually. Thank you again, Jack. You really didn’t have to.”

Jack shrugged. “Don’t mention in,” he said, winking at Ianto. “Just glad I could help.”

Ianto grabbed his keys, mobile and wallet, slipping everything but his keys into his pockets. He stepped outside, closing and locking the door behind them. “Okay, ready,” he said.

“Then let’s get going,” Jack replied, turning and heading toward his car.

The drive to the school was relatively quiet, Jack concentrating on getting them there in one piece, but he did let Ianto choose the music and was happy just to sing along. When they arrived, Jack led them to the gymnasium, handing their tickets to the girl at the door.

They found their friends at the far end, huddled in the corner, and made their way over. Jack could see Ianto was a bit apprehensive, and he placed his hand on his lower back to show his support.

“Hey, Tea Boy!” Owen called to them as they approached.

“Ianto!” Tosh cried out, rushing up to hug him. “How have you been?”

“Hi guys,” Ianto greeted them, smiling. “I’ve been well, Tosh, thank you. Just working.”

Introductions were made for the new people in their group, Rhys, Lisa and Katie. Adam and Lisa had come together, as did Gwen and Rhys, Owen and Katie. Toshiko was there with her boyfriend Tommy.

“You look amazing, Jack,” Gwen said, smiling.

“Thank you, Gwen. You look lovely yourself.” Jack felt Ianto stiffen beside him and rubbed circles on his back. “Toshiko, that dress is stunning.”

Tosh blushed, smiling shyly. “Thank you, Jack. Tommy picked it out.”

“Saw it in a new store in Town Centre,” Tommy explained. “Great place, but it was bloody freezing.”

After talking for several minutes with their friends, Jack wanted to get Ianto alone. He heard one of his favorite songs and took Ianto’s hand, pulling him back toward the middle of the gym.

“Dance with me, Ianto,” he whispered in his friend’s ear.

“Jack, I don’t know,” Ianto hesitated, looking around.

Jack frowned. He didn’t want to push Ianto into anything he wasn’t ready for. “Well, then just come talk to me. Away from the rest of the group.”

“Okay,” Ianto agreed, following behind him.

They found a relatively empty spot on the bleachers and had been talking quietly for at least twenty minutes when Jack looked up at the clearing of a throat. Gwen was standing before them, eyes wide.

“Jack,” she started, smiling. “Rhys doesn’t want to dance. Will you dance with me?”

Looking back at Ianto Jack found his expression unreadable. “Do you mind, Ianto?”

“Of course not,” Ianto replied, smiling softly. “Why would I possibly mind?”

“Good!” Gwen said, grabbing Jack’s hand and pulling him out onto the floor. “I love this song.”

Jack allowed himself to be tugged onto the floor, Gwen’s arms immediately wrapping around his neck. He held her waist, returning her smile as he took the lead and moved them slowly in circles.

Glancing over at his group of friends he saw a frown on Rhys’s face. “Gwen, are you sure Rhys is okay with us dancing? He looks kind of...upset.”

“Oh, he’ll be fine, Jack,” she answered, cuddling a bit closer. “He didn’t want to dance, so I told him I would ask you. It’s not like he’s my boyfriend,” she added.

Jack sighed. He knew Gwen liked Rhys. She’d talked about him constantly since he’d asked her to go to the dance, and at lunch he and his friend Lisa had taken to sitting with them. Gwen and Rhys would be tangled up, whispering to each other, Gwen making doe eyes at him and Rhys grinning at her. If he wasn’t her boyfriend yet it was only a technicality, Jack was sure.

Right now, however, the school’s DJ had decided to play several slow songs in a row, and Gwen was still holding tight to him as the third song began. Jack didn’t want to be rude, but he really did want to get back to Ianto.

The boy in question, however, was apparently just as eager to get back to Jack. He interrupted their dance, much to Gwen’s disappointment, asking to cut in.

“May I?” he asked, smiling at them.

Gwen pulled away from Jack, turning as if to step into Ianto's arms, but Ianto took that moment to step into Jack's. Jack beamed, letting his hands circle Ianto's shoulders as his date wrapped his own arms around Jack's waist.

Gwen stormed off, barely noticed by Jack. Somewhere in the back of his mind he saw her standing with their friends, pouting, but he was entirely too caught up in the fact that there was a Welshman in his arms.

"What made you change your mind?" Jack asked, knowing without a doubt it was Gwen's clinging to him that had made Ianto decide to step in. He just wanted to see if Ianto would admit it.

"Felt like dancing now, is all," Ianto murmured, resting his cheek on Jack's shoulder. "You do still want to dance with me, yeah?"

Jack smiled, holding Ianto closer. "Yes I do, Ianto," he replied.

The song ended entirely too soon for Jack's taste, and he begrudgingly released his friend when the music changed tempo into something more upbeat. Ianto smiled shyly at him, indicating the spot where they'd been sitting previously.

Making their way back over they took a seat, Ianto sighing. "It's not as bad as I thought it might be," he said, causing Jack to raise an eyebrow.

"Dancing with me?" he asked, puzzled.

"No," Ianto chuckled, shaking his head. "Being here at the school. The dancing was...nice."

Jack grinned. "Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Well everyone's really happy to see you," Jack told him, glancing over at their friends. "Even Owen."

"Not everyone," Ianto argued. "One in particular would rather I weren't here at all."

"You mean Gwen, Ianto?"

"Yup."

Jack scowled. "Why do you think that?"

"She'd like to be here with you, instead of me."

"Ianto..."

“It’s alright, Jack. I see the way she looks at you. Not that you’re much better. Your flirting is quite obvious, really.”

“It doesn’t mean anything,” Jack defended. “I flirt with everyone. That’s just the way I am, I guess.”

“It means something to her,” Ianto said, nodding his head in Gwen’s direction.

“You think I’m leading her on?” Jack asked, a bit concerned.

“I don’t know. Are you?”

“No. I mean, not intentionally.” Jack sighed. “Don’t get me wrong, Ianto. Gwen’s a beautiful girl, and a great friend, but I’ve never been interested in her like that. Not in the way you’re thinking.”

“Have you told her that?”

Jack dropped his eyes. “The conversation’s never come up, actually.”

“Really?” Ianto asked, looking surprised. “We’ve all known each other since we were kids, but you’ve never had that discussion with her?”

“I guess I never really thought it was an issue. I thought she understood.”

“Understood what, exactly?” Ianto asked.

“That I’ve always liked you, Ianto, not her.”

A pink tinge coloring Ianto’s cheeks crept slowly upward until it reached his hair. Jack looked over at their friends, all in their own little world except for Gwen. She met Jack’s eyes before she looked away, putting her arm around Rhys and kissing him. Ianto was right. She was very interested in Jack and now was attempting to make him jealous.

“I’m going to step outside for a little air, Jack,” Ianto told him, getting to his feet. Jack looked up at him, nodding before looking back at his feet. Ianto’s hand extended, indicating Jack should take it. “Care to join me?”

Jack’s eyes shot back up to meet Ianto’s. His friend was smiling. Jack gave him his hand, accepting the help to his feet, and was surprised when Ianto didn’t let go. Ianto led him along the bleachers, past their friends – and a frowning Gwen Cooper – and out a side door onto a patio the school had set up for the dance.

Chapter 6

The cooler air outside the gymnasium made Jack shiver slightly. Or maybe it was being able to be alone with Ianto on the quiet patio. Either way, Jack was exactly where he wanted to be.

“It was rather crowded in there,” Ianto said, smiling as he stopped and turned to face him.

“Yes it was,” Jack agreed, returning the smile. The patio was small, with a few chairs set up. A couple of students were standing by the makeshift railing, having a cigarette. “Warmer too,” he added.

“More privacy out here,” Ianto murmured. “For those who...want that.”

Jack’s eyebrow went up. “What about you, Ianto?” he asked quietly, squeezing Ianto’s hand. His heart was beating so fast he was positive Ianto would hear it. “Did you want more privacy?”

“Maybe,” Ianto admitted, his cheeks coloring.

Jack watched as the two girls who’d been smoking turned to head back inside, smiling and giggling as they passed them by. He stepped closer to Ianto, watching his face for any sign that this wasn’t what he wanted. When Ianto gave nothing further away Jack took a chance and cupped his hand around the back of Ianto’s neck, tilting his face and leaning in.

“Oh! Oh, I’m sorry!”

Both Jack and Ianto jumped. Jack dropped his hand from Ianto’s neck and Ianto released the other. Standing in the doorway was Gwen, looking surprised.

“Doesn’t matter,” Ianto told her.

“I didn’t mean...I just...wow...” she stammered, turning to walk back inside.

Ianto looked back at Jack, eyebrow raised. Jack just shook his head, taking Ianto’s hand again. “You okay?”

“Of course,” Ianto replied.

“You want to go back inside?”

Ianto ducked his head, looking at his shoes for a moment. “I don’t know, Jack,” he said, looking up under his lashes. “What do you want to do?”

Jack reached out and lifted Ianto's chin. "This," he said, pressing a gentle kiss to Ianto's mouth.

The kiss was short and unassuming, and Jack pulled back just enough to gauge Ianto's reaction. The boy's eyes were still closed, and he opened them slowly, gazing at Jack. Before Jack had a chance to back away Ianto's hand was clutching his shirt and he had slammed his mouth back over Jack's.

Jack returned the kiss with equal enthusiasm, sliding fingers into Ianto's hair. He teased Ianto's lips with his tongue until he was granted access, taking it slowly, letting the other boy adjust. But Ianto adapted quickly, exploring with his own tongue, battling with Jack's.

Coming up for air a few moments later, Jack grinned at his friend, heart still racing. Ianto smiled back at him.

"Oi, you lot!" Turning toward the doorway again, Jack now found Owen there, hands on hips. "You two going to be out here all night, then?"

"It's only been about five minutes," Jack argued.

"Fewer, really," Ianto agreed.

"Long enough to upset Gwen," Owen told them, shaking his head. "She just came running in, mumbling about a shock to her system. Now I understand. I may be scarred for life. Again."

Jack smirked and Ianto rolled his eyes, but both followed Owen back into the gymnasium anyhow. It wasn't lost on Jack that Ianto stayed right by his side, and when they joined their friends inside Ianto surprised Jack by slipping his hand into his, entwining their fingers.

Jack saw Gwen's eyes drop to their joined hands, widening, before she looked back up them. "So you two...done with whatever that was?" she asked, looking from Jack to Ianto and back again.

Jack scowled. "Done with it?" he asked, wanting clarification. He didn't like Gwen's tone.

"What Gwen means is that we're planning on leaving," Rhys told them, looking pointedly at his date. "It's a bit boring here and we're thinking maybe a party at mine? My parents aren't home."

"Yeah, wanna come with?" Tosh asked.

Jack glanced at Ianto. They had hours left before Ianto had to be home. "What do you think, Ianto?"

“Whatever you’d like, Jack,” his friend said, smiling.

“Then it’s settled,” said Rhys, beaming at them. “Just follow us.”

Jack and Ianto made their way out of the gym, close behind their friends. They separated long enough to get into Jack’s car, but once the doors were closed Ianto placed his hand over Jack’s on the seat.

“She said ‘you two,’ like we’re a couple,” Ianto mused.

“Well we are,” Jack told him, starting the engine. “Does it matter?”

Ianto’s brow furrowed. “We are?”

Jack turned to look at him. “I’d hoped that’s what this all meant. But if I’m wrong…”

“No, I just…” Ianto looked confused and it made Jack’s heart clench. “I’ve never liked a guy before, Jack. This is new to me.”

“Neither have I, Ianto. You’re the first.”

“But you said you’ve liked me since we were kids.”

“I have.”

Jack waited while the implications sank in. Ianto’s eyes widened. “So you’ve never…had a relationship…with another guy?”

“No, Ianto.”

Jack pulled out of their parking space, following behind their friends’ vehicles. It appeared they’d all arrived together in two cars, Owen’s and Tommy’s.

“You’ve dated several girls, though, yeah?” Ianto asked, breaking the silence that had followed Jack’s admission. “I remember at least three.”

“A few,” Jack said, shrugging. “But now you know why it never lasted.”

He saw a smile tug at Ianto’s lips out of the corner of his eye. Ianto also hadn’t removed his hand. Jack turned his hand over, sliding his palm under Ianto’s.

“I’m glad you convinced me to go tonight, Jack.”

“Me too.”

They fell silent again, each lost in their own thoughts. When they arrived at Rhys's home Jack parked the car carefully at the curb. He turned off the engine and unbuckled his seatbelt.

"Ianto?"

"Yes, Jack?"

"Can I kiss you again?"

Ianto smirked. "I don't know, Jack. Can you?"

Jack huffed. "MAY I kiss you again?"

"Yes Jack, you may."

Jack grinned, leaning over and pressing a kiss to Ianto's mouth. It was simple and relatively chaste, this time, however, as Jack didn't want to keep their friends waiting. As it was, when they parted they found their eight friends had already gone into the house.

Ianto blushed. "We should probably get inside."

"Yeah, probably," Jack agreed. He pulled back, opening his door and stepping out onto the cement. Ianto did the same. After locking the car Jack reached a hand out, smiling when Ianto took it.

They made their way up the front walk, joining their friends inside. Jack noticed Gwen was clinging to Rhys, and wondered if it was more of her eagerness to show him that she was happy too. He felt bad for the guy, really. Rhys adored Gwen, from what he could tell, and Jack hated the fact that he might be used just to try to make him jealous.

The group was gathered in the lounge, relaxing onto comfortable leather couches, a few chairs, and Jack and Ianto sat down on the floor. Rhys passed out several beers but Jack declined and asked, instead, for water.

"Won't your parents mind you using up all the beer?" Katie asked, looking concerned.

"Nah, not at all," Rhys replied, shrugging. "I help my dad out at his hauling firm, so he doesn't mind if I hang out with my friends once in a while."

"We should play spin the bottle," Gwen suggested, making several heads turn.

Adam laughed. "Remember when we were, what, ten years old? And we played spin the bottle at Jack's party?"

“Oi! Don’t remind me,” Owen complained, rubbing his face. “I had nightmares for years.”

“You played spin the bottle when you were ten?” asked a previously quiet Lisa. “That’s so young!”

Jack grinned. “I was a pretty old ten.”

“And Ianto turned the shade he is now,” Toshiko giggled.

Jack patted Ianto’s knee. “My first kiss,” he admitted.

Ianto’s head snapped around. “Really?”

“You think I ran around kissing everyone before the age of ten?”

“Don’t make him answer that, Jack,” Owen warned. Everyone laughed, even Jack. “And let’s think of something else, yeah?”

“Jack,” Gwen said, moving away from Rhys and standing in the middle of the room. “Why don’t we show everyone our cheer from last Saturday?”

Jack’s eyebrow rose. “I’m not so sure everyone wants to see that.”

“I was there,” Adam stated, sipping his beer. “Remember?”

“I wouldn’t mind seeing it,” Lisa said, smiling. “Sounds like fun.”

“Yeah, Jack,” Tommy piped up. “Show us.”

“If we must,” Owen grumbled.

Jack got to his feet, smiling. “Okay, fine,” he said, shaking his head.

Several moves and a stumbling Gwen later, Jack was sprawled on the floor with Gwen in his lap. They were laughing so hard he didn’t notice the look that had crossed over Ianto’s face until Gwen was finished detangling herself from his lap and had gone to sit back down. There was a similar look on Rhys’s face.

“And you got second place with that?” Owen asked, snickering. “Jack, did you sleep with one of the judges?”

“Funny, Owen,” he replied, sitting back down beside Ianto. “I’d like to see you try it.”

“Jack was wonderful,” Gwen said, defending him.

“Thank you, Gwen.”

“We should watch a movie,” Tosh suggested.

“Sure,” Rhys replied. “What would you like? We have a large selection.” He pointed to the shelves on either side of the telly.

“Ooh, Gladiator,” said Katie. “I love Russell Crowe.”

“Mmm, Russell Crowe,” Lisa agreed. “He’s lush.”

“I wouldn’t mind that,” Jack said, winking at the girls. “Tight leather, all those muscles.” Owen groaned.

“How about a comedy?” Tommy asked.

“The Hangover!” Adam said, nodding.

Jack laughed. “That movie was hilarious. What do you think, Ianto?”

“As long as it’s something without leather,” Ianto replied softly. “Some fetishes should be kept to yourself.” He wasn’t looking at him and Jack frowned.

They finally decided on Mortal Kombat, and everyone settled in to watch it. Everyone, that is, except Jack. He was too concerned with Ianto. When the boy got up and wandered into the kitchen Jack followed him.

“Hey,” he whispered, stepping up next to him. “What’s going on?”

“You tell me, Jack.”

“I don’t know, Ianto. That’s why I’m asking.” He reached for Ianto’s hand but the other boy pulled it back. “Did I do something wrong?”

“You called us a couple.”

“Yeah,” Jack agreed, brow furrowed. He wasn’t sure how that was a bad thing. “I’d like us to be. We talked about that earlier.”

“I’m not sure I can, Jack,” the Welshman told him, turning sad eyes on him. “Not when Gwen won’t back off.”

Jack closed his eyes for a moment, hanging his head. Of course. Gwen. “Ianto, I’m not interested in her.”

“But she’s interested in you, and she goes out of her way to show it.” He flailed his hand around to make his point. “It’s like all she can think about is how to get you into her knickers.”

“That’s kind of harsh, Ianto.”

“Am I wrong?”

“She’s just a flirt. She doesn’t mean anything by it. Besides, she’s with Rhys.”

“And she’d dump him in a heartbeat if you gave her the word.”

Jack swallowed, knowing deep down that Ianto was right. “So I’m being punished because Gwen likes me?”

“You’re encouraging her.”

“I don’t mean to, Ianto!” He put his hand on Ianto’s back. “Do you really think I’d give up everything in order to be with her?”

“What’s everything, Jack?” Ianto asked, turning to face him.

“You, Ianto. You’re everything.” His shoulders slumped. “I thought that tonight, with the dance, and us kissing...” He looked back up at Ianto. “When I said we were a couple I meant it. I want us to be together.”

“And Gwen?”

“I’ll talk to her, Ianto,” he said, slipping his arms around Ianto’s waist. He rested their foreheads together. “I’ll make sure she understands that I’m with you, and off limits. If you want me to be your boyfriend, that is. I mean, I know you’re not gay, so...”

“Oh shut up, Jack,” Ianto said, kissing him hard.

“Um...” It was Tosh this time and Jack and Ianto pulled apart, chuckling. “I was just going to get Tommy another beer.”

“Don’t let us get in your way,” Jack told her, grabbing Ianto’s hand and leading him back toward the lounge.

“Are you two...you know...together now?” Tosh asked, blushing slightly.

“Yes,” Ianto answered her, and Jack tightened his grip on his hand. “Yes, we are.”

“That’s wonderful!”

“Thank you, Toshiko,” said Jack, smiling. “I happen to think so too.”

They left her in the kitchen and joined the others in the lounge. Jack took a seat leaning against the arm of the couch, and pulled Ianto down with him. Ianto was seated

between Jack's legs, his back to Jack's chest. Jack wrapped his arms around Ianto and Ianto's hands settled on Jack's arms.

Pressing a kiss to the side of Ianto's neck he finally felt content. In his arms was the boy he'd wanted forever, and they were surrounded by their friends. He let himself get lost in the movie, and put aside his thoughts about having a talk with Gwen. He'd worry about that another day. After all, it probably wasn't as bad as Ianto made it out to be.

What he didn't see, however, was Gwen's glare shooting daggers at them from across the room.

Chapter 7

The drive back to Ianto's house passed entirely too quickly to suit Jack. It was half eleven, and while he knew the woman watching after Ianto's mother could be there until midnight they'd both agreed it would be best to get him back before that time. In addition, Jack had a suspicion that Ianto was preoccupied with thoughts of leaving his mother with someone else. He needed to get back in order to be comfortable.

"Did you have a good time?" Jack asked him as they walked up to the front door, hand in hand.

"What do you think?" Ianto asked, eyes sparkling at him and making Jack smile as they stopped on the front step.

"I hope you did. I don't like to assume."

"That's a good philosophy, Jack," Ianto replied. "But I had a wonderful time. Thank you."

Jack's smile became a grin. "Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Good." Jack cupped his face and pressed his lips to Ianto's. "You know, I wasn't going to go if you weren't able to go with me."

"Really?" Ianto asked, seeming surprised. "I'd have thought there were other options."

"If you say Gwen I'll have to punish you," Jack warned, playfully. "I only wanted to go with you."

Ianto shook his head, unlocking the door and drawing Jack inside. The hall light had been left on for him. "You're crazy, Jack Harkness. Plenty of girls...or boys...would have gone with you."

"Maybe," Jack agreed, closing the door behind them and following Ianto into the lounge. "But only one I cared about."

"Oh, you're home early, Mr. Jones," said Rebecca, standing in the doorway. "I didn't expect you for at least half an hour. Did you want me to go now?"

"No, that's alright," Ianto told her, smiling as he and Jack took a seat on the couch. "We hired you through midnight so you're welcome to work until then. As long as that's fine with you, Jack?"

"Of course," Jack replied, giving Rebecca his best smile. "Midnight is fine."

“Thank you very much,” she said. “I’ll stay on until midnight, then.”

She left the room and Jack cuddled up to Ianto. “Sounds like she could use the money,” he whispered, not wanting the woman to overhear him. “I didn’t want to cut her time short just because we got back early.”

“I completely agree,” Ianto told him, resting his head on Jack’s shoulder. “Before we left she was reading to Mam from one of Mam’s romance novels. She may actually be better at the job than Abigail.”

Jack thought about that for a moment. “Maybe we should keep her on, here,” he thought out loud.

Ianto raised his head. “Oh, I couldn’t do that to Abigail, Jack. She has a family to feed.”

“No, I meant as nighttime care,” he explained. “In addition to Abigail.”

“Jack, we’ve talked about this. I can’t afford it. There isn’t enough money.”

“I could ask for a raise in my allowance, Ianto,” Jack offered. “Then she could help out maybe one night a week?”

Ianto shook his head. “I can’t let you do that.”

“I could get a part time job.”

“Jack!”

“What?” Jack asked, shrugging. “Ianto, you can’t take care of her for the rest of your life. You need to be able to be a kid!”

Ianto sighed, drawing his knees up and wrapping his arms around them. “I’m not a kid, Jack. I had to grow up a long time ago.”

Jack watched as a sad look washed over his boyfriend’s face. He wanted to help. He had to help. “Then let me be here.”

Ianto turned his head. “What do you mean?”

“Let me help you with your mother.”

“Jack...”

“I’m serious, Ianto,” Jack told him, pulling Ianto’s shoulder until the boy released his legs and moved to face him. “You’re helping me with my exams, so let me help you.”

Ianto's face contorted into a scowl. "It's not quite the same thing, Jack. My Mam isn't an exam you can revise for. An exam you work toward, you take it, and it's over. My Mam is a daily struggle."

"I know that, Ianto." He frowned, trying to find the right words to express how he felt. "But I'm going to be here a lot now, and I don't think it would be right for me to just come over and occupy your time without helping you. You're my boyfriend, so your troubles are my troubles and likewise."

Ianto smiled, taking Jack's hand. "See, this is why it was so hard for me before I admitted to myself I was interested in you." Jack raised an eyebrow. "You're so different from any friend I've ever had, Jack. You care about people. Genuinely care. And you want to make everything right for everyone."

"Is that a bad thing, Ianto?"

"No, not at all," Ianto reassured him, squeezing his hand. "But I figured you cared about everyone, and that it didn't mean you liked me specifically."

"But I did."

"I know that now," Ianto said.

"So you'll let me help?"

"Okay, Jack," Ianto conceded. "If that will make you happy."

"It will," Jack said, leaning in and kissing him softly.

tw tw tw tw tw

Tearing himself away from Ianto was difficult, but Jack had promised his mother he'd be home not long after midnight. He paid Rebecca for her time and then he and Ianto shared a long, lingering kiss on his front step before saying goodnight. They'd agreed Jack would be back the next day, since it was Saturday, but that he had to bring his books with him so that Jack could finish his homework for the week and Ianto could help him revise.

Stepping through his own front door Jack found his mother waiting up for him. "How did it go, Jack?"

Jack grinned, flopping down on the couch beside her. "It was great."

"Yeah? How did Ianto do, seeing everyone again?"

“Oh, he was nervous at first, but everyone made him feel welcome.” Jack thought back over the night wistfully. “We went to Rhys’s house after being at the dance for a while and all hung out there and watched a movie.”

“That sounds nice, Jack. I wish Ianto could stop by sometime. I miss seeing him around here.”

“Yeah, me too,” Jack told her, frowning. “But he’s got so much to deal with since he has to work and then take care of his mother.”

“I’m not one to judge people, usually,” she said, shaking her head. “But that father of his really left them in a lurch. And his sister...” She clucked her tongue.

“I know, believe me. But there’s good news,” Jack said, smiling.

“What’s that, Jack?”

“We’re together now, me and Ianto.”

His mother smiled back at him. “That’s great, Jack!” She patted his hand. “I know how much he means to you.”

“I think I love him,” Jack admitted. “Is that too soon?”

“If you’d just met him, yes,” she said. “But you’ve known him almost your whole life, Jack. And Ianto’s a wonderful kid. He’s sweet, polite, and very handsome.”

“He said he’s not a kid.”

“Well, with what he’s been through I’m not surprised he feels that way. But to me, you’re both so young. It’s a shame he has to have as much responsibility as he does.”

“I told him I’d help him with his mother, since he’s been helping me revise,” he said. “And since we’re a couple now, I’ll probably be over there a lot.”

“As long as your coursework gets completed and your grades don’t suffer, Jack, I’m more than happy to hear it,” she told him. “Just don’t forget about cheer and your own family. I’d like to see you now and again.”

Jack chuckled, giving his mother a hug before getting to his feet. “I wouldn’t desert you,” he assured her, winking. “I’d like to bring Gray over there tomorrow, if that’s okay? I know he misses Ianto too.”

“That’s fine with me,” she confirmed.

“Great! I’m gonna head to bed now,” he said, stifling a yawn. “I’ll do my chores first thing tomorrow and we’ll leave for Ianto’s around noon.”

“Have a good rest, dear.”

Heading up the stairs Jack smiled to himself. He was so lucky to have the family he did. His parents might go away on business a lot, but he'd never felt like they weren't there for him. He only wished Ianto had been so lucky.

tw tw tw tw tw

Finishing up with the front and back garden Jack hurried inside to clean up. He passed his brother who was seated on the couch, watching the telly. “I'm going to go take a shower and then we're going over to see Ianto, Gray.”

His brother's head whipped around. “I get to go with you?”

“Sure do. Does that sound like fun?”

“Yes!” Gray said loudly, getting onto his knees on the couch so he could face Jack. “Can we go to the park?”

Jack frowned. “Well, we have to stay at the house because Ianto's mother needs us there. But we can play some games.”

Gray considered that for a moment. “Okay. I like Ianto.”

“Me too,” Jack said, grinning.

“You love him.”

Jack ruffled his brother's hair. “There you go again,” he teased. “Being so smart.”

“Mummy says it's part of my charm.”

“Mummy is very smart too.” He walked toward the stairs again. “I'll be back down when your show is over, okay?”

“Okay Jack!”

He watched his brother turn back to the telly and he grinned. He loved that kid.

Chapter 8

Ianto greeted Jack and his brother at the door with a big smile. “Gray!” he exclaimed, picking up the boy and putting him on his hip. “How’ve you been? What are you doing in school? Any new girlfriend? Boyfriend?”

“Hi Ianto!” Gray enthused, wrapping his arms around the older boy. “I’ve been good! Girls are icky, Ianto! And I don’t like boys like that. Not like you and Jack.” He giggled. “What else did you ask me?”

Ianto shook his head. “It’s not important.” They headed into the lounge and Ianto took a seat, still holding Gray. “So what are we doing today, hmm?”

“I told Gray maybe we could play a game,” Jack said, smiling. “What do you think, Ianto?”

“That sounds like fun,” he agreed, ruffling Gray’s hair. “What game do you want to play, Gray?”

The little boy’s face scrunched up in concentration. “Hide and seek!”

Ianto and Jack looked at each other, shrugging. “Alright,” Ianto told him, glancing around at all the boxes and containers littering the room. Plenty of places to hide. “Jack and I will go to my room for a minute, and you find a place to hide in here.”

“Okay!”

Ianto took Jack’s hand and led him out of the lounge, heading down the hall to his room. Tugging his boyfriend out of the hall he stuck his head out, calling to Gray, “Alright Gray, I’m going to start counting! You have sixty seconds!”

The sound of the little boy’s giggles could be heard where they stood and Jack grinned, watching as Ianto pulled out a stop watch his grandfather had given him before he’d passed on. Clicking the button on top, Ianto grinned back.

“I’ve missed you,” he told Jack, pressing a kiss to his mouth.

Jack closed his eyes, winding his arms around his boyfriend. “Missed you too,” he murmured against Ianto’s lips.

“Is it sixty seconds yet?” came a small voice from the lounge.

Ianto and Jack chuckled. “Not yet,” the Welshman called, nuzzling Jack’s neck. “Mmm. You smell good, Jack. What cologne are you wearing today?”

“I’m not,” Jack told him, enjoying the feel of Ianto pressed up against him. A little too much, considering his brother was in the next room. He groaned, clutching at Ianto’s back when Ianto sucked on his neck.

“You smell like that naturally?” Ianto asked him, pulling back to look at him. “I’d never noticed that before. Good thing, probably. I’d have likely mauled you.”

Jack shivered at the thought, giving Ianto his most evil smirk. “Sounds amazing, Ianto Jones.”

They stared at each other, twin sets of blue eyes blazing with something that could only be described as raw desire, until Jack cleared his throat and reached for the hand that held the stop watch. “It’s time,” he told him, voice a bit more gravelly than he’d intended.

Ianto blinked, looking at the stop watch. “Yup. Hold that thought.” He straightened his shoulders and walked out of the room. He called to Gray, “Ready or not, here I come!”

Jack shook his head. He took several deep breaths, trying to will away the erection that was beginning to tent his jeans. The things Ianto could do to him without even trying were incredible, but he needed to behave. He was there to spend time with his boyfriend, yes, but he also wanted to help out with Ianto’s mother and he’d brought along his brother, for crying out loud. This was no time to be contemplating another step in his and Ianto’s relationship.

“Agh! Stop! Okay! Agh!”

Jack grinned, walking out of the room and down the hallway to the lounge. “Found him, did you?” he asked, seeing Gray currently being tickled by a laughing Ianto.

“Yes I did,” Ianto answered, not losing a beat in his attack on the little boy. “But he’s pretty good at this game.”

“He’s a natural,” Jack admitted, folding his arms.

“Your turn, Jack!” Gray told him, struggling to escape Ianto’s hands. “You hide and Ianto and I will find you!”

Jack raised an eyebrow, then looked around the room. “Alright. You guys go count.”

Ianto led the little boy away, disappearing into the hallway as Jack looked around for a good spot to hide. He spotted a tall grouping of plastic storage containers in the corner and smirked. As good a hiding place as any, he figured.

Crawling into the tiny space behind the high tower he scooted far into the corner, scrunching down until he was resting on his haunches. There was barely enough room

with his long legs, so he turned toward the opening, drew his knees up as close to his chin as he could and kept his breathing shallow.

The seconds ticked away agonizingly slowly, until he heard Grey say, “Here we come, Jack!”

Jack breathed through his nose, biting his lip to stop from laughing. It was a nervous habit, and he wanted to win this game. Childish, maybe, but he still wanted it.

“Where could he be?” Ianto asked his little helper, shuffling around as he looked over and behind boxes.

“Somewhere tall,” Gray told him. “Cause Jack’s really tall.”

Smart as a whip, that kid, Jack thought to himself. He could hear them getting closer and he prepared himself for when he was found.

“Hey Gray, why don’t you check that corner of the room over there,” Ianto said, and Jack wasn’t sure which corner he meant.

“Okay!”

Jack winced, figuring his brother would come bounding around the boxes and containers at any moment. Instead, it was Ianto’s smirk he saw as his boyfriend crawled on his hands and knees towards him. Jack swallowed, seeing the predatory look in his eyes.

“You find him yet?” Ianto called to Gray, his eyes not leaving Jack’s.

“No, not yet, Ianto! I’m still looking!”

“Make sure you check that whole side of the room,” he said, only centimeters from Jack’s feet.

“Okay, Ianto!”

Jack grinned, watching as Ianto carefully placed a hand on either side of his hips, leaning in until their mouths were a breath apart. His heart raced at the proximity.

“Found you, Jack Harkness,” he whispered, not moving any closer.

“What’re you going to do with me?” Jack whispered back, eyes dropping to Ianto’s mouth.

“What do you think I should do?”

“Kiss me, Ianto,” he growled softly. “Before I go insane.”

Their lips met then, hard and unforgiving. Jack bit back a moan, not wanting to alert his brother to their position if at all possible.

“I can’t find him, Ianto!” Gray called, a pout in his voice. “He’s too good!”

Ianto smiled into the kiss and Jack couldn’t help but do the same. “Keep trying, Gray.”

There was a loud sigh. “Okay.”

Cupping his hand around Ianto’s neck Jack deepened the kiss, delving into Ianto’s mouth with his tongue and tasting as much of him as possible. Ianto’s tongue battled his for dominance before conceding defeat, allowing Jack control. When he pulled back Jack sucked on his lower lip, eyes darkening with want.

Ianto winked, moving backward until he was a good meter away from Jack. “I found him, Gray! Come help me catch him!”

Jack growled, loudly this time, and Ianto just smirked at him. Gray came scampering around the boxes pointing and giggling. “He got you, Jack! He got you!”

“Yes he did, Gray,” Jack replied, staring into Ianto’s stormy blue eyes. “He truly and completely has me.”

Gray was still giggling when Jack scooted out of his hiding place, tugging down his shirt to try to cover the evidence of his tryst with his boyfriend. Jack moved a couple boxes out of the way so that there was room for all three of them to sit comfortably, though he settled back against Ianto’s chest, letting his boyfriend wrap his arms around him, one leg up on the couch.

Gray crawled onto the opposite end, all smiles. “That was fun. Can we play again? This time you can hide, Ianto!”

“Oh, maybe in a little while,” Ianto said, smiling back. “How about we rest a moment and then I bring you in to see my Mam? She’s been asking about you.”

“Really?” Jack asked over his shoulder.

“Yup. The last time Gray was here he made her a picture with shells, remember that?”

“Ah, yes. It was great.”

“I like making things,” Gray said, sitting cross-legged. “She liked it. I’m very clever.”

“Yes you are,” Ianto told him. “She loved it, actually. It’s still hanging in her room.”

“Really?” Gray asked this time, eyes wide.

“Sure is. Come look,” he suggested, moving a little until Jack begrudgingly shifted over and allowed him to get to his feet. He leaned down to whisper to Jack, “She’s having a good day.”

Jack nodded, understanding that there’d be no problems with Gray visiting with his mother today. It was always questionable, if she wasn’t completely lucid. But if she wasn’t suffering from any symptoms that day, it would be a lovely time for Gray to sit with her.

Gray took Ianto’s hand and they wandered out into the hall. Jack watched them go, heart swelling seeing the two of them together. Ianto really had a way with children. He’d make an excellent father one day.

Frowning, Jack shook his head. It was really far too soon to be following that train of thought too far down the track. Sure, they’d known each other for years, but they’d been together for less than a day. He was moving things too fast, he just knew it. He didn’t want Ianto to get scared and back off.

A few minutes later Ianto returned, no Gray in tow. Jack gave him a questioning look, to which Ianto smiled. “They’re reading.”

“Romance novels?” Jack asked with a concerned frown.

Ianto laughed, sitting down beside him. “No, of course not. I brought in a few of my favorite childhood books.” He pressed a kiss to Jack’s temple. “That should keep them busy for a couple of hours.”

Jack smirked. “Oh really? And what do you intend to do with me for a couple of hours?”

Ianto rolled his eyes. “Well first, I was thinking we could make lunch for the four of us.”

Jack pouted. “I thought they were reading.”

“Doesn’t mean they can’t eat at the same time,” Ianto replied. “You and I can whip up some sandwiches and sliced fruit.”

“Very healthy, Ianto.”

“I thought so.”

Jack grinned, hugging his boyfriend close. God, he was crazy about him. He wanted to tell him that so badly, but he knew it was far too soon. Instead he just snuggled with him, breathing in the scent that was distinctly Ianto.

“Food,” Ianto told him several minutes later, disentangling himself and getting to his feet. He held out a hand to Jack, who gladly took it.

Jack followed him into the kitchen, where they began to prepare a nice lunch. They brought Gray and Ianto’s mother their food in her bedroom, where the two of them were seated at a small table. Gray was reading enthusiastically from “The Wonderful World of Oz” and Bethan, Ianto’s mother, was listening intently.

Jack had to admit she looked healthy and happy today, hair brushed and up in a band at the back of her head, and she was wearing a bright red dress that flowed to her sandaled feet. Her cheeks were rosy and she was smiling, watching Gray read to her.

“Enjoy lunch, Mam,” Ianto told her, kissing the top of her head.

“Thank you, dear, I will,” she replied, smile deepening. “Hello Jack,” she greeted him, reaching out an arm.

Jack hugged her, accepting the kiss on his cheek. “Hello Mrs. Jones,” he replied, winking. “You look just beautiful today. Is that a new dress?”

She blushed, reminding him of Ianto instantly. “What, this old thing? Surely you jest. Now go on, you two,” she scolded, shooing them toward the door. “Gray is reading to me and I’m sure you’d rather be alone.”

Now Ianto did blush. “Mam...”

“What? I’m not blind, you know.”

Ianto just shook his head, grabbing Jack’s hand and drawing him out of the room. “Come on, Jack,” he said. “Better leave now before she says something really embarrassing.”

“You’re such a handsome couple!” she called after them, and then she and Gray began giggling.

“Like that?” Jack asked him, smirking.

Ianto mumbled something under his breath and dragged Jack back to the lounge, where they sat to eat their lunch.

tw tw tw tw tw

After lunch Jack and Ianto cleaned up all of their plates and cups, washing and drying them quickly and putting them away. Jack wound his arms around Ianto’s waist from

behind as he finished putting the last of the dishes on the shelf. He pressed a kiss to Ianto's neck.

"Trying to distract me?" Ianto asked him, stretching his neck and giving Jack more access.

"Is it working?" he murmured, biting at his neck and then kissing the wound better.

Ianto groaned softly. "Perhaps."

"Good."

Ianto turned in Jack's arms, placing his hands on his shoulders. "I don't know what to think, Jack," he said, eyes sincere.

"About what?" Jack asked, eyebrow rising.

"Us," Ianto admitted. Jack was nervous for a moment but Ianto smiled, kissing him softly. "It's nothing bad, I promise."

"Tell me."

"It's just that...we've only been together a day...less than, actually...but I...I feel..."

Jack watched Ianto's eyes as they darted over his face, then toward the floor, then back up to meet Jack's. "Go ahead," he encouraged.

"I feel like it's right," Ianto said at last, shrugging. He picked at an invisible piece of lint on Jack's shoulder. "Us being together, I mean. Does that make sense?"

Jack smiled, resting their foreheads together. "It makes perfect sense."

"I just never thought I'd be attracted to guys the way I am girls," Ianto continued.

"Though I'm not, really. It's not guys. It's...it's just you. It's only you."

Jack felt his heart clench and he drew Ianto closer, burying his face in his neck and hugging him close. He closed his eyes, pressing kisses to Ianto's skin. He felt Ianto's nails dig into the base of his skull as his arms wrapped around Jack's neck, and he sighed.

"I'm exactly where I want to be," Jack whispered, feeling Ianto's heartbeat against his own.

"Me too, Jack," Ianto said back, tightening his hold. "Me too."

Chapter 9

It was a couple of weeks before Jack was able to afford another evening alone with Ianto. His boyfriend had protested, of course, but Jack couldn't help it. He knew that Ianto needed the time away and he wanted nothing more than to spend time with him. This time, however, he only hired care for four hours. Enough time, he figured, for a nice meal at a decent restaurant. He knew Ianto wasn't fooled, however. He knew they were both aware the difference in money was going directly to the meal.

"You're still spending too much on me, Jack," Ianto scolded, exiting the car and joining Jack as they walked through the car park and over to the front door.

"Ah, come on, Ianto," Jack pleaded, coming to a stop outside the restaurant and wrapping his boyfriend in a hug. "It's just once in a while. Twice a month isn't bad. Surely you can't begrudge me wanting to be alone with my boyfriend?"

"Jack, twice a month means your entire allowance is going to pay for my Mam's care just for an evening. There's no money left for you."

"This is for me, too," he argued, pressing a kiss to Ianto's nose. "For us."

Ianto sighed, smiling at him. "Alright, Jack. But no more than twice a month, okay? I don't want to be the reason you've no money."

Jack grinned, kissing his lips gently before turning them back toward the door to the restaurant. It was an Italian restaurant, though not on the expensive side, since funds were, indeed, low. They were shown to a booth in the corner, and the waitress handed them both menus.

"Can I interest you gentlemen in something to drink? Tea, perhaps? Or coffee?"

"A coffee for me, please," Ianto told her.

"And you, sir?"

"For me as well, thank you," Jack confirmed, looking back at Ianto as the woman walked away. "Have you been here before, Ianto?"

"No, can't say that I have," he answered, a slight blush coloring his cheeks.

Jack felt bad. He hadn't meant to embarrass him. He reached across the table, taking Ianto's hand. "I've only been a couple times, myself," he said, rubbing his thumb over Ianto's knuckles. "It's good, though. You'll like it."

Ianto nodded, looking through the menu. "Mmm, pasta does sound delicious."

“Yes it does,” Jack agreed, noticing with a smile that Ianto hadn’t removed his hand. He perused his own menu, settling on the Chicken Fettuccini Alfredo.

When the waitress returned with their coffees she was smiling down at them. “All decided, gentlemen?”

“Go ahead, Ianto,” Jack told the Welshman.

“Ah yes, um, I will have the Chicken Fettuccini Alfredo,” he told her, returning her smile. “Thank you.”

“Same for me, actually,” Jack stated, squeezing Ianto’s hand.

“I’ll put your order in right away. Would you care for any appetizers?”

Ianto and Jack shared a look but both shook their heads. “No, but thank you,” Ianto said, handing her the menus.

She left the table and Jack beamed at his boyfriend. “Ordering the same meals. Some might think we’ve been together longer than we have.”

“Am I rubbing off on you?” Ianto asked.

Jack chuckled, adding some sugar to his coffee and taking a sip before answering, “Not yet.”

Ianto blushed. “I meant that in the non-sexual sense, Jack.”

“Of course you did, Ianto.”

Ianto pursed his lips, glaring playfully before he fixed his own coffee and took a drink. “Not as good as mine,” he said, setting the cup down on the table.

“Definitely not,” Jack agreed, winking.

“Oh my God!” a voice screeched from a few feet away.

Jack’s head shot up and he cringed, seeing Gwen, Tosh and Lisa coming their way with the same waitress. It wasn’t so much seeing them there that was the issue, but he knew immediately that there was no way he’d get his alone time with Ianto at this rate.

“Hello girls,” Ianto greeted them, smiling. Jack could tell the smile was forced. He’d also pulled his hand back from Jack’s and Jack shot him a frown.

“What a surprise running into you,” Gwen told them, turning to the waitress. “We’ll sit here with them, she said, indicating Jack and Ianto’s table.”

Before Jack could protest Ianto was scooting over closer to him to make room for the other three, and their thighs were brushing together. That wasn't so bad, he thought, placing a hand on Ianto's knee and squeezing.

The waitress took their drink orders and left them menus, disappearing just as quickly as she had earlier.

"Girls night out?" Jack asked his friends, looking at each girl in turn.

"We've been shopping," Tosh answered first, holding aloft a plastic bag.

"It was lovely," Lisa said, smiling brightly. "We finished up as the shops were closing."

"And I picked up a pretty little number for Rhys," Gwen announced, reaching into her own shopping bag and pulling out a black, lacey bit of nothing. "Isn't it amazing?"

Ianto turned bright red and Jack cleared his throat. "Wow," Ianto murmured, lowering his eyes.

Gwen held the negligee against herself. "Rhys is going to go mad when he sees this, yeah? What do you think, Jack?"

"It's lovely, Gwen," he told her, feeling Ianto tense under his hand.

Several awkward moments later the waitress returned with the girls' drinks. "Ready to order, ladies?"

They placed their orders in turn, the waitress retrieving the menus. Jack caught her eye and he could swear she shot him a sympathetic look before leaving in the direction of the kitchen.

"I've decided to sleep with Rhys, Jack," Gwen announced, causing Ianto to nearly snort his coffee.

"Kind of...figured that out," Jack replied. "Don't you think Rhys should be the first one to know that, and not me?"

"Well, I already told the girls," Gwen said, looking at them for support. Tosh and Lisa nodded, though Jack noticed they both seemed rather embarrassed by the conversation.

"Ah," Jack said, sipping his coffee, slowly.

"If you'll excuse me," Ianto said, placing his cup down on the table. "I need to use the bathroom."

“Of course,” Jack replied, scooting out of the booth to let Ianto out. He didn’t notice Gwen move into Ianto’s spot until the Welshman disappeared into the back of the restaurant and Jack reluctantly tore his eyes away from him.

“So Lisa,” he started, catching the girl’s attention. “You and Adam...is it serious?”

“Adam? Oh, no,” she said, smiling. “We’re just friends. But he’s a nice boy.”

“I think he has a crush on me,” Tosh piped up, blushing. “He knows I’m with Tommy, but he keeps trying to get me to go out with him.”

“I think it’s adorable,” Gwen said, sipping her coffee. “Now Jack, don’t you think Lisa is a lovely girl?”

Jack’s eyebrows shot up, intrigued by the sudden change of topic. “Of course,” he replied, watching as Lisa shook her head. “Why do you ask?”

“I want to set her up with someone, but even though I think they’ll make a wonderful couple she’s hesitant and doesn’t think he likes her.”

“Any boy would be a fool not to like her,” Jack said, winking at the girl across from him.

“That’s what I said,” Gwen stated, smirking.

“Who is it?” Jack asked, somewhat curious now.

“Ianto,” Gwen said, smiling brightly. “Don’t you think they’d be wonderful together?”

Jack’s eyes widened and he looked at Gwen as though she’d sprouted a second head. “Absolutely,” he said, shaking his head. “If Ianto weren’t already in a relationship.”

“With who?” Gwen asked, eyes widening like his own.

“With me, Gwen,” he said, holding his hands palm up. “We’re together. We have been since the dance.”

“Oh don’t be silly, Jack,” Gwen laughed, waving her hand at him. He could see Tosh looking down at the table, and Lisa, frowning and biting her lip. “That’s just a silly little fling. Everyone knows you’re just toying with him.”

“What?”

“You’ll never last,” Gwen continued, rolling her eyes. “And when you stop playing Ianto he’ll be free to date Lisa.”

“I am not playing him, Gwen!”

“Just shag him and get it out of your system, Jack,” Gwen said, taking another sip of her coffee. “We all know who you’d rather be with.”

“And who’s that?”

“Me, of course.”

“Oh, yeah,” Jack said, rolling his own eyes. “I want to dump Ianto for you.”

“I’m glad you finally admit it,” Gwen purred, leaning closer to him and grabbing his face in both hands. She kissed him hard, Jack’s hands coming up to grip her wrists and push her away.

Tosh gasped, covering her mouth, and Gwen pulled back, looking over Jack’s shoulder. “Oh hello, Ianto,” she said sweetly. “Everyone move over and let Ianto back in.”

Jack turned to face his boyfriend, seeing the stricken look on his face. He swallowed hard, reaching a hand out to him. “Ianto...I...”

“Just save it, Jack!” he said, face red and tears threatening to spill onto his cheeks.

The waitress appeared with their meals, hovering a few feet from the table. “Two Chicken Fettuccini Alfredo’s,” she said softly, looking between Jack and Ianto carefully.

“No thank you,” Ianto said, voice cracking. “I’ve lost my appetite.”

He turned and hurried toward the door, and Jack reached for his wallet. “I’m sorry,” Jack told her, handing her the money. “Keep the change.” He then hopped out of the booth and took off after Ianto.

“Oh dear,” Gwen said, looking at her friends with doe eyes. “Something I said?”

Chapter 10

“Ianto!” Jack called, jogging after the Welshman who was heading toward the corner. Most likely to catch a cab, he figured. “Ianto, wait. Please?”

Ianto slowed his pace, allowing Jack to catch up with him. Jack stopped in front of his boyfriend, placing his hands on his shoulders. Ianto looked up at him, eyes red-rimmed. He’d evidently been crying.

“What is it, Jack?” Ianto asked him, sighing. “If you think I’m going back in there you’re mistaken.”

“No, Ianto,” Jack said softly, cupping his face. He didn’t pull away, so Jack took that as a positive sign. “I wouldn’t ask you to do that. But you have to know, Ianto, she kissed me out of the blue. I swear to you.”

“I know, Jack,” Ianto replied, eyes filling with tears again. “I saw and heard what happened. But...Jack, that’s not why I’m upset with you. Even though it was hard to watch.”

“Then what is it, Ianto?” Jack asked, swallowing hard. He’d been horrified that Ianto had seen Gwen kiss him, and was glad he’d at least known Jack hadn’t initiated anything, but at the same time he knew that entire part of the conversation was something Ianto shouldn’t have had to witness. “What did I do?”

“It’s what you didn’t do, Jack. They all sat down with us and you said nothing,” Ianto said, shaking his head.

“But Ianto,” Jack argued, gently. “You made room for them. I thought that meant you were okay with it. I didn’t want to start a scene in the restaurant if it didn’t matter to you.”

“It did mean something to me. This was supposed to be a date, yeah? Time for us to be alone.”

Jack lowered his eyes. “That’s what I’d planned it to be, yes.”

“I didn’t say anything to Gwen or the others because you were treating me to dinner. It wasn’t really my place to do so.”

“But if you didn’t want them there you could have said something to me, Ianto. I would have agreed with you,” he told him, squeezing his shoulders.

“Well Gwen’s not obsessed with me, Jack. She’s got her eyes on you. She always has.” Ianto frowned at him. “You obviously haven’t talked to her, Jack.”

“I...” Jack looked away, sighing deeply. He’d really screwed things up. “I’m so sorry, Ianto. I just haven’t had the chance to talk to her. God, this is all my fault. I should have made the time at school.”

“Jack! Ianto!”

Jack turned to see Toshiko heading towards them. He lowered his hands from Ianto’s shoulders, catching one of his hands in his own. Ianto allowed him to do so, wiping his face with his other hand.

“Tosh?” Jack said, seeing her carrying two large paper bags.

“I brought you your food,” she said, slightly out of breath. “I was going to bring it to Ianto’s house, but I’m glad I caught you here.”

Jack smiled, taking their bag from her. “That was really nice of you Tosh. You didn’t have to do that.”

Toshiko smiled back. “It was no problem. You didn’t get to have your meal because of us. Truthfully, I couldn’t wait to get out of there either. Ianto, I am so sorry you had to see all of that.”

“Doesn’t matter,” he muttered, not meeting her eyes.

“Yes it does,” Tosh told him. “Gwen had no right to say the things she did, and quite frankly, I’m embarrassed on her behalf.”

“Did you leave them there?” Jack asked. “You drove, didn’t you?”

Tosh smirked. “Yep. I asked Lisa if she wanted to leave with me, but, being new, I think she’s a little afraid to be on Gwen’s bad side.”

“And you?” Jack inquired, smirking as well.

“I couldn’t care less about being on her bad side. Especially when hers is the wrong side.” Tosh smiled. “I’d rather eat my food alone than sit with someone so rude and hateful. I mean really, with poor Rhys sitting at home, not knowing what her real plans are? I feel for the guy.”

“Me too,” said Jack, shaking his head. He’d seen Gwen’s true colors tonight, and knew their friendship would suffer for it.

“Ianto, sweetie?” Tosh said, getting the Welshman’s attention. “I mean it. You really don’t deserve the things Gwen was saying or doing. She’s spiteful and vindictive, and considering how long we’ve all known each other I’m appalled. You’re okay, right?”

“Yes, Tosh,” Ianto said softly, smiling at her. “Thank you. I appreciate your support.”

“Don’t mention it,” she replied. “Now, I better get home. I’m absolutely starving!”

She headed off with a wave as she made her way to the car park. Jack turned back to his boyfriend. “Do you want me to go back in there and give her a piece of my mind?” he asked, quite serious. “I’ll do it, if you want me to.”

“No, Jack,” Ianto said, shaking his head. “You’re right. There’s no reason to cause a scene in the restaurant. It’s not really fair to the other patrons.”

Jack nodded, drawing Ianto into his embrace. The boy didn’t resist and Jack held him close. “I don’t want to lose you, Ianto Jones.”

“I’m not going anywhere,” Ianto murmured into his shoulder.

“Good,” Jack told him, burying his face in Ianto’s neck and inhaling his scent. “And now my lips have been tainted. I wish I knew a way to fix that...”

Ianto pulled back, glaring at him. “Funny, Jack,” he said, pressing his lips to Jack’s for a long, deep kiss.

When the kiss ended, Jack grinned, grabbing Ianto’s hand again and tugging him toward the car park. “Let’s get out of here, Ianto,” he said, swinging their hands together. “We have plenty of time left to enjoy our dinner at home.”

“That sounds nice, Jack,” Ianto replied, squeezing his hand as they approached the car. “But maybe,” he added, letting go of Jack’s hand as they each got into the car. “Maybe you could stay over tonight?”

Jack closed his door, smiling at Ianto across the seats. “Really? You want me to?”

“I do,” Ianto confirmed, smiling back shyly and looking up under his lashes.

Jack beamed. “Well, then we’ll just make a quick trip to my house and pick up some overnight things, okay?”

“Okay, Jack,” Ianto replied.

Jack started the car, unable to wipe the smile off of his face. He’d been so sure he’d lost Ianto tonight, after Gwen’s behavior and his obvious lack of ability to see the kind of person she’d become. But he wouldn’t make that mistake again. He’d make sure Gwen not only apologized to Ianto but to him as well.

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After fixing an overnight bag of clothing and essentials, and having a quick conversation with his mother and father, Jack was back in the car with Ianto and they were on their way. Jack held Ianto's hand on the way back to the Welshman's house, reassuring himself that things between them were going to be okay.

When they arrived at Ianto's, Rebecca greeted them at the door. They confirmed, just as they had the last time, that they'd still like her to complete her hired time, and she seemed pleased. They made their way to Ianto's room but Ianto stopped off to check on his mother.

Jack had placed his bag and the food bag on the floor by Ianto's wardrobe, and was sitting on the bed when the Welshman returned. He smiled at Ianto, standing up and reaching out his hand. Ianto took it, moving closer to him.

"I'm really sorry, Ianto," Jack told him, wrapping his arms around his boyfriend's waist. "I should have talked to Gwen a couple weeks ago, and maybe tonight would have never happened."

"I have a feeling she still would have tried to kiss you," Ianto told him, smiling sadly. "She doesn't understand personal boundaries."

"No, I don't think she does," Jack agreed, nuzzling his Welshman's nose with his own. "But I'm going to tell her, Ianto. Either she straightens up and respects our relationship or I can't be friends with her."

"I hate making you choose between us."

"It's a shame I have to," Jack replied, pressing a kiss to Ianto's forehead. "But that's her fault, not yours. She's the one making it impossible to be friends with her."

Ianto nodded, then kissed Jack softly. "Can we eat now? My stomach is growling."

Jack smiled, stepping over to where he'd placed the bag of food. "Do you think Rebecca and your mother are hungry? These portions are huge."

"I'll ask," Ianto said, slipping out of the room. He returned a moment later. "No, they've both eaten," he told Jack, leading him into the kitchen. "Maybe we'll just have breakfast for the morning."

Jack grimaced, laughing. "Chicken Fettuccini Alfredo for breakfast?"

"Why not?" Ianto asked, taking one of the containers and placing it in the refrigerator. He dumped the other on a plate, setting it in the microwave to heat up and tossing out the container.

Jack shook his head, grabbing two forks from a drawer and then leaning on the counter. "Just sounds...weird," he admitted, shrugging.

“We can’t all eat donuts and biscuits for breakfast, Jack,” Ianto teased him.

“Maybe, but they go better with coffee.”

The microwave chimed and Ianto took out the plate. “Kitchen or bedroom?” he asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Bedroom’s fine,” Jack answered.

“Alright,” Ianto agreed, moving towards his room.

Several minutes later they’d cleared the plate, each raving about the quality of the food. Ianto took their plate and forks to the kitchen, washed them quickly, then returned to the bedroom to join Jack. He hopped up onto the bed, kissing Jack hard on the mouth.

“Mmm, what was that for?” Jack asked, smiling at him.

“Do I need an excuse to kiss my boyfriend?” Ianto asked, smiling back.

“Never,” Jack told him, kissing him in turn.

They settled down to watch some telly, and before Jack knew it Rebecca was tapping on the door to let them know it was time for her to leave. Jack gave her the money she’d earned, both of them thanking her again for her time.

“It’s a pleasure,” Rebecca told them, smiling. “Your Mam is charming, Ianto.”

“Thank you,” he replied, returning her smile.

Once she’d left the house, Ianto checked on his mother one last time to wish her goodnight, then made his way back to the bedroom.

“How’s she doing?” Jack asked, seeing the smile still crossing Ianto’s face.

“She’s doing well, today,” Ianto told him, sighing. “It’s nice to see her smile so much.”

“That’s good,” Jack agreed. “Seems Rebecca’s cheerfulness is good for her.”

“Yup.”

They both prepared for bed, Jack moving to the bathroom to change into pajamas. Ianto joined him a few moments later and they both brushed their teeth.

“I’m glad you asked me to stay over,” Jack told him when they were back in Ianto’s bedroom, snuggled under the covers.

“Me too,” replied Ianto. “I slept well the last time you spent the night.”

“Even though you woke up cuddling with me?” Jack teased, smiling at him.

“Yes, well,” Ianto mumbled. “At least this time I have the right to.”

Jack snickered. “You had the right to then, as well. I didn’t mind at all.”

“I’ll bet,” Ianto said, burying his face in Jack’s neck. “I still can’t believe you don’t wear cologne.”

“Nope, sure don’t,” Jack confirmed. “Well, there was one time,” he admitted, chuckling. “My brother bought me this awful little bottle of cologne for Christmas one year. I don’t know what our mother was thinking, letting him get it. But the thought was there, so I had to at least wear it once.”

Ianto giggled. “Gray’s a good kid. You’re lucky to have a brother like him.”

Jack sighed. “Yeah, I really am.”

They were quiet for a few minutes, each lost in their own thoughts.

“Jack?” Ianto said, breaking the silence.

“Hmm?”

“Have you...I mean...do you..?”

“Do I..?” Jack said, waiting for the rest of the question.

Ianto blushed. “Never mind.”

Jack pulled back a bit, looking at his boyfriend. “It’s okay, Ianto,” he said, brushing his fingers through Ianto’s hair. “Whatever it is, you can ask me.”

Ianto looked deep in thought for a moment, his eyes meeting Jack’s a moment later as he worried his bottom lip. “Do you ever think about...doing more? With me, I mean?”

Jack raised an eyebrow. “As in...more than kissing?” he asked, wanting to make sure they were on the same wavelength.

“Yeah,” Ianto said, blushing again.

Jack smirked. “Yes, of course I do. Why?”

“I was just wondering,” Ianto said, dropping his eyes.

Jack kissed him slowly, exploring Ianto's mouth with his tongue before moving his lips to Ianto's neck. He bit him softly, soothing the marks with his tongue and then moving his mouth to Ianto's ear. He whispered, "I'll do whatever you'd like me to do. All you need to do is ask."

Ianto's hand clutched at his hip. "I...I don't know, Jack," he managed, swallowing. "I've never done anything before."

Jack pulled back, a smile crossing his face. "Met neither, Ianto," he admitted.

"With anyone?"

"Nope."

Ianto smiled, curling further into Jack. "Well, you can. You know, if you want to. With me."

Jack kissed Ianto again, unable to resist him. When they broke apart they were both breathing heavily. Jack kept his eyes locked on Ianto's, but slid his hand down his chest, cupping his boyfriend's erection through the soft flannel of his pajamas.

Ianto's eyes closed and a small moan escaped his mouth. Jack kissed it away, stroking Ianto gently.

"Are you sure?" he whispered, still moving his hand.

"Y-yes," Ianto replied, gripping Jack's shirt in his fist. "P-please, Jack."

Jack nodded, tilting Ianto's face up so he could kiss him again as he slid his hand into Ianto's pajama bottoms.

Chapter 11

Ianto clung to his t-shirt as Jack worked his hand over him. Jack soothed him with kisses, wanting to give him as much pleasure as possible. Within minutes he had him worked up into a squirming mess.

“Jack...Jack...” Ianto chanted, canting his hips toward Jack’s hand.

“Shh,” Jack quieted him, not wanting him to be overheard.

Ianto moaned, whispering, “Need...Oh God...”

Ianto came undone beside him, burying his face in Jack’s neck and groaning his pleasure. Jack continued his movements, easing him through it gently. When Ianto stopped trembling Jack removed his hand, reaching over his boyfriend to the nightstand where there was a box of tissues. He cleaned his hand and then Ianto, tossing the soiled tissues in the bin in the corner.

“You okay?” Jack asked him, stroking Ianto’s flushed face. Blue eyes met his and a smile crossed Ianto’s face.

“I...Jack...” he started, stumbling over his words. Jack smiled back at him. “That was amazing, Jack.”

“Yeah?” Jack replied, pressing a kiss to Ianto’s forehead. “Felt good?”

“Good is an understatement,” Ianto mumbled, blushing. “But what about..?” Ianto touched Jack between the legs.

“Um, I don’t know, Ianto,” Jack told him, restraining himself from thrusting his hips toward Ianto’s hand. He was aroused beyond all reason, having been so intimate with Ianto. “I guess that’s up to you. What do you want? I don’t want to rush you into anything.”

“I want...to make you feel good too, Jack.”

“Okay, Ianto.”

Jack kissed him deeply, aligning their bodies again. Ianto’s hand fumbled with his waistband but found its way inside, grasping him tightly. Jack moaned into their kiss. Ianto’s hand on him felt incredible.

Ianto’s movements were slow at first, tentative, but as he found a rhythm they became firmer and faster. Jack’s hips moved of their own volition, meeting Ianto’s hand eagerly.

It didn't take long before Jack could feel the familiar tension building in his stomach. He was no stranger to pleasuring himself, and he knew he wouldn't last much longer.

"So close, Ianto," he whispered after breaking their kiss, nuzzling into Ianto's neck.

Jack's heart was racing as he fell apart, and he wound his arms around Ianto, letting his hips settle into a final rhythm. He wanted to cry out, but with Ianto's mother in the next room he couldn't afford to. Instead, he grunted into Ianto's neck, much as the other boy had done, licking, biting and suckling at the flesh he found there until he could do nothing but pant helplessly.

When he was finished Ianto was smiling at him, before leaning back to grab tissues as Jack had done a few minutes before. Jack reached for them but Ianto shook his head.

"Let me," Ianto told him, cleaning them both carefully.

Jack nodded, still trying to catch his breath, and admired the mark he'd left on Ianto's neck. He liked showing the world Ianto was his.

Throwing the wadded tissues toward the bin Ianto turned back to him and Jack snuggled him close. "Was it...okay?" Ianto asked hesitantly.

"Better than okay," Jack said, brushing his fingers across Ianto's cheek. "You're amazing, Ianto Jones."

Ianto blushed again, leaning into Jack's touch. "So are you, Jack."

Jack yawned, withdrawing his hand and covering his mouth. "Wow. Alright, well...now I'm so tired! Ianto, you wore me out."

Ianto yawned as well, giggling. "Don't do that, Jack. It's contagious."

Jack grinned, pressing kisses all over Ianto's face. His boyfriend squirmed under the attention, and Jack took advantage of the moment by tickling him relentlessly. When he finally showed mercy to the wiggling Ianto under his hands he hugged him tight.

"God, I love you, Ianto," he said into his ear, placing a kiss just beneath on his cheek.

Ianto pulled back slightly, meeting Jack's eyes. "I...I love you too, Jack."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," Ianto said, nodding.

Jack's heart clenched and he sighed, pulling the covers up to their necks and settling in beside Ianto, wrapping his arm around him. Within a few minutes he could hear the other boy's breathing even out and he smiled, happily letting himself drift off to sleep.

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School on Monday morning couldn't bring Jack's spirits down. Not only had he spent that glorious Saturday night with Ianto, but on Sunday Jack had hurried home to do a few chores before picking up his book bag and returning to Ianto's for an afternoon of revising. Which meant, of course, some time for cuddling and watching the telly as well.

He was going to pass his exams with Ianto's help though, he was sure of it. Luckily the exams he really needed to worry about were still a year off, but if he wanted to get there he had to pass the courses he was currently taking.

"Hi Jack," Gwen said brightly, stopping beside him as he stood at his locker.

Jack's smile disappeared. "Gwen," he acknowledged, slamming the locker and hefting his bag over his shoulder. He began to walk away, heading for his history classroom.

Gwen hurried after him. "Hey, what's the deal with you?"

Jack glared at her. "You must be joking."

"N-no," she replied, shaking her head.

Jack stopped, fixing her with steely blue eyes. "Gwen Cooper, until you apologize to me and to Ianto for your behavior on Saturday night I have nothing more to say to you." With that he spun on his heel and continued down the hallway.

She followed after him, grabbing his arm. "You're overreacting, you are," she told him, pursing her lips. "I didn't say anything that you weren't already thinking."

Jack shook her off. "Look, I'm not sure how much more clearly I can say this. I've liked Ianto since we were kids, Gwen. Ianto Jones. He's now my boyfriend." He took a breath, trying to keep his anger under control. "He's not a toy for me, he's not a part time shag, and I love him."

Gwen's eyes widened. "You don't mean that."

"Yes, Gwen, I do," he replied, shaking his head. "And why do you care, anyway? You have Rhys now."

"Maybe. But that's only because no one else will have me," she murmured, blinking and not quite meeting his eyes.

Jack snorted softly. "I love Ianto, Gwen, and he loves me. I'm not planning to break up with him, and I'm not interested in you the way you want me to be. You're my friend.

Or, you were, anyway, before you treated Ianto so badly. And he was your friend as well. Why do you want to hurt him? What did he ever do to you?"

Gwen seemed to think for a moment, looking down at her shoes. "He got in the way of you and me, Jack."

"No, Gwen," Jack said, shaking his head sadly. "There's nothing between you and me. We're not going to be together. And if you can't accept that, there won't even be a friendship." He started again towards his classroom, knowing the bell would ring in just a moment.

Gwen hadn't moved. "But what about cheer?" she called, making him turn around. "We have to practice together!"

"If need be," he called back, raising his hands in submission, "I'll quit."

And with that he walked into his history class, leaving Gwen to think about his words.

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Jack sat with Ianto in the chip shop during his break, slowly sipping a chocolate malt and holding Ianto's hand. Their conversation was in hushed tones, and Ianto was smiling at him over his basket of chips.

"I wish you were coming over tonight," Ianto told him, squeezing Jack's hand gently. Cerys had the day off and Jack's parents were going to be attending a dinner meeting, so Jack needed to watch Gray. "Then maybe we could...celebrate you talking to Gwen."

Jack smirked around his straw, swallowing the chocolaty goodness and winking at Ianto. "Celebrate, hmm?"

"Yup."

"And exactly how would we celebrate, Ianto?"

Ianto looked down at his food, and then back up at Jack. His own smirk was one to be reckoned with. "I'm sure we'd think of something."

Jack was just about to open his mouth with a sarcastic and naughty reply when he saw the shop's door open and Tosh and Lisa enter with Tommy and Owen in tow. Jack raised his eyebrow, wondering what had happened to Katie. Owen and Lisa looked a bit...cozy together.

Ianto turned his head briefly, following Jack's gaze. "I don't see Gwen," he commented when he turned back.

“Nope. I wonder if Tosh is still fighting with her. I didn’t get a chance to ask today.”

“Hi Jack, Ianto,” Tosh said to them as her group approached.

“Hi Toshiko, guys,” Jack greeted, smiling.

“Hi,” Ianto said.

“I’m really sorry about this weekend, Ianto,” Lisa said softly, putting her hand on his shoulder.

“I hear Gwen was a real treat, yeah?” Owen offered. “I’m all for harassing the Tea Boy, but she was over the top.”

“It’s alright, Lisa,” Ianto told her. “It’s not your fault.”

“All I ever said was that you were...really cute,” she admitted, looking at the floor. “I never told her I wanted to break you guys up. I know you’re happy together.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Ianto assured her, smiling brightly.

“You’re not hanging out with her today?” Jack asked them, looking from face to face.

“Not until she learns some respect,” Tommy answered for them, scowling. “Not only did she insult the two of you but she threw these girls right into the middle of it.”

Jack nodded and watched as Owen and Tommy headed to the counter to put in their orders. Turning back to the girls Jack smiled. “So, Lisa, you and Owen..?”

She smiled shyly. “Tosh picked me up Saturday after the disaster dinner and we went to Tommy’s. Owen was there. He’s been...really sweet about everything.”

“I’m glad you two get along,” Jack said.

“Well, I hate to interrupt the party,” Ianto said, frowning. “But I have to get back to work. Not off for another hour and a half,” he explained to Tosh and Lisa. The girls nodded and Ianto stood, leaning down to whisper in Jack’s ear. “The food and drink are on me, this time.”

“You sure?” Jack asked, raising his eyebrows.

“Yup.”

“Well, we’ll let you say goodbye,” Tosh told them, winking and indicating for Lisa to follow her to another table further into the shop.

Jack smiled and then looked back at Ianto, standing to give him a hug. "I'll call you later, okay?" he said, kissing him softly.

"You better," Ianto said, smiling.

"Bye guys!" Jack called to their group of friends, now all sitting together and talking.

"Bye, Jack!" they called in unison.

Jack gave Ianto one more kiss and then grabbed his book bag, heading out the door.

"They're really perfect for each other," Tosh sighed dreamily.

"Yeah they are," Lisa agreed.

"Both so handsome," Tosh added.

"Yeah..."

"Oi, you lot," Owen said, scowling. "That's enough of that."

Tommy chuckled, kissing Tosh on the cheek. "Aw, don't worry Owen. Those two only have eyes for each other. We won't lose our girls to them."

"Mmhmm," Owen said, though he was smiling. He put his hand on Lisa's and she smiled back at him.

Outside, sitting in his car Jack pulled out his mobile, texting Ianto, "LOVE YOU."

A moment later, as he was driving towards his home he received a text back, "LOVE YOU TOO."

He glanced at his phone and then back at the road, grinning.

Chapter 12

“Oh, Jack, can you come here for a moment?”

Jack glanced over as he was descending the stairs and saw his mother and father sitting in the lounge. He smiled, joining them in the room. “Sure. What’s going on?”

“I wanted to ask you a question about you and your friend...I mean...boyfriend,” his father stated, indicating Jack should take a seat.

Jack moved over to the armchair opposite his parents and sat down, folding his hands in his lap. “Okay. What do you want to know?”

“Well, your mother and I have been discussing starting a new internship program at the office, and with you being done with school for the year shortly, we thought it might be just the thing to keep you busy this summer.”

Jack’s eyes widened. “An internship?” His father nodded. Jack liked the sound of that. He really did want a job of some sort. “What would I be doing?”

“To start with it would be as a sort of courier,” his mother explained. “When we have important documents to send to another branch you would be the one to take them there. In addition, you’d be watching your father, studying his daily activities and seeing if you might be interested in working there after school is over and you’re at University.”

Jack smiled. His father and mother were skilled architects, having owned their own business for as long as Jack could remember. They had clients all over the world, and a large staff of employees that handled the day to day grind of the corporate world. He’d wondered if his father would ever ask him to work there.

“Is it...paid?”

“Of course, Jack,” his father said, chuckling. “Not full salary to start, of course, as it’s a temporary to hire internship and it’s just for the summer, but if you do well, we’ll discuss making you a full employee and the salary that would come along with that.”

Jack’s eyebrows rose. “And you said this had something to do with Ianto, too?”

Jack’s father and mother looked at each other and then back at him. Jack swallowed, unsure if this was going to be good or bad.

“We’d like to ask him into the program as well,” his mother said. “I know he’s currently working, but with his need to take care of his mother, well...”

“We thought he might like something a little more stable,” his father continued. “We could use an office boy of sorts. A receptionist who also handles filing and general errands for the other employees.”

“Even as an intern I’m pretty confident it would pay more than he’s making at the chip shop,” his mother added. “He’s so charming, Jack. Polite and sincere, very eager to please. He’d be perfect for the company. Do you think he might be interested?”

Jack was beaming. He got up and hugged each of his parents in turn. “You really mean it?” They smiled back at him and nodded. “I...I’d have to talk to Ianto, but I’m sure he’d want to at least talk to you about it.”

“That’s wonderful, Jack,” his father replied.

“Oh, but...”

“What is it, son?”

“Well, he’d have to meet with you, right? But he has to look after his mother after work every day and on the weekends. I’m not sure how that would work.”

“We’ll just have to go to him,” his father stated, looking at his wife for confirmation. She nodded and he returned his gaze to Jack. “We’re very serious about this. We trust the both of you, and Jack, your grades have been excellent as of late.”

“Thanks to Ianto’s help,” Jack admitted. “I wouldn’t be passing trigonometry or chemistry without him. He’s a great tutor.”

“That’s great, Jack,” his mother said, smiling. “You’re heading to Ianto’s now, right? No dinner here, again?”

“I was just going to eat over there. If that’s okay?”

“That’s fine, Jack. Tell him we’d love to talk to him this weekend if he’s interested.”

“I will,” he said, hugging her again. “Thanks! Both of you!”

A few minutes later and Jack was out the door, headed to his boyfriend’s house. He’d forgone the book bag this time, as he really felt they needed a break from his revising. He made a stop to get them each a curry and then hurried off to Ianto’s.

Following Ianto into the lounge Jack set down their food, then drew the Welshman into his arms for a long kiss. “Missed you,” he told him, before kissing him again.

“Missed you too,” Ianto replied, smiling and taking a seat on the sofa. “How did your meeting with the cheer coach go?”

“As well as I expected,” Jack shrugged, sitting down beside him. “To say he wasn’t thrilled I was quitting the team is an understatement.”

Jack had been busy most of the week with chores to do at home, school work and his meeting with the coach. When Gwen had tried to flirt with him at lunch several days that week but refused to apologize, that had been the last straw. He told her he couldn’t be friends with her if she didn’t stop acting like he wasn’t in a relationship, and she told him she’d be waiting when he was done playing at being gay. He’d asked for a meeting with the coach the next afternoon.

“He was angry, yeah?”

“Oh, he was livid, Ianto.” Jack took a bite of his curry and chewed thoughtfully for a moment. “But I told him that I can’t work with one of my teammates anymore, so the dynamic would no longer be there. Ianto, he wanted us to see a therapist.”

“He what?” Ianto asked, fork on its way to his mouth. “You’re joking.”

“Nope. The coach thought if Gwen and I could work out our issues we’d be fine.”

Ianto sighed, putting his fork back down. “I’m sorry, Jack.”

“For what?”

“For coming between the two of you. For your having to quit the cheer program.”

Jack frowned, tilting Ianto’s chin up so he could look him in the eyes. “Ianto Jones, you’re more important to me than cheer. And you’re certainly more important to me than Gwen Cooper.”

Ianto gave him a small smile. “I still wish it were different.”

“Yes, well,” Jack shook his head. “She can’t accept that I’m not in love with her. She’ll never change, and I won’t put up with her attitude and behavior when it comes to you.” He kissed him softly before releasing his chin. “No one treats the boy I love that way.”

Ianto grinned at him. “My protector.”

“You better believe it.”

tw tw tw tw tw

Sitting on Ianto’s bed, Jack had just finished telling him about his parents’ proposal. Ianto’s brows were furrowed, and Jack was afraid he was going to say no.

“And they’re willing to pay me more than I’m making at the shop?” Ianto asked.

“Yes.”

“I don’t want to be a charity case, Jack.”

Jack sighed. “No, Ianto, that’s not what this is. I swear. Besides, they want us both to work there.” He took Ianto’s hand between his. “This could be the perfect opportunity for the both of us. I really wanted to get a job, and you could use one that better supports your mother. And we’ll see each other every day.”

“That would be nice,” Ianto said, smiling.

“Just meet with them. You don’t need to say yes right now. Talk to my parents and see if this is something you want to consider.”

“I’d love to get out of the chip shop, to be honest,” Ianto replied. “At least in an office I won’t smell like grease and fried foods.”

“Oh, I kind of like it,” Jack purred, tugging him closer so he could give him a kiss. “The smell of hard work.”

“Ew, Jack.”

Jack laughed, wrapping his arms around his boyfriend and cuddling him close. “You know you love it.”

“I love you,” Ianto offered.

“That works too,” Jack said, kissing his neck.

He was enjoying the small moans of pleasure Ianto was emitting as Jack pressed love bites along his chin and throat, pushing him back onto the bed. He’d moved to straddle him and was just leaning down to kiss him senseless when Ianto’s mam called his name from the other room.

Jack groaned, rolling off of him, and Ianto kissed him softly before getting up off of the bed. “I’ll be right back,” he told him, heading into the hallway.

A few minutes later Ianto returned, looking worn out. “You okay?” Jack asked, hugging him when the boy sat down beside him.

“She was asking for Rhi,” he answered, snuggling into Jack’s embrace. “She doesn’t understand sometimes that my sister left and isn’t coming back.”

“She hasn’t even called to check on you, has she?”

“Nope.”

“I’m so sorry, Ianto,” Jack murmured into his hair, tightening the embrace. “She’s missing out on knowing her incredible brother.”

“You’re biased,” Ianto replied, poking Jack’s side.

“Maybe, but I’m still right.”

“If your parents are serious about hiring me I’ll seriously consider it, Jack.”

Jack laid them down, holding the other boy to his side and nuzzling his neck. “They’re serious, Ianto.”

“Do you think they can come over tomorrow?”

“Sure.” Jack lifted Ianto’s shirt and pressed kisses to his stomach. Ianto squirmed.

“That tickles, Jack.”

“Does it?”

Ianto cried out when Jack blew on his belly. “Yes! Yes it does!”

“Good,” Jack mumbled into his skin, nipping at him before drawing himself up over Ianto to kiss him again, letting his fingertips tease at Ianto’s sides. “I haven’t lost my touch.”

“You’re incorrigible,” said Ianto, smirking as reached down to grab Jack’s hands.

“You wouldn’t want me any other way.”

“Probably not. But Jack?”

“Yes Ianto?”

“Quit mucking about and kiss me properly.”

Jack grinned before obliging, eagerly.

Chapter 13

Jack's first day of work at his new job surprised him. It wasn't just the fact that he'd passed his classes and was out of school for the summer, now working for his parents. It wasn't even the ridiculous amount of exercise he seemed to get by practically running up and down stairs, between floors, or the trip he'd taken that day to another office several minutes away by bus. No, the main reason he was so surprised was the change he could see in Ianto. And it wasn't necessarily a good one.

He'd tried to hold in the gasp of astonishment when he saw Ianto first thing in the morning, entering the boardroom and taking a seat at the table. He wasn't wearing the jeans Jack was so used to, or the boots that made him even taller than he was. Instead, he was dressed to impress, in a dark gray, three piece suit, complete with a dark red dress shirt and gray striped tie. Jack had felt the blood drain out of his face and head somewhere south of his stomach. He'd tilted his head and given Ianto a questioning look, but Ianto had merely glanced at him and turned his attention to Jack's parents.

At lunch that day, Jack found him at the reception desk, and ogled him from just out of Ianto's line of sight. Ianto was answering calls, jotting down messages on a notepad and until Jack cleared his throat, the Welshman seemed completely in his element.

"Jack!" Ianto said, putting his pen down. "Shouldn't you be upstairs?"

"It's noon, Ianto," he answered, moving from the wall on which he'd been leaning and stepping closer.

Ianto glanced at the clock, eyes widening. "So it is."

"You want to catch a bite at a restaurant or check out the cafeteria here?"

"Actually, I have a bit of filing to do," Ianto told him.

Jack frowned. "You're not going to eat lunch?"

"I'm not really that hungry," replied Ianto, shrugging. "You go ahead, though."

Jack watched him turn back to the ringing phone, picking it up and taking another call. After he'd routed it to the right office, Ianto moved to lift a box of paperwork onto his desk, reaching inside to begin sorting through it. Jack stood there for a moment, feeling hurt that Ianto had brushed him off so thoroughly, and then turned around and walked the other direction, obviously having been dismissed.

His second day of work didn't bode much better for his relationship. After trying unsuccessfully to get Ianto to spend some time with him during that lunch hour as well, he was growing increasingly more frustrated and upset. He wasn't sure what he had done wrong, and Ianto didn't seem to want to tell him.

He decided he'd wait for Ianto after work, since he'd taken his car that day and not driven in with his parents as he had his first day. It took at least an extra twenty minutes past the time Ianto should have been off the clock for the Welshman to appear from a back office, looking up to see Jack waiting by the desk.

"You're still here," Ianto commented, moving behind the desk to collect his things.

"I kind of hoped we could spend some time together," Jack said, noticing that Ianto wasn't meeting his eyes.

"I have to get home to Mam, Jack," Ianto said, shrugging on his coat.

"I know. Can I come with you?" Ianto sighed, looking up at him. Jack could see his eyes were red, as if he'd been crying. "Ianto? What's wrong?"

"Not here," his boyfriend replied, looking around as if he was afraid they'd be overheard.

Jack silently followed him out the front door, drawing his own coat closed against the unusually chilly summer afternoon. He watched Ianto closely as they walked away from the building, heading, it appeared, toward the bus stop.

"Ianto, I brought my car."

"I can't..." he started, cutting himself off with a huff. "It would be better if I went home alone, Jack."

Jack felt like a vise had gripped his heart. "Did I do something wrong? Are you mad at me?"

Ianto shook his head. "It's not you, Jack."

"Then what is it, Ianto?" Jack asked, grimacing when his voice cracked. "Because until we started working here, I hadn't talked to you in over a week, and now you don't want me around at all. Are you...breaking up with me?"

Ianto's eyes snapped up to meet his. Maybe it was the urgency in his voice, or maybe the sound of tears choking his speech, but Ianto actually looked concerned.

"Oh, Jack..."

"Because if you are, then...I guess it's past the point where I can convince you not to." Jack held back the tears, but it took everything in his power not to break down on the sidewalk. "But I love you, Ianto. And...I don't know what I did to make it so you felt you couldn't even talk to me about it."

"It's my sister."

“Y-your sister?” Jack asked. Ianto nodded. “Why would Rhiannon want you to break up with me?”

Ianto huffed a long breath, shaking his head. “She doesn’t, Jack. But she’s back.”

Jack’s brow furrowed. He was confused. “When did that happen?”

Ianto slumped down onto the stone wall bordering the office garden. “A week ago.”

“What happened?”

“She stormed right into the house like she owned the place, Jack. Like she had every right to be there.” His features darkened. “Started telling me I wasn’t taking care of Mam or the house properly. And Mam...she...she was so happy to see Rhiannon, she forgot I was there.”

Jack sat down next to him, careful not to touch him, even though he wanted to pull him into his arms in the worst way. But Ianto obviously didn’t want his affection right now.

“I’m sure she didn’t forget, Ianto.”

“Oh you have no idea what it’s like, Jack! When Mam is in a manic state, she’s all over the place. She was ecstatic, talking a mile a minute. And then...then Rhi...”

“Rhi what?”

“Rhi said she’s moving back in, with Johnny, and she’s going to clean up the house and make sure Mam is taken care of the right way. And Mam was so happy.”

“That doesn’t sound like...a bad thing. That sounds good, Ianto.”

Ianto looked at him, hurt in his eyes. “She told me she doesn’t want me there anymore.”

“Your mother?”

“No.” It was Ianto’s turn to choke up. “Rhiannon.”

Jack’s face fell. “What? Why? Ianto, I don’t understand.”

“It’s the drugs, Jack. She’s high all the time. She and Johnny. To them that house is just a place to crash, to have their friends over and party.”

“What happened to their place?”

“I don’t know. But Rhiannon and Johnny are moving in and want me out.”

“Ianto, that’s your house! They can’t do that!”

“They can if Mam lets them.”

Jack shook his head. “But why? Why would your mother let them kick you out? Your sister’s not going to be able to take care of her if she’s high all the time!”

“Mam adores Rhiannon,” Ianto said, dejectedly. “She’s always loved her more.”

“No, Ianto. I don’t believe that.” He threw caution to the wind and wrapped his arms around the other boy, sighing when Ianto sobbed and curled into his chest. “We’ll fix this. I swear to you, we will. If you’ll...let me?”

Ianto clutched at his shirt. “I’m so sorry, Jack,” he cried. “I love you. I just didn’t want you to...” He cut himself off and Jack tightened his arms.

“Shh...it’s okay, Ianto.”

“No, Jack. I was pushing you away. So you wouldn’t see me...like this.” He looked up at Jack, tears soaking his face. “I don’t want you to leave me, Jack. I’m scared.”

Jack wiped Ianto’s face with his thumbs, holding his head steady as he kissed him, gently. He then pressed his lips to Ianto’s forehead, before drawing him into another hug. Ianto’s face burrowed into his neck, and Jack could hear his shaky breathing.

“I’d never leave you, Ianto Jones,” he told him, slipping his arms inside Ianto’s coat and rubbing circles over his jacket-covered back. “Whatever happens, we’re going to get through this. Together.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.” Jack slowly eased himself to his feet, pulling his boyfriend up with him. “Come on. I’m gonna drive you home.”

Ianto looked worried. “My sister...”

“...is no match for me, Ianto. And you have to remember, it’s the drugs talking. It’s not her. She was always a wonderful sister to you growing up.”

“A lot has changed. She was a daddy’s girl. When he left...”

“When he left she rebelled, right?” Ianto nodded. “She felt betrayed, Ianto. If they were that close she would have felt like he abandoned her. He did, really. Both of you. And while you stayed strong and were there for your mother, she turned to Johnny and to the drugs. She was trying to escape.”

“But now she’s back, and she wants everything I have, Jack.”

“I don’t think she knows what she wants. I guarantee she lost their place, or Johnny did, and now they need a safe place to live.”

“I don’t know why she needs me to leave.”

“Probably because you represent all that is good, Ianto,” Jack told him, grabbing his hand and pulling him gently towards the car park. “If you’re there, Rhiannon can’t pretend everything is fine. You’re there, and you’re doing well, and taking care of your mother too. She wants to be normal again, and normal isn’t having you running the house.”

Ianto pressed himself against Jack’s side and Jack wrapped his arm around him, holding him close as they walked. “But we were just fine. I’m making more than enough to take care of Mam now. Why did she have to come back now and ruin everything, Jack?”

“We’re not going to let her. Your mother can’t make the decisions because of her condition. Your mother needs you.”

“You’ve never seen Rhiannon as she is now.”

Jack turned to face Ianto when they got to the car. He tipped Ianto’s chin up, smiling. “And Rhiannon’s never seen me as your protective boyfriend.”

A hint of a smile crossed Ianto’s face. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Ianto,” he replied, before opening his door and letting him get inside. He tugged on Ianto’s tie and pulled him into a searing kiss, breaking it only because he needed air. “More than ever.”

Ianto grinned at him and Jack shut the door, moving around the car and getting into the driver’s side. Starting the engine Jack took a deep breath, relieved he hadn’t lost Ianto but greatly disturbed by the turn of events.

“Jack?”

“Hmm?” he asked, turning to the Welshman.

“Can you stay the night tonight? I don’t want to be alone with her and Johnny.”

Jack took his hand, squeezing it. “Of course, Ianto. We’ll stop by my house and I’ll grab some clothes for tomorrow.”

“Thank you.”

“It’s going to be okay,” Jack told him, turning back to the front and putting the car into reverse. He backed out of the parking space, heading for the exit. “You’ll see.”

And he really hoped that was true.

Chapter 14

Jack held Ianto's hand as they stepped into the house. His eyes widened, seeing that the hallway had been cleared of boxes and debris. Ianto stiffened beside him.

"They moved her things," whispered Ianto, tightening his grip on Jack's hand. "She's going to be so upset."

"It's okay, Ianto," Jack soothed, pulling his boyfriend into his arms and hugging him tightly.

"It's not, Jack!" Ianto said, his voice a bit muffled by Jack's shoulder. "You don't understand."

"Actually, I do. I read up on hoarding, Ianto." He pulled back from the Welshman, running his fingers through his hair. "Your mother isn't screaming in there. That's a good sign, right?"

Ianto's brows furrowed. "I suppose, yeah."

"Well then," Jack continued, pressing a kiss to Ianto's forehead. "Let's go talk to Rhiannon and Johnny and find out what's going on. One step at a time."

Ianto nodded and led the way into the lounge. Jack wasn't surprised to see that room greatly transformed as well. The couch and table were sitting clear of clutter, there was an armchair Jack hadn't seen in ages, and the last light of the day was filtering in through the window.

"Where did all the boxes go?" Ianto asked his sister, who was sitting with Johnny on the couch.

"Hello to you, too, Ianto," she replied, not lifting her eyes from the telly. Another thing Jack hadn't seen since he'd started coming over regularly. The television. "There're sandwiches in the fridge if you're hungry."

"Rhiannon..."

"I stored them, Ianto. Okay? I didn't throw them out. Mam would kill me."

Ianto visibly stiffened. "She didn't mind you moving them, then?"

"She threw a right fit, actually," Johnny spoke up, stretching his arms and yawning before dropping his arm back behind Rhiannon. "But it had to be done."

"I have to check on Mam," Ianto told Jack, worry etched across his face. "Can you...just..."

“I’ll wait here,” Jack interrupted. Ianto nodded and headed off to his mother’s room. “So...Rhiannon,” Jack started, giving her a big smile. “Haven’t seen you for ages.”

The girl – woman, really – turned to look at him, raising an eyebrow. “Jack Harkness. Figures.”

Jack frowned. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“She means it didn’t take long for you to move in on her brother,” Johnny stated, eyes burning into his.

“That’s not fair,” Jack began, placing his bag on the floor and putting his hands on his hips. “I...”

“Life’s not fair, now is it?” Johnny interrupted, shaking his head. “What...you think you can just waltz right in here all high and mighty and sweep Ianto off his feet? He’s a boy from the wrong side of town, for you, isn’t he, Jack?”

“Don’t talk about him like that,” Jack said, growing angry.

“He’s a good lad,” Rhiannon said, folding her arms. “At least he was. Now he’s just mouthy and looks down his nose at us, he does. That’d be your influence, then?”

“Ianto has known me since we were four,” Jack pointed out, narrowing his eyes. “He’s the same as he’s always been. It’s you who’s changed.”

“Watch your tone of voice with my wife,” Johnny groused, getting to his feet.

“WIFE?” Ianto cried out from behind Jack. Jack turned toward him. “You married the likes of him?”

“Oi! You listen to me, you insolent brat...”

Jack spun around, getting in front of Ianto and coming face to face with a red-faced Johnny. “Don’t you ever talk to Ianto that way. Back. Off.”

“You’ve no business here, Harkness,” Johnny snarled, his breath reeking of beer. “Get out of my house.”

“This isn’t your house!” Ianto said, trying to get past Jack. Jack didn’t let him.

“What he said,” he replied, shaking his head. “I have every right to be here. I’ve been invited by someone who lives here.”

“As have I,” Johnny growled. “And since I’ve married her, I have as much a right to be here as she does.”

“No, you haven’t,” Jack told him, stepping towards him. “Rhiannon used to live here. Until she skipped out on her baby brother and left him to take care of all the finances and their mother by himself. Ianto still lives here. Ianto was responsible. Ianto has the eight to five job and puts food on the table and pays for his mother’s care. What do you do?”

“You stuck up son of a...” Johnny’s fist came up but Jack was faster, grabbing his hand and twisting it sideways. Johnny howled in pain and took a few steps back. “What the fuck is the matter with you? You got real problems, you know that?”

“With me?” Jack asked, moving forward and closing the distance between them. “You’re in my boyfriend’s house, watching the television he pays for, eating the food he buys and trying to run things. You threw a punch at me, buddy. It’s not me who has the problem.”

“Now that’s enough!” Rhiannon cried, getting to her feet and looking accusatorily at Jack. “I left for a bit but I’m back. I’m older than Ianto and I make the rules around here. Since you can’t respect that, I want you out. Both of you!”

“Rhi!” Ianto said, and Jack could hear the tears in his voice. “Don’t.”

“Look around you, Ianto,” she told him. “This is what we accomplished since you’ve been gone. You couldn’t do that, could you? Oh sure, you go out in your posh three piece suit, thinking you’re better than us. But you couldn’t even clean up the house.”

“Those are Mam’s things!” Ianto cried, stepping up beside Jack and balling up his fists. “She’s passed out in the room. What did you give her?”

“A sedative,” Johnny replied, still staring at Jack and rubbing his hand. “Bitch needed it.”

“Excuse me?” Jack asked, blood boiling.

“You heard me,” Johnny spat. “Now get the hell out of my house!”

“It’s not your house!” Jack shouted back. “How many times do you need to hear that?”

“Jack...don’t. He’s not worth it.”

“He can’t talk about your mother like that, Ianto.”

“I know. But...just...” Ianto tugged on his shirt sleeve. Jack glanced at him and saw pleading in his eyes. “Please.”

Jack sighed, nodding as he stepped backward. Johnny sneered at him.

“You chicken shit.”

“Don’t push me, Johnny,” Jack told him, glaring. “I’m only backing off for Ianto’s sake. We’re not finished with this.”

“Oh, you’re finished, alright,” Johnny told him, moving toward him. Rhiannon grabbed the loop on his jeans.

“No, Johnny. Just leave them be for now. We’ll deal with them later.”

Johnny swung an arm backward, catching her across the face. “Let me handle this, Rhiannon!”

Rhiannon gasped, holding her cheek. “Johnny!”

“I SAID LET ME HANDLE THIS!” Johnny raged, lunging toward Jack. Jack ducked down, grabbing the man’s legs and lifting, which sent Johnny over the top of him. He crashed into the tea cart that graced the wall, breaking it with a loud snap.

“Oh my God!” Rhiannon cried.

“You hit her!” Ianto accused, throwing himself at the man now trying to catch his breath on the floor. Jack reached an arm out, looping it around Ianto’s waist and preventing him from getting to Johnny. “Let me go, Jack! He hit my sister!”

“I know,” Jack said softly, the anger still present but being tamped down by concern for Ianto’s wellbeing. “I know, Ianto.”

“He didn’t mean to,” Rhiannon said, moving over to Johnny and checking his head. “He’s not...he’s not violent.”

“Could have fooled me,” Ianto said, struggling against Jack’s grip on him. “Why would you marry him, Rhi? Why?”

“Ianto...”

“No, Jack! I want to know.”

“Because...because I love him!” Rhiannon told her brother, tears streaming down her face. “I love him. And...”

“And what?” Ianto asked, finally starting to relax in Jack’s arms. Jack wrapped his other arm around him, pressing a kiss to his neck. Ianto sighed.

“I’m pregnant, Ianto.”

They just stared at her for a moment, Ianto tensing again in Jack's arms and Jack holding him tightly, unwilling to let him go and make things worse. "Y-you're..."

"Pregnant," Rhiannon nodded, sniffing. "We're going to have a baby, Ianto."

"I don't...I don't even..." Ianto trembled. "How could you let this happen, Rhi? Y-you took off...and left me here. And...now..."

Rhiannon's face softened. "I didn't want to leave you, Ianto."

"But you did!"

"I know." She turned back to Johnny, who was struggling to get to his feet. "I...I can't talk about this right now. I have to look after Johnny."

Ianto hung his head for a moment. Jack just held him, watching as Rhiannon led her husband into the hallway and through to the guest room. Rhiannon's room, to be more accurate. The door closed behind them with a soft click and Jack turned Ianto around in his arms.

"Hey," he said softly, lifting Ianto's chin. "It'll be okay."

Ianto shook his head, still crying. "It won't," he replied, voice shaky. "Please, Jack. Just..."

Jack caught him when he crumpled, drawing his boyfriend up and into his arms. He tucked one arm beneath Ianto's knees and the other around his back. Jack made his way to Ianto's room, depositing the shaking form on the bed and kissing his head softly.

"Get ready for bed," he told him, heading back to the lounge to collect his bag. When he returned, Ianto was exactly where he'd left him.

"What about dinner?"

"Are you hungry?"

"No," Ianto replied, shrugging. "I guess not, really."

"Me neither," Jack told him, removing Ianto's coat and draping it over his desk chair. He then did the same with Ianto's suit jacket, waistcoat and shirt, before moving on to his shoes, socks and trousers.

Ianto didn't argue, just allowed Jack to undress him. When Jack handed him a pair of pajamas from his wardrobe Ianto took them wordlessly, slipping into the soft cotton with a sigh.

“I’m so tired of fighting with them,” Ianto murmured, looking up at him with wide, sad eyes. “I want my sister back.”

“I know,” Jack replied, kneeling on the floor between Ianto’s legs and running a hand through his boyfriend’s hair. “I was hoping it wouldn’t come to blows.”

Ianto’s face reddened with renewed anger. “He hit her, Jack. How could he do that?”

“He wasn’t thinking. I believe it was an accident.” Ianto looked incredulous. “I’m not saying he wasn’t careless, Ianto. And reckless. He’s an idiot. But I don’t think he meant to hurt her.”

“I’m not so sure.”

“Only time will tell, Ianto,” Jack said, pressing a kiss to Ianto’s lips. Ianto kissed him back, clutching at Jack’s coat and pushing it off his shoulders before grabbing at Jack’s braces and tugging them down. “Hey, slow down.”

“I want you, Jack,” Ianto told him, working the buttons to Jack’s dress shirt. “Please. Please make me forget what happened tonight.”

Jack sighed, touching their foreheads together and stilling Ianto’s hands. “Not like this, Ianto.”

The Welshman’s face fell. “But I need you.”

“And I’m right here,” Jack said, placing soft kisses all over Ianto’s face. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“You don’t want me?”

Jack swallowed. “I want you more than you can imagine,” he said, shaking his head. “But right now isn’t the time to take that step.”

Ianto nodded slowly, and Jack got to his feet, removing the remainder of his clothing before slipping into the t-shirt and pajama bottoms he’d brought from his house. He and Ianto took turns in the washroom getting cleaned up and then Jack settled down beside him on the bed.

“We can watch telly, if you want,” Ianto offered, picking up the remote control. Jack nodded and Ianto switched the box on, turning to spoon with him. Jack’s arm wound around his waist, holding him close.

Sometime later, Jack nuzzled the back of Ianto’s neck. “Do you want me to touch you, Ianto?”

Ianto turned his head. “Touch me...like...”

“Like last time,” Jack replied, letting his hand trail down his boyfriend’s stomach. “It’s not what you wanted to do, but...”

“You’d do that for me?” Ianto asked, rolling onto his back? “What about you?”

“I’ll be fine, Ianto.”

Ianto seemed to be considering it for a moment. “M-maybe...” He didn’t continue, blushing fiercely.

“Maybe what?” Jack asked, pressing a kiss to the corner of Ianto’s mouth.

“If we can’t have sex,” Ianto started, swallowing and licking his lips. “Maybe you could...with your mouth...”

Jack grinned. “You want me to go down on you?” Ianto blushed again, and Jack thought that particular shade of pink was amazing on him. “I could do that.”

“R-really?” Ianto stammered, eyes wide and full of hope.

“Really, Ianto,” Jack replied, crawling over him and giving him a deep kiss.

Ianto moaned when Jack’s hand found him, and Jack wasn’t surprised to find that just their talking had Ianto incredibly turned on. By the time he’d pulled Ianto’s pajama bottoms down and ducked his head, the Welshman was squirming on the bed.

Several minutes later found Ianto moaning his name over and over in a chant as he came, the boy’s fingers tangling in Jack’s hair, and Jack couldn’t help but smile when he released him and pressed a kiss to Ianto’s thigh. “You okay?” he asked, reaching for a tissue to dry Ianto off.

“I...just...wow, Jack.”

Jack grinned, tugging up Ianto’s pajamas into place before positioning himself at Ianto’s side once more. He buried his face in Ianto’s neck and breathed him in. “So, good then?” Ianto giggled, turning onto his side and drawing Jack’s face up, kissing him long and hard, seemingly not caring where Jack’s mouth had just been. “I’ll take that as a yes.”

“Yes, Jack,” Ianto said between kisses. “Yes, yes, yes.”

“Yeah?” Jack preened, rolling onto his back and putting his arms behind his head. “I guess all that porn helped.”

“Jack!” Ianto smacked his arm playfully.

“What?” Jack asked, turning his head and smiling. “I had to learn somewhere.”

Ianto was blushing furiously, and he tucked his head against Jack’s chest. Jack lowered an arm and wrapped it around him, letting the Welshman lay on him.

“You sure you don’t want me to…”

“I’m good, Ianto.”

Ianto’s hand slid down Jack’s chest, his stomach, and then between his legs. “You’re hard as a rock.”

Jack closed his eyes, sighing. “Yup.”

“Let me.”

“Ianto, you don’t have to.”

“Please, Jack? I want to.”

Jack opened his eyes to find Ianto watching him carefully, his hand closing around the hardness in Jack’s pajamas and causing Jack to thrust his hips involuntarily. “God, Ianto.” Ianto was still watching him, eyebrows raised. “Okay. Okay, Ianto, yes.”

The other boy’s face lit up and Jack realized he’d not seen him smile like that in ages. When he released into Ianto’s mouth a few minutes later with a grunt he knew there wasn’t anything he wouldn’t do to make the Welshman happy. Not that getting a blow job from his boyfriend was a great sacrifice.

“I love you, Ianto Jones,” he purred into his ear afterward, holding the boy close. “So, so much.”

“And I love you, Jack Harkness,” Ianto replied, snuggling back into his arms, his back to Jack’s chest. “Always.” He yawned, covering his mouth before turning off the television. “I’m sleepy now, Jack.”

“Me too,” Jack agreed, not really concerned that it wasn’t anywhere near time to go to bed. Ianto turned off the light and Jack tightened his grip around his boyfriend. “And it’s going to be okay, Ianto,” he told him, knowing Ianto would understand what he was referring to. “You’ll see. We’ll get this all sorted, I swear.”

Ianto sighed, letting his fingers tangle with Jack’s. “I hope you’re right, Jack.”

“I’m always right.”

“Cheeky.”

“But of course,” Jack teased, kissing his neck. “Goodnight, my beautiful Welshman.”

“Goodnight, my handsome American.”

Jack snorted, closing his eyes.

Tomorrow was another day. He’d make everything better for Ianto, he told himself, determinedly. He had to.

Chapter 15

Jack awoke in the middle of the night to the sound of crying. He blinked his eyes open, frowning, and reached for his boyfriend.

“Ianto?” he whispered.

There was a choked sob, and then snuffling. “Y-yeah?”

Jack placed a hand on Ianto’s chest. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, Jack. Go back to sleep.”

Jack propped himself up on his elbow, rubbing Ianto’s chest slowly. The boy hiccupped, and Jack felt it. “Something’s wrong. Is it Rhi and Johnny?”

Ianto sighed. “Yeah.”

Pressing a kiss to Ianto’s damp cheek, Jack felt his anger rise again. While it was unfair that Ianto should have to work to support his mother, he did that out of love and a feeling of obligation. Bethan couldn’t help her condition, and therefore her own behavior and emotional state was not something Jack blamed for Ianto’s situation. She also couldn’t take care of herself. His sister and her husband, however, were another story.

“We’re going to fix this, Ianto,” Jack told him, reaching for his hand. “We’re going to get things back to normal.”

“How, Jack?”

“If need be, we can call in the authorities.”

His boyfriend tensed up. “Jack, no.”

“Why not, Ianto?” Jack replied softly, squeezing Ianto’s hand. “Protective services were set up just for this kind of situation. If we call them they can ensure that your mother is in safe hands.”

“I can’t do that to my sister. She’s got the baby on the way, and she’s just not thinking straight.”

Jack took a deep breath. This marked the seventh work night over the last three weeks he’d stayed over at Ianto’s house, and the seventh time they’d arrived home from work and stepped straight into an argument with Rhiannon and Johnny. Well, Johnny, for the most part. Rhiannon seemed to just follow along with whatever he said.

It hadn't been any better when Jack wasn't there, either, if Ianto's moods at work were anything to go by. Sometimes he'd talk about it, but many times he refused to. Jack did know that according to what Ianto had seen, Johnny had not lifted a hand to Rhiannon a second time. Jack supposed that, at least, was a small blessing.

"And what about what this is doing to you and your mother?"

"I can take care of us both."

"You already do that, Ianto. But you can't keep coming home to be yelled at. You've done nothing wrong." Jack's head was beginning to hurt. "And they've not given you any money to stay here, besides!"

"I know."

"It's not fair for you to be supporting your entire family. Johnny should be taking care of your sister and the baby."

"So apart from calling the authorities and having my sister and her lousy husband hauled off, how do I fix this?"

"Maybe just Johnny?"

Ianto shook his head. "They're married, Jack. And if he disappears I'm just going to have to take care of Rhiannon and her baby anyhow, right?"

"Why?" Jack asked. "Why can't she get a job and pay for daytime care for the baby, when he or she arrives, as well as contributing some money towards household expenses?"

"And exactly who is going to hire a pregnant woman, Jack? The economy is horrid right now. If your parents hadn't been so amazing and hired me, I'd have been working at the chip shop for a very long time. There're just no jobs right now. It's an employer's market."

Jack kissed Ianto's cheek again. "Did they already replace you at your last job?"

"I don't know," Ianto replied.

"We could look into it. Maybe recommend your sister for the job?"

"If she's honestly gone off the drugs, Jack, that would be an idea. But I don't think I could give her a glowing recommendation right now. Not with Johnny around and able to influence her." He stopped, sighing again. "I've just no idea how to fix all that's gone wrong."

Wrapping his arms around his boyfriend, Jack cuddled him close. His glance at the clock told him it was barely two in the morning. They needed their sleep if they were going to be any good at work the next morning.

“How about we try to forget about everything for right now and maybe focus on it later?”

“Yeah, you’re right. I’m sorry I woke you, Jack.”

“Don’t be,” Jack replied, kissing him softly. “Let’s just try to get back to sleep, alright?”

“Alright.”

Jack nuzzled Ianto’s neck, breathing in his scent. After finally hearing the soft sounds of Ianto’s even breathing he let himself drift back to sleep.

tw tw tw tw tw

Once Saturday rolled around, Jack was insistent upon taking Ianto out. The other boy had argued, not wanting to leave his mother alone with his sister, but since Johnny had gone out of town and was visiting with friends in Newport, Jack told him they should give her a chance.

“Have you seen her take any drugs since she’s been at the house?”

“Well, no. I’ve seen Johnny smoking marijuana, but not in the house, and Rhiannon stayed inside watching the telly.”

“So maybe she’s taking this pregnancy seriously, Ianto. Give her the opportunity to redeem herself.”

Ianto seemed to consider it for a moment and then nodded, though Jack could tell it was somewhat reluctantly. “I suppose a couple hours can’t hurt. Not too much, anyway.”

“If things go well today, and there’re no issues with Rhiannon, then we can be pretty sure that Johnny’s the real problem.”

“I was sure of that anyway, Jack.”

Jack smiled, kissing Ianto’s forehead. “Let’s go ask her, okay?”

They headed into the lounge from the kitchen where they’d been eating lunch, and found Rhiannon where they’d left her, sitting on the couch.

“Hey, Rhi,” Ianto greeted, smiling. “Would you be alright to watch Mam for a few hours? Jack wants to take me to the cinema.”

Rhiannon looked up at them. “She’s having a good day, yeah?”

Ianto nodded. “Yes. She’s sleeping at the moment, but she was doing really well earlier.”

“Alright then. But you won’t be out late, will you? The baby has been making me a bit ill in the evenings.”

Jack sympathized. He could remember his mother’s morning sickness with Gray, and it was never strictly in the morning. It hit her any time of the day and made her pretty weak.

“I won’t keep him out long,” Jack promised, taking Ianto’s hand. “We really appreciate this, Rhiannon.”

“Thanks Rhi!” Ianto offered.

She smiled at them and nodded. “Yeah, yeah. Go on now, before I change my mind. Or before the bub changes it for me.” She then turned back to the television.

Jack looked at Ianto, shrugged, and then winked. Rhiannon had been referring to the baby as “the bub” for a while now. It was still too early to find out if she was having a boy or girl, so the nickname had stuck. Jack rather liked it.

“So, the cinema, Jack?” Ianto asked when they got into the car.

“That’s the plan. Anything you want to see?”

“Not particularly. Anything is fine with me. You?”

Jack thought for a moment. “Actually, no.” He grinned. “Why don’t we do something else?”

“Like what?”

Jack smiled. “Why don’t we head to the bay? Maybe just wander around a bit? We could get some ice cream at that little shop on the boardwalk.”

Ianto returned the smile. “I’d love that.”

“Alright,” Jack said, starting the car. “Cardiff Bay it is!”

tw tw tw tw tw

Stepping out of Cadwaladers with his mint chocolate chip waffle cone, Jack grinned up at the sun. The rainy first days of summer were long gone and he welcomed the heat.

“Bloody sun is going to melt my ice cream,” Ianto complained from behind him, stepping closer to join Jack on the pier. “I miss the rain.”

Jack laughed. “Seriously? Ianto, it rains too much in Wales as it is. You want more?”

Ianto licked his strawberry ice cream and shrugged. “I’m used to it.”

“So am, I,” Jack argued, taking a bite of his own dessert and talking with his mouth full. “But still, the sun is a lovely change.”

“Are you going to savor that?” Ianto asked, wincing. “Keep that up and it’ll be gone in a couple bites.”

Jack grabbed Ianto’s hand, swinging it slightly. “Maybe I should nibble, instead.”

“If you insist. But licking is the better option.”

Jack smirked. “Oh really?” He leaned in and swiped his tongue along Ianto’s neck.

“H-HEY!”

“Mmm. Maybe you’re right.”

“Jaaack!” Ianto cried as he pulled his hand free and wiped at his neck. “Ew! Your tongue is all sticky!”

“I don’t remember you complaining the last time I used my tongue.”

The blush that crept up Ianto’s neck and face was intense, and he looked around them as if checking to see if anyone could overhear their conversation. “You, uh...weren’t eating ice cream at the time, Jack.”

Jack winked at him and pressed a quick kiss to his lips before grabbing Ianto’s hand again. “No, I certainly wasn’t.”

They strolled along the pier and then around Mermaid Quay, looking in the windows and talking. An hour later they wandered over to the Millenium Centre, checking out the gift shops.

Jack plucked a plush sheep off the shelf, playfully sitting it on Ianto’s shoulder. “Hey Ianto?”

“Hmm?”

“I forgot to ask you... Did your mother ever say anything about all the boxes Rhiannon and Johnny placed in storage?”

Ianto glanced at him before taking the sheep and putting it back on the shelf. “A few things, actually.”

“What happened?”

“At first the paranoia took over and she thought we were all out to get her,” Ianto replied, shaking his head. “Then she forgot for a couple days. When she remembered she cried, telling me she couldn’t live without her things. She accused Johnny of wanting to make her miserable. She called him a few names I don’t even want to repeat.”

Jack’s brow furrowed. “And now?”

“Well, she was told we still have it all, but that it’s in storage. I think that was what settled her down.” Ianto sighed. “But there’s no storage, Jack. They had no money for that.”

“You mean they threw it all away?”

“Yup.”

“Did they even check to see if there was anything important in those boxes before they tossed it?”

Ianto shook his head. “I don’t think so. If they did, Johnny probably sold whatever they found for his drug habit.”

“Oh, Ianto,” Jack replied. “How’d you find out?”

“Rhiannon told me.”

“Really?”

“Apparently she was feeling guilty. That was about a week ago. You forgot to ask and I forgot to tell you.”

“That’s two poor memories,” Jack agreed, smiling. “But I’m glad she told you.”

“Me too.” Ianto looked down at his watch. “We should probably head back soon.”

They left the store and then the building, making their way over to the Red Dragon Centre where they had parked the car. Being the weekend, there were different vendors lining the main aisle of the building. Jack drug Ianto over to the tables.

“We have a little time left,” he explained, shrugging. “We’d have been gone longer if we’d seen a movie.”

“True,” Ianto agreed, following behind him.

“Oh wow,” Jack said softly, picking up a wood beaded bracelet. “Look at this, Ianto.”

“That’s really nice,” his boyfriend acknowledged, taking it from his hand. A moment later he grinned. “There’s a red dragon on this bead.”

“And hey, a matching one in a darker brown,” Jack murmured. He picked it up, looking at Ianto. “Let me buy you one?”

Ianto’s eyes widened. “You don’t have to do that. You bought me ice cream.”

“But I want to. See? They match. We can both have one.”

Smiling, Ianto said, “Okay, Jack. But I have money too, now, remember? What if I wanted to buy one for you?”

“Then you buy mine and I’ll buy yours. Deal?”

Ianto gave him a toothy smile. “Deal.”

They handed the bracelets to the gentleman manning the table and each pulled out a few pounds to pay for one of them. When they’d completed the purchase they walked away from the table, heading to the car park.

Once inside the car Jack pulled Ianto’s bracelet out. “Here,” he said, reaching for Ianto’s left arm. He secured the beaded bracelet on Ianto’s wrist.

“Yours too,” Ianto said, taking the other bracelet from the bag and placing it on Jack’s wrist. “Now we match. Yours is just a shade darker.”

Jack grinned, reaching to cup the back of Ianto’s head and draw him closer. “Happy Saturday,” he murmured, pressing a kiss to Ianto’s mouth.

“Happy Saturday to you too,” Ianto replied when the kiss ended, licking his lips. “You still taste like mint chocolate chip.”

“Do I?”

“Mhmm.”

Jack kissed him again, this time using his tongue. He traced patterns inside his boyfriend’s mouth, making Ianto moan into the kiss. Hands clutched at his shirt,

holding him close as Jack broke the kiss and turned his attention instead to nibbling at Ianto's neck.

Several minutes later they were both panting. Jack groaned, pulling back enough to look into Ianto's eyes. What he saw there was need that more than matched his own.

"I want you so much, Ianto," he growled, touching their foreheads together.

"God, Jack."

"We can't go to my house. My parents are there with Gray."

"And we can't do anything at mine until Rhiannon goes to bed."

Jack took a deep breath, pulling back from Ianto and smiling. "I think we can wait, can't we?"

"I think we must," Ianto said, returning the smile. "I don't know what it is you did to me, Jack Harkness, but you drive me crazy. I like it."

"Yeah?" Jack asked, grinning.

"Yeah."

They headed back to Ianto's house, and Jack couldn't help but smile when Ianto took his hand and held it between them. When they arrived Jack was reluctant to break the connection, but knew he had to.

They joined hands again once they exited the car, and made their way up the front walk to the door. When they got inside they headed straight for the lounge, and both stopped dead in their tracks. There on the couch, beside Rhiannon, was Ianto's mother.

"Oh, hello, boys!" she said happily, waving them over. "Come watch telly with us."

"Mam?"

"Hi, Mrs. Jones."

"Oh please, Jack! It's Bethan, really."

"Of course. Hi, Bethan."

"Come here, come here!" They both moved closer, and Bethan smiled down at their joined hands. "My precious boys."

Ianto blushed. "Mam, I didn't expect to see you out here."

“Yes, it’s nice to see you up and about,” Jack added.

“I felt like spending time with my little family. But all I found was my baby girl.” She reached an arm around Rhiannon and pressed a kiss to her cheek. “I do so love her.”

“Mam, you’re going to smother me,” Rhiannon whined, looking up at her brother with pleading eyes. “She’s been like this since you left.”

“I just want a cuddle, Rhiannon!”

Jack smirked and tugged on his boyfriend’s hand. “Come on, Ianto. We can watch some telly with your mother and sister.”

“Jack?”

Jack took a seat at the end of the couch and yanked Ianto down beside him, effectively pinning the boy between himself and his mother. “There.”

“Oh, my baby boy,” Bethan cried, wrapping an arm around Ianto as well. “Just like it should be. Our little family. Including you, Jack!”

“Why thank you, Bethan.”

“Mam, don’t forget about Johnny,” Rhiannon said, scowling.

Bethan frowned. “I don’t like that boy, Rhiannon Jones. I don’t care for him at all.”

“Mam! He’s my husband! And it’s Rhiannon Davies now.”

“I don’t care,” she continued, shaking her head. “This is my family. Right here on this couch.”

Rhiannon pulled out of her mother’s embrace, standing and putting her hands on her hips. “Well if you can’t accept Johnny I don’t suppose you’ll be accepting our child, either!”

Bethan pointed her finger at her daughter. “Now you listen here, Rhiannon. I may be a few screws short of a toolbox a lot of the time, but I know a bad person when I meet one, and that Johnny Davies is a bad person! That little baby, however, why, that’s my family right there. That baby is part of us.”

“The bub is part of Johnny!” Rhiannon replied. She shook her head, storming out of the room.

Bethan simply sighed and slid further over on the couch. “Come on, then. Scoot over here and give your mam a big hug.”

Ianto hesitated for only a beat before he flung his arms around his mother, burying his face in her neck. “Oh, Mam...”

“Shh, shh. There, now. Why the tears, Ianto Bug?”

Jack watched the two of them, mother and son, looking for all the world like they were a normal, happy family.

“I’m just glad you’re doing alright, today,” Ianto told his mother. “It’s nice to have you out here.”

“It’s nice to be out here. I see you two have matching bracelets,” Bethan added, effectively changing the subject.

Jack smiled. “We picked them up today. At the Red Dragon Centre.”

“Jack’s idea,” Ianto said, smiling at him. “We bought each other’s.”

“They’re lovely,” she told them, holding up Ianto’s wrist for a closer look. “You’re wonderful, Jack. Did you know that?”

“I may have suspected,” Jack replied, grinning.

“Arrogant git,” Ianto said, chuckling. “Mam, you’re going to inflate his ego.”

“Well he is, Ianto Bug,” she argued. “You’re very lucky to have such a wonderful boy in your life.”

“I know, Mam.”

Jack kissed Ianto’s temple. “I’m the lucky one. Your son means everything to me.”

“He’s my only little boy,” Bethan replied, smiling gently. “My special boy. You’ll take care of him, right Jack?”

“Of course I will.”

“Good. Because you know I can’t always do that myself. I’m going to depend on you a lot, Jack.”

“You can count on me.”

“He’s just so precious to me.”

“Hello? Sitting right here.” Ianto was blushing furiously.

Jack laughed, winking at his boyfriend’s mother. “Sorry, Ianto.”

“Well boys, I’m going to head back to my room. Lots of EastEnders to catch up on!”

With a kiss to each of their foreheads Bethan Jones made her exit, leaving Jack and Ianto alone on the couch.

“Well, that was certainly...different,” Ianto said, still watching the doorway where his mother had disappeared.

“How long has it been since she’s come out to the lounge, Ianto?”

His boyfriend turned to face him. “At least a year, Jack. She wouldn’t have even realized the clutter was all gone if Johnny hadn’t have mentioned it to her.”

Jack winced. “And considering how much she adores Johnny, no wonder she had choice words to call him.”

“Yup.” They were silent for a few moments and then Ianto smiled. “Do you want to watch the telly in my room?”

Jack raised an eyebrow. “Ianto Jones, are you trying to get me alone on this fine summer afternoon?”

“Yes.”

“Well then...lead on, my Ianto Bug.”

Ianto groaned, but switched off the television, pulling Jack by his hand out of the room and down the hallway.

Chapter 16

“So, Johnny’s not been back.”

Jack looked at his boyfriend in surprise. They were sitting in the cafeteria at work, eating their lunches and enjoying each other’s company, and Jack had just dropped his fork.

“You’re kidding me!”

“Nope.”

“And he left when, Friday?”

“Yup. Rhiannon’s been trying to reach him, as he was meant to come back Sunday night, but he’s not answered his mobile and hasn’t returned any calls.”

Jack frowned. “What do you think is going on?”

“I’ve no idea, really,” Ianto replied, shrugging. “Rhiannon thinks he must have lost his mobile.”

“Then why wouldn’t he borrow someone else’s so that he could call?”

“Your guess is as good as mine.”

Jack thought about that for a moment. “And she has no number for anyone he was going to visit?”

“No, none.”

Jack picked up his fork again, digging into his leftover pasta. “Then we’ll just have to wait and see, I suppose.”

Ianto nodded, taking a sip of his drink and then smiling. “Is it wrong that I’m hoping he doesn’t return?”

“Not in my book,” Jack said, shaking his head. “Twpsyn.”

“Excuse me?” Ianto asked with a smirk and a raised eyebrow. “Did you just call Johnny an idiot?”

“I did,” Jack said, winking.

Ianto giggled. “Well he is that. And when did you pick up that word?”

“Maybe I heard you say it once?”

“I don’t remember saying that around you.”

“That’s odd.”

“Jack...”

“Ianto?”

They stared at each other for a moment and Jack could see the cogs in Ianto’s brain working. He knew his boyfriend was trying to figure him out.

“You looked it up, didn’t you?”

“Maybe.”

Ianto laughed. “You never fail to surprise me, Jack.”

Jack grinned at him. “Just trying to keep things interesting.”

“You’re good at that.” Ianto smiled at him. “Are you coming over tonight?”

“I can’t. I have to stay with Gray as Cerys has the night off to see her daughter for her birthday, and my folks are going to a late dinner meeting.”

Ianto looked disappointed. “Oh, I see. Maybe tomorrow then?”

“Sure.”

Lowering his voice and looking up at Jack under his lashes, Ianto whispered, “I miss you desperately when you’re not with me.”

“Really, Ianto?”

“Yeah.” Ianto sighed. “It’s more difficult to sleep.”

Jack smirked. “That’s because I tend to wear you out.”

“I mean it, Jack,” Ianto said, looking down at the table. “I don’t like being there without you. I miss your arms around me.”

Jack took his hand. “Well maybe...” He trailed off, not sure that what he was about to say would be appropriate. “Never mind.”

“No, Jack. What were you going to say?”

“It wouldn’t work anyway,” Jack insisted, shaking his head. “Not with me attending classes full time.”

“Jack?”

He looked up at Ianto, seeing the concern in his boyfriend’s face. “I was going to suggest that I...I move in with you, but it’s too soon, and...”

“I’d love you to.”

“...there’s not enough room, with the baby coming, and... Wait, what?”

Ianto’s smile spread from ear to ear. “I’d love you to move in with me, Jack.”

“You’re serious?”

Ianto grabbed Jack’s hand – the one not holding his fork – and rubbed his thumb over it. “Very serious.”

Jack furrowed his brow. “But Ianto, with me going to school and then university full time I won’t be able to work more than a few hours a day, if they even let me stay on. I wouldn’t be able to bring that much money home.”

“That’s alright.”

“I wouldn’t be contributing that much, and you’d be feeding me.”

“Your parents feed you now, right?”

“Well, yes, but...”

“Then what’s the difference, Jack? You would pay what you could, and when school was out for the summer before university you would just go back to working full time, right? And then when you’re at university you’d be working a few hours a day again. I make more than enough now to support us.”

“And the baby? There’s not a lot of room, Ianto.”

Ianto sighed. “Well, since you’d be sharing my room, and the baby will be sharing Rhiannon’s, there’s really no problem. You don’t have very many things, Jack. They’ll fit in my room.”

Jack swallowed, turning his hand over and squeezing Ianto’s. “There’s Gray to think about.”

“Gray is welcome over whenever you’d like. You know I love your brother.”

“I...I don’t know what to say, Ianto.”

“Say you’ll move in,” Ianto replied softly. “It was your idea, after all.”

“Well, I’ll have to discuss it with my parents,” Jack said, smiling. “But if they’re okay with that plan, then yes, Ianto Jones, I’ll move in with you.”

Ianto’s eyes lit up and he tugged Jack’s hand, leaning across the table. Jack met him halfway and they kissed. It was quick and relatively chaste, but they were both grinning when they broke apart.

tw tw tw tw tw

“Oh Jack,” his mother said, sighing. “You’re so young, dear!”

Jack looked at his hands. He’d known this conversation would not be easy when he’d broached the subject after getting home from work. It didn’t help that his parents were trying to get things done before they left for their dinner meeting. His father was still at work and he’d had to follow his mother into her home office where she was getting paperwork and a few architectural plans ready.

“I know I’m young, Mum,” he told her, standing by her drafting table. “But I really think this could work out well for everyone.”

“Okay, so tell me the pros.”

“Well, for one, I know that Cerys has wanted to get out of her flat for quite some time, since the neighborhood’s gone downhill in the last few years. If I were living at Ianto’s, you could convert my room into a room for her, and she could be live-in instead of commuting here when she has to work, just like you wanted to before.”

His mother paused, looking up at him. “That’s a brilliant idea, Jack.”

“And if I live at Ianto’s, he can help me with my studies. Once I’m at university I’m going to need all the help I can get. Remember how much help he was with my revision this last year?”

“But what about your brother? Sometimes I need you to watch him, like tonight.”

“I can still do that at Ianto’s. He’s said Gray is welcome at any time. Ianto adores Gray, and I know Gray feels the same way.”

“And work? Do you still plan to work for your father and me?”

“Of course, Mum! I’d work full time during the summers, and as many hours as permitting while attending classes.” He took his mother’s hand, eyes pleading with her. “Ianto and I both love working there. We could even drive together.”

“And you really love Ianto, don’t you?”

Jack nodded. “I really do.”

“Then you have my blessing, Jack,” she told him, smiling.

Jack threw his arms around his mother, hugging her tightly. “Thank you so much. I need to call Ianto. What time are you leaving tonight?”

“In about an hour,” she replied, turning back to her desk. “And you’d better tell your brother. I’m pretty sure he’s going to be upset.”

Jack frowned. “Yeah, he will be. I’ll talk to him. What about Dad?”

“I’ll handle him,” she said. “Now go on, call your boyfriend.”

Jack left the room at a jog, grinning from ear to ear.

Several minutes later, after a frantic and enthusiastic conversation with Ianto, Jack went in search of his brother. He found him playing with his dinosaurs on the floor of his room.

“But I’ve got to eat you,” Gray enthused, as the voice of the Tyrannosaurus Rex. “I’m bigger and stronger than you!”

Jack watched him from the doorway, smiling as the little boy had a full conversation between the predator and the Stegosaurus it planned to eat. He was going to miss seeing his brother every day.

“Jack!” The child launched himself off the floor when he noticed his brother standing there. “Are you going to watch me tonight?”

“Yes I am, Gray.”

“Yay! Mummy and Daddy have a meeting to go to. They said it’s a lot of boring grownup stuff.”

Jack smirked. “I bet it is.”

“Wanna play dinosaurs with me?”

“Actually,” Jack said, ruffling the boy’s hair and stepping into the room, “I was hoping we could have a talk.”

“That sounds serious, Jack,” Gray told him, pouting as he took a seat cross-legged on his bed.

Jack joined him. “It is, Gray. I’m going to be moving in with Ianto soon.”

“With Ianto?” Gray appeared to mull that over in his head. “Can I come too?”

Smiling, Jack shook his head. “I wish you could, buddy, but Mummy and Daddy would be sad if you weren’t here.”

“They’ll be sad without you here too.”

“Yeah, but what about Cerys? Wouldn’t you miss her? She’ll probably be coming to live here.”

Gray’s eyes widened. “Really?”

“Yup. Mummy and Daddy are going to ask her if she wants to have my room when I move to Ianto’s.”

“I love Cerys.” Gray frowned. “But you’re going to leave me behind, then.”

“You can come over, Gray,” Jack told him. “Ianto wants you to.”

“When will you be coming back?”

“I won’t. I’m moving there for good.”

Gray’s eyes welled up. “But I’ll miss you, Jack!”

Jack pulled his brother into a tight hug. “And I’ll miss you too, Gray. We’ll still see each other, though. I’ll only be on the other side of town.”

“Will you still take me out to the cinema sometimes?” the boy asked, sniffing.

“You bet.”

“Hey, can I use the phone to ring you?”

“You sure can. Just ask Mummy and Daddy when you want to ring me and they’ll let you use the phone.”

Gray pulled away from him, grinning. “I only ever get to use the phone to talk to Auntie and Uncle in America!”

“Well, now you can use it to talk to me, too.”

“YAY!” Gray got up off of the bed and ran from the room, heading down the stairs, shouting, “MUMMY! Mummy! Jack says I can use the phone to call him when he’s living with Ianto!”

Jack couldn’t hear his mother’s reply, but he smiled anyway. His brother had been upset, granted, but he’d taken it much better than Jack had thought he would.

Taking a deep breath, Jack left his brother’s room and went into his own. He looked around at his things before grabbing a pen and paper. He’d need to make a list of the things he was taking and what he’d give to his brother or to charity.

He couldn’t believe this was really happening. He and Ianto were going to be living together.

Chapter 17

Jack grinned at Ianto over the large cardboard box in his arms. The Welshman grinned back, and Jack felt a tug at his heart. This was the right thing for them. He knew it was. Yes, they were ridiculously young to be cohabitating, but really, Ianto had been forced to grow up much faster than the average teenager, and who was Jack to argue against his own feelings? He knew what he wanted, and had since he was a little boy. He wanted to be with Ianto, and had every intention to follow their relationship through, no matter what odds might be stacked against them.

“Just a few more boxes, then,” Ianto acknowledged, pushing the two they had just brought in into a corner of his room with the rest. Luckily it wasn’t a tiny bedroom. The layout of the house was very well designed.

“Odds and ends, really,” Jack said, kissing Ianto on the cheek.

“And what was that for?” Ianto asked.

“Just felt like it, Ianto Bug.”

Jack felt the air whoosh behind him as Ianto attempted to swat at his bottom, but Jack was faster than that. He was already out of the bedroom and heading down the hallway toward the front door.

“You know, Jack,” his boyfriend started, trailing along behind him. “Mam gave me that nickname when I was a wee boy. It’s not particularly flattering now.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Jack replied, reaching into his car for another box. “I think it fits you perfectly.”

“You think I look like a bug?”

“I think you’re cute as a bug,” Jack murmured, pressing a kiss to Ianto’s lips before Ianto grabbed the next box. “Adorable, sexy, and all mine.”

Ianto growled at him. “Just wait until I get you alone,” he said, lifting the two remaining boxes into his arms and closing the car door with his hip. “I’ll show you who belongs to whom.”

Jack smirked, turning to go back into the house. He wished he had a free hand to adjust the jeans which were now tightening over his groin at Ianto’s words. As much as he and Ianto had explored their sexual relationship, they’d yet to take it all the way. He didn’t want to hurt Ianto, he didn’t want to rush it, and if the truth were told, he was as nervous as he was excited about the prospect.

“Was that a threat or a promise?” Jack asked him after they’d both set their boxes down.

“Both,” Ianto replied, raising an eyebrow. He grasped Jack’s t-shirt and yanked him closer, slamming their mouths together in what could only be described as a possessive manner. When they broke apart their foreheads rested together.

“How can we be alone with you sister and mother here?” Jack asked softly, arousal coursing through him and making him want to take Ianto right then and there.

“Rhiannon is going out tonight with a friend,” Ianto answered, not yet having let go of Jack’s shirt. “And as for Mam, well, she isn’t much for spying on me. She minds her own business.”

“Unlike your sister,” Jack said, supplying Ianto’s unspoken words.

His boyfriend chuckled. “Exactly.”

They kissed again, a sweeter, tenderer version of their previous kiss, and Jack melted into his boyfriend’s arms. He could stand there all day, if given the time. Kissing Ianto was like very emotion packed into one. There was no one word for how he felt when Ianto kissed him.

“We should unpack,” Jack eventually whispered when the kiss ended. “Or at least, I should.”

“I’ll help,” Ianto replied, pulling back.

Jack reluctantly let him go, smiling. “You’re amazing, Ianto, you know that?”

“Because I want to help you place your things?” Ianto asked, returning the smile.

“Nope. Just because.”

Ianto blushed, a soft, flattering pink. “You’re not so bad yourself, Jack.”

“Oi, you two,” a voice from the doorway said, getting Jack’s immediate attention. Rhiannon. “How do you manage to get anything done if you’re all sappy and corny the whole time?”

Jack looked at Ianto and saw his raised brow. Jack understood immediately. Rhiannon was the typical older sister and would forever be in their business.

“Not the whole time,” Jack said, winking at his boyfriend.

“And it’s called being in love, Rhiannon,” Ianto added.

“Sure, in love.” Rhiannon rolled her eyes at them, folding her arms. “I was in love once. Look where it got me.”

Ianto scowled. "Johnny is an idiot."

"Oh, I have better words than that for him," Jack said, shaking his head. "But the baby might be listening."

Rhiannon cracked a smile and Jack felt triumphant. "Three weeks without a word. The louse."

"He doesn't know what he's missing out on," Jack told her. He remembered when his brother was born. Sure, there were nights his family got no sleep, but having Gray as a little brother had been nothing short of wonderful, as far as Jack was concerned. "What are you going to do, Rhi?"

"File for divorce, I suppose. He's abandoned me. And the baby."

"A missing persons report might be advisable," Ianto suggested, shrugging. "Perhaps he's met with foul play."

"Well he'd certainly deserve it if he had," she growled, brows furrowing.

"He could also have simply gotten so smashed he fell into the bay," Ianto added with a frown. "I'd have pushed him in myself if given half the chance."

Jack couldn't help but smile. Ianto and his sister looked so much alike, especially when upset or angry. They looked just like their mother, actually. Jack figured the baby would likely have the same looks, if the Jones genes were that strong.

"And you stop grinning at me, Jack Harkness," Rhiannon scolded him playfully. "You're far too young to be flirting with me, and especially in front of my brother."

"You're breaking my heart, Rhiannon Davies."

"Jones," she corrected. "I'm taking my name back. No way am I keeping the name of a man who can't even be bothered to take care of his wife and child."

"If he does come back, I'm changing the locks," Ianto said, moving to one of the boxes and bending over to pull it open. "He's no longer welcome here."

"Our big damned hero," Jack crooned, slipping his arms around his boyfriend's waist when he stood back up. "We should get you a cape."

Rhiannon snorted. "Right, well... I'll leave you boys to your unpacking," she said, waving a hand around. "Or whatever it is you're up to. I'm going to go sit with Mam for a bit."

“Alright,” Ianto replied, smiling over his shoulder as Rhiannon left the doorway. “Jack, we need to get your things put away.”

“I can think of something that needs to be put away,” Jack whispered into his ear, pushing his hips forward just slightly and nibbling at Ianto’s earlobe.

“Jesus,” Ianto cursed. His bottom pushed back into Jack’s groin and they both moaned.

“You sure you want to unpack the boxes now?” Jack asked, rolling his hips. He knew he was playing with fire, since Rhiannon could decide to return any moment, but he didn’t care. “There are so many other things we could be doing.”

Groaning, Ianto pulled out of Jack’s embrace and turned around. “Nice try, Jack,” he said, folding his arms. The position did nothing to hide Ianto’s obvious erection. “Boxes first, horny boyfriends second.”

Jack pouted. “Fine, fine. You’re right, Ianto. Work to do.”

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Three hours later found the boys finished with unpacking, and lying on the bed. Jack was exhausted. He couldn’t understand how clearing out less than ten cardboard boxes, including all of his clothes, could be so tiring. But he found he barely wanted to move. That is, until his stomach growled.

“The beast is hungry,” Ianto mumbled, not bothering to remove his face from where it was currently tucked into Jack’s neck.

Jack laughed, rubbing Ianto’s back. “I didn’t eat much for breakfast,” he admitted. “And we didn’t have lunch. We should go pick up some dinner.”

“I could really go for a curry,” said Ianto. “Mmm.”

“You might have to detangle yourself, first.”

“Nope. Let’s go like this.”

“Don’t think that’d work, Ianto.”

“Bod y ffigurau.”

“What?” Jack asked with a smile. He loved when Ianto spoke Welsh. It didn’t happen as much as he’d like.

“I said,” Ianto growled, pulling his face from Jack’s neck, rolling onto his back and closing his eyes, “that figures.”

Jack leaned in to kiss the corner of his mouth. “You should speak Welsh more often. It’s sexy.”

Ianto quirked a brow but didn’t open his eyes. “You should learn Welsh. You’ve only lived here for nearly thirteen years.”

“I did learn some, remember?”

“Sure, an insult,” Ianto answered, eyelids opening and bright blue eyes fixing him with a look.

“Well, it was still Welsh. And besides, I know more than that.”

“I’m listening.”

“Rwyf am i chi, cariad.”

Ianto pushed up onto his elbows, eyes wide. “I’m impressed, Jack. And I want you, too. But, food takes priority.”

Jack growled as Ianto rolled out of his arms and off of the bed. “You said boxes first, horny boyfriends second!”

“I lied.”

“Ianto!”

“Food, Jack,” Ianto told him, hands on his hips. A smile tugged at his lips. “Dessert after Rhiannon leaves.”

Jack grinned, scooting off the bed and tugging Ianto against him again. “I like the way you think, Ianto Jones.”

“Yes, you love me for my mind,” his boyfriend said, pulling away and grabbing Jack’s keys off the dresser. He then headed out the door, obviously expecting Jack to follow.

“That and your Welsh vowels,” Jack called.

“Of course. Now come along, Jack. Tikka Masala awaits!”

Chapter 18

There were butterflies in Jack's stomach all the way through dinner. He couldn't help it. He'd been with Ianto intimately, but actual intercourse was something they'd just kept putting off. The fact that both of them were new to this made him nervous. If one of them had some experience, even with a member of the opposite sex, it might be a bit less intimidating. But Jack had never gone that far with a girl, and neither had Ianto.

"Are you alright, Jack?" Ianto asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I'm fine," Jack lied, poking at a piece of chicken and swishing it around in the curry sauce on his plate.

"Jack..."

He looked up and met Ianto's eyes, seeing the worry there. He smiled, trying to be reassuring, but realized he was failing miserably when Ianto didn't lower his eyebrow.

"Sorry, Ianto," Jack said softly, putting down his fork. He wasn't hungry anymore anyway. "Just doing some thinking."

"Care to share?"

Jack looked around before inching closer across the table. "About tonight."

"Oh," Ianto replied, lowering the eyebrow. "Did you change your mind? I mean, it's not like we set in stone what we'll be doing. I had assumed, however..."

"Me too," Jack interrupted, grasping Ianto's hand. "And I still want to. But..."

"But?"

Jack swallowed slowly. "I've never done this before, Ianto. What if..." He lowered his voice and licked his lips. "What if it's not good for you?"

A smile tugged at the corner of Ianto's mouth. "I've never done this before either, Jack."

"I know. And that's kind of...awkward. Don't you think?"

"I think you worry too much, Cariad."

Jack smiled at the endearment. The smile faltered, however, when another thought occurred to him. "What if I hurt you?"

The hint of a smile Ianto was wearing transformed into a smirk as he leaned forward, his breath warm against Jack's lips. "And what makes you think you'd be the one on top?"

Jack couldn't help but suffer two distinct reactions to Ianto's words. First, he blushed furiously, which was a rarity, to be sure. Second, the rest of his blood supply traveled south, pooling where his body wanted it most and he groaned. Spying the waiter, he raised his hand.

"Check? Please?"

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On the way home Jack was determined to drive. Maybe it was a last ditch effort to remain in control. Control that he was pretty sure he would soon be turning over to his boyfriend. Or maybe it was just that he was suddenly hell-bent on getting home more quickly than Ianto normally drove. Either way, Ianto's hand kept up a teasing presence on his thigh that was burning a hole through Jack's jeans, and Jack had only enough strength to grip the steering wheel when said hand inched closer to its intended target.

"You're going to get us killed if you keep that up," Jack ground out between gritted teeth.

"Well that would be a shame," Ianto replied, his hand not stopping its movement.

Jack closed his eyes for a brief moment and then blinked them open again, trying to clear his mind. Ianto's fingers brushed against him and Jack's breath released in a loud huff, his left hand dropping like a lead weight and capturing Ianto's before it could wreak more havoc on his senses.

"Ianto..."

His boyfriend leaned impossibly closer, his nose nuzzling Jack's neck. "Yes, Jack?" he crooned, lips brushing Jack's earlobe.

"Y-you're..." Jack cleared his throat. "You're going to make us crash!"

"Oh, I think you have more control than that," he whispered, sucking the earlobe between his lips.

"Nnggh," Jack moaned, forgetting himself and releasing Ianto's hand.

Ianto took advantage and pushed the heel of his hand against Jack's erection. He growled into his ear, "I want you, Jack Harkness."

Jack brought his other hand back up to the steering wheel and hit the accelerator, making it to Ianto's house – no, their house – in record time. He ambled out of the driver's side and vaguely registered that Ianto was smirking at him before he locked the door and grabbed his boyfriend's hand, dragging him inside the house.

Disengaging from Ianto only long enough for the Welshman to tell his sister they were home, Jack made his way into the bedroom. He heard Rhiannon say something about not waiting up and then there was the jangle of keys and the sound of the front door opening and closing. By the time Ianto made it to the room Jack already had his shirt off and was working on his belt.

“Starting without me?” Ianto asked, closing the door and stalking towards him.

“I thought about it,” Jack teased, undoing the buckle. “But I’d rather you joined me.”

Ianto smiled, pulling his own shirt off and draping it over his desk chair. “Don’t mind if I do.”

Within a few minutes they’d managed to divest each other of all clothes, and were lying beside each other on the bed. They shared desperate kisses, each seemingly wanting to crawl inside the other’s mouth. Their legs became tangled and their bodies began to move against each other, searching for the pleasure they knew they could each bring the other.

“Jack,” Ianto gasped between kisses.

“God, Ianto,” Jack replied, burying his face in Ianto’s neck. “Please. I need you.”

Ianto nodded, climbing over the top of Jack to get to the bedside table. He opened the drawer, pulling out the two items they were going to need. He knelt over Jack, holding up the bottle and raising his famous eyebrow.

Jack nodded, watching as Ianto placed the condom aside and opened the bottle. He had seen this so many times in the movies he watched on the internet, but to actually be participating...it made his head spin.

Jack’s eyes closed at the first touch of Ianto’s fingers, his heart hammering in his chest, but within a few minutes he was writhing on the bed, trying to both get closer and still get farther away from the intense feelings of pleasure that Ianto was creating.

“Are you ready, Jack?” Ianto asked. His voice was unsure and shaky, and he was breathing just as hard as Jack.

“Yes, Ianto,” he managed, gripping Ianto’s shoulders. “Please. Now.”

There was the sound of the condom wrapper being ripped open and tossed aside, the bottle was used once more, and then the cap was snapped shut and the bottle dropped off the side of the bed. Ianto lay over him, pressing a passionate kiss to his lips before lifting his legs.

For a few moments all Jack could feel was pain. He closed his eyes tight, willing it away. Ianto spoke soothing words to him, Welsh vowels crooning his sympathies, and then, slowly, the pain ebbed. It was replaced with pleasure, and Jack had to bite his lip so he wouldn't cry out.

"Are you...okay...Jack?" Ianto asked between breaths.

"Oh God, Ianto," Jack murmured, pulling him down so he could get to his lips. They kissed, awkwardly, but it was enough for Jack. "I love you."

"I love you...too," Ianto replied, pulling back and increasing his movements. "Can't hold...on..."

"Don't," Jack told him, shaking his head. "Let go...Ianto!"

Their eyes met and Ianto nodded, reaching between them and making Jack's eyes widen in surprise. His head began thrashing on the pillow and less than a minute later they both cried out, as quietly as possible, and Ianto collapsed on top of him.

They lay that way for a couple of minutes, just catching their breath. Suddenly Ianto giggled and rolled off of him, covering his face with his arm.

"Ianto?"

"Sorry," Ianto mumbled under his arm, pulling it away and grinning at Jack. "I just...never imagined it would be..."

"Be...what?" Jack asked, rolling over to face him.

"That was incredible, Jack."

Jack returned his grin. "It was pretty spectacular."

Ianto leaned closer and kissed him, cupping the back of his head. When the kiss broke they were both breathing hard again. "Thank you."

"For what, Ianto? I should be thanking you!"

"For letting me make love to you."

Jack swallowed, searching Ianto's eyes. All he found there was love. "Of course, Ianto. How could I resist you?"

Ianto kissed him again and then pushed himself up on his elbow. "We should get cleaned up. And next time, we'll have to remember to lay down a blanket or something."

Jack grinned, scooting into a sitting position. “Next time, eh?” he teased, winking at Ianto. Then he looked down at the bed and grimaced. “Oh yeah. Definitely need a blanket next time.”

They both laughed, sharing another kiss before reaching for the tissues to begin cleaning up. They each got dressed enough to head for the bathroom and take showers, and then they found themselves back in the bedroom. Ianto went to check on his mother, then returned to curl up with Jack on the bed. Jack had unceremoniously tossed the duvet onto the floor.

“Rhiannon gave Mam dinner before she left,” Ianto told him, snuggling into Jack’s side. “There was a plate on the side table and she was fast asleep.”

“That’s good,” Jack told him, pressing a kiss to his temple. “Maybe she missed what went on in here, then.”

Ianto chuckled into his chest. “I hope so.” A moment passed. “Jack?”

“Yes, Ianto?”

“Was it really alright? I mean...” His voice trailed off, muffled by Jack’s chest.

Jack wrapped both arms around him, hugging him tight to his body. “It was amazing, Ianto. You were amazing.”

“You’re not just saying that?”

Jack pushed Ianto up until he could see his face. He locked eyes with the Welshman, cupping his chin. “Ianto, you have no idea how difficult it was not to scream.”

Ianto blushed. “Yeah?”

“Oh yeah.”

Ianto kissed him softly, hand stroking Jack’s chest. “Next time...you wanna top?”

Jack’s eyes darkened and his body reacted. He groaned, running his fingers through Ianto’s hair. “Next time I want to do whatever you want to do, Ianto.”

“I want to feel you inside me.”

Jack blinked, squirming. “You do realize I’m never going to be able to sleep if you keep talking dirty like that, right?”

Ianto grinned, his hand sliding down Jack’s stomach. “That’s the general idea, Jack.”

Jack growled, pushing Ianto over onto his back and straddling his waist. “Ianto Jones, you are an evil, wanton sex fiend.”

“Yup.”

Chapter 19

By the time school started Jack had settled into his new life at Ianto's house. They'd slipped into a kind of routine. In the mornings they'd have breakfast, complete with Ianto's amazing coffee, before driving into work together. Then they'd have lunch together in the cafeteria, and drive home together after work. Now that Jack was back in school, however, while they still had their breakfasts together, afterward they went their separate ways. And Jack was missing all the time they'd normally be spending together.

He was in his own little world as he grabbed his History book from his locker and a hand slapped down on his shoulder. He spun around, eyes wide.

"Rhys! And...Gwen."

"Well hello there, Harkness," Rhys greeted cheerfully. "You see, Gwen? He's still alive and breathing."

"I was beginning to wonder, I was," she said, nodding. "I've not heard from you in months, Jack."

Jack frowned. There were reasons for that. "I've been a bit busy."

"Too busy to call your friends?" Gwen pouted.

The retort was on the tip of his tongue but he refrained. "I should really be getting to class."

"Oh right, of course. We won't keep you then, will we Gwen?"

"Well actually, I heard a rumor, Jack..."

"Gwen..."

"No, Rhys. I think I deserve to know!"

"What rumor, Gwen?" Jack asked, closing his locker and folding his arms around his book. He lifted his chin, somewhat defiantly.

"People are saying you and Ianto..." The rest of the sentence hung in the air and then Gwen straightened her shoulders. "Well, that you're..."

"Living together?" he interrupted, cocking an eyebrow.

"Yes, that."

“Yep. Now, if you don’t mind,” he said, smiling, “I have a class to attend. Rhys, it was good to see you.”

Turning his back to the couple Jack barely caught the way Gwen’s mouth fell open in shock. Clearly she hadn’t expected the rumor to be true. Jack was pretty sure she needed to get out more.

tw tw tw tw tw

“So, wait...she actually came up to you?” Lisa shook her head. “She’s got nerve. I’ll give her that.”

“She’s got something,” Owen muttered.

“I’m not sure she would have had the courage without Rhys there,” Toshiko added, getting a nod from Tommy. “Although, she does still have it bad for you, Jack.”

Jack groaned. “It’s my own fault for flirting with her all those years.”

“To be fair, mate, you flirted with the rest of us too. You don’t see us trying to climb on your...”

“OWEN!”

“What?” Owen asked Lisa, shrugging innocently. “I’m just stating a fact.”

“Owen’s right,” said Tosh. “Jack, you’ve always been a flirt. But there’s a big difference between playful flirting and serious interest. Gwen just doesn’t understand.”

“And you’re happy, right?” Tommy asked.

“Unbelievably so,” Jack replied, a grin spreading from ear to ear. “I love Ianto. There’s no one else for me.”

“That’s so romantic,” Lisa said dreamily, grasping Owen’s hand. “Am I your only one, Owen?”

“Eh...”

That earned him a slap to the shoulder and had the rest of them laughing. Jack noticed that she still held his hand, however, and he whispered something into her ear that had her giggling. It made Jack smile to see his friends as happy as he was.

“How are things going with Ianto’s mum?” asked Tosh, opening the juice box she’d packed with her lunch.

“Pretty well, actually,” Jack replied, taking a bite of the chicken sandwich Ianto had made for him. Remembering his manners he swallowed before continuing. “But she keeps asking to see Gray. I’ll have to pick him up for the day. Maybe this weekend.”

“Aw, that’s sweet,” said Lisa. “I bet she’s gonna love having a grandbaby around.”

Jack had told them all about the situation with Rhiannon and Johnny over the summer. And the jerk still hadn’t contacted his wife. She was already looking into filing paperwork, since he’d basically abandoned her and their child. He’d had his mobile number shut off, which also meant hers had been disconnected, and so they’d had the locks on the house changed. He wasn’t welcome back.

“Yeah, I’m sure she will,” he agreed. “Right now we’re just getting things prepared for the baby.”

“It’s still a ways off, though, yeah?” Tommy asked, offering a chocolate chip cookie to Toshiko. She took it, smiling sweetly. “I mean, she’s not that far along, right?”

“Actually, further than we thought,” Jack answered. “She didn’t know she was pregnant until she was three months in.”

“Wow! So only a few months left, then,” Owen said. “Ianto will be an uncle. Lots of nappies. Remind me to stay away.”

Jack chuckled. “Yeah, but I’m really looking forward to it. I loved helping out when Gray was a baby.”

“Babies are fun,” Tosh piped up, smiling. “Our neighbor has twins! I’ve been asked to mind them on Sunday evenings while they attend church. Apparently they get a bit fussy having to sit for so long.”

The bell rang and they all groaned, gathering their rubbish and binning it before getting their things together to head to their respective classes. Owen walked with Jack, however, as they both had Music after lunch. Luckily it was lecture only, and not anything requiring talent. The last time Jack had heard Owen sing he’d been rubbing at his ears for days.

They took their seats in the back of the room, as had always been their classroom tradition, and Jack took out paper and a pen. He smiled when he saw Owen had actually brought supplies as well.

“What? Sometimes I do what I’m told.”

“Begrudgingly,” Jack teased, winking at him.

“Oi! Save that for the tea boy.”

“Oh, I have much more planned for him.”

“I’m not listening,” Owen replied, covering his ears.

“Seriously though, Owen. It’s his birthday soon. I’m planning his party.”

“Wait.” Owen dropped his hands. “Ianto is older than you?”

Jack smirked. “By six months, yes. You didn’t know that?”

Owen pursed his lips, thinking. “Wow.”

Jack snorted. “What can I say? I like older men.”

The second bell ringing signaled the start of class, and drowned out Owen’s groan.

tw tw tw tw tw

“And how was your first day of school?” Ianto asked him when Jack greeted him at the door, pressing a slow, soft kiss to his lips.

“Mmm,” Jack moaned into the kiss, forcing himself to pull away so he could answer. “It was good, Ianto. How was work?”

“Lonely without you,” his boyfriend replied, pouting.

“Well, I’ll be back there in a few days,” Jack reminded him, taking Ianto’s hand and pulling him into the lounge to sit on the couch. “Part time. Wow. That’s going to be weird.”

“It’s going to be long days for you,” Ianto said, settling back onto the furniture. “I’m just glad your parents agreed.”

Being that one of the stipulations for Jack’s change of residence was that he would continue to work with his parents, Jack had only asked for the first week of school off. He wanted to see how his classes were and what his best options for school work and revision would be before he added the burden of a few hours working every day afterward. He didn’t think it would be a problem, though. While this was his last year at Torchwood Institute, he’d managed to get his most important classes out of the way rather early. His biggest concerns were his A-Levels.

Jack knelt in front of Ianto and lifted one of his feet, untying and slipping off his shoe. He did the same with the other before sitting down next to Ianto and urging him to shift

sideways on the sofa. When Ianto complied, Jack picked up both of his feet and settled them on his lap, reaching for one and beginning a massage.

“Oh God, Jack,” Ianto groaned, leaning back and closing his eyes. “That feels amazing.”

Jack smiled, working his thumbs into the ball of Ianto’s foot. “You’re a hardworking man now, Ianto,” he said softly. “A good foot rub is relaxing. Just what you need after long hours at the office.”

Ianto cracked an eye open. “And what about you?”

“What about me? This is about you.”

Smiling, Ianto’s closed his eye again. “You’re too good to me, Jack.”

“Probably.”

Ianto snorted. “Better not let Rhiannon see you doing this. Our niece is making her feet swell. She’d probably kill for a foot massage.”

Jack grinned. “Our niece?”

Ianto’s eyes opened and he returned Jack’s smile. “Well, you are family now, yeah?”

Jack eased Ianto’s feet off of his lap and crawled across the couch, gathering Ianto into his arms and kissing him soundly. When they came up for air Jack’s heart was thumping in his chest and he could feel that Ianto’s was doing the same.

“I love you, Ianto Jones. Even if you are going to be an old man soon.”

“Old man, Jack?” Ianto’s eyes darkened. “Why don’t we go into the bedroom and I’ll show you what this old man can do?”

Jack felt an answering twitch between his legs and growled. “Your sister is in the kitchen, Ianto.”

“And?”

“And...we normally don’t do anything like that when she’s home. Remember?”

Ianto smirked. “Yes, but we could if we were really quiet.”

“Seriously...fiend.”

“Your fault, Jack. You created the monster.”

“Which monster is that?”

They both turned to see Rhiannon standing in the doorway; arms crossed and amused expression on her face. Jack snickered and pulled himself up off of Ianto. Ianto had the decency to blush a deep shade of red.

“Rhiannon...er...”

“Relax, Ianto,” she told him, waving her hand around. “It’s not like I’m an innocent. I was just checking to see if you’re ready for dinner.” She rubbed her belly. “Mica is starving.”

Jack smiled at her. “So you picked a name? It’s lovely.”

“Thank you, Jack. I’ve always liked it. Johnny hated it.”

“Well he doesn’t get a say anymore, does he?” Ianto asked, frowning.

“Exactly my point,” she answered, raising her eyebrow. “Now who’s up for Chicken Cattiatore?”

With that Rhiannon turned around and headed back toward the kitchen. Ianto sighed beside him and Jack slipped a hand into his, pressing a kiss to the corner of his mouth.

“Come on, old man,” Jack teased, pulling Ianto to his feet. “Time to eat.”

Ianto growled, pulling his hand away and smacking Jack on the arse. “You’re so going to get it, Jack Harkness.”

“Promises, promises.”

Chapter 20

The preparations for Ianto's birthday party were coming together without any real hiccups. That made Jack extremely happy. Between school and work the last couple of weeks he'd thought his brain might explode, but with their friends' help he'd managed to get everything done. Tomorrow was the big day.

"Writing your life story?" Ianto asked him, handing his boyfriend a cup of steaming coffee.

Jack smiled up at him. "Thank you, Ianto. And no, actually. My memoirs will have to wait. I have other things to do first."

"Like what?"

"Like...that's on a need to know basis," Jack teased, winking at Ianto and getting a disgruntled snort in reply.

"And I'm guessing that right now, I don't need to know," Ianto told him, leaning down for a kiss.

Kissing him back, Jack smiled. "Exactly."

Jack was sitting at what was now their desk, going over his To Do list for Ianto's party. So far he'd been able to cross off the ordering of the cake, the buying of decorations, the ordering of rental tables and chairs, the rental of a hotel's small conference room, the RSVPs of their friends and family, and finally, after his errand that evening after work, the purchase of Ianto's present.

There was still much to do, including the moving of refreshments from Tosh's house to the hotel, having Tommy pick up the cake, moving the decorations from Owen's house to the hotel and actually making the place look festive, picking up the tables and chairs and setting those up properly, and making sure, all the while, that Ianto had absolutely no idea what was happening. The latter, he knew, was going to be the most difficult. Luckily, all their friends were helping out, and Jack would now only be responsible for getting Ianto to the hotel on time. Jack was paying for everything, so all they had to do was follow his carefully drawn out plans.

"You know Jack," Ianto mused, taking a seat cross-legged on the bed and making Jack look over his shoulder to see him, "any other boyfriend would demand to know what you're being so secretive about."

Jack grinned, getting up from the desk and moving over to the bed. He leaned in, resting his hands on Ianto's thighs, nuzzling the side of Ianto's neck before whispering in his ear, "Yes, but I already know I have the best boyfriend in the world." He kissed the shell of Ianto's ear. "Besides, I promise it's something good."

He pulled back, planting a none-too-gentle kiss on Ianto's lips. Ianto kissed him back, parting his lips when Jack's tongue sought to deepen the encounter. Jack could taste Ianto's amazing coffee, and under that delicious flavor was Ianto himself. Jack groaned, knowing he'd never get everything done if he didn't stop now.

Ianto's eyes were sparkling knowingly at him when he pulled back. Ianto raised his coffee mug to his lips and took a sip, before placing it on the nightstand and grabbing his book. "Go on, then," he murmured, flipping to the spot he'd held with a leather bookmark. "Go about finishing your business. I'd like to have you in me at least once tonight."

Jack's jeans tightened considerably and he growled. "You've got one hour, Ianto Jones, and then I'm going to make sure you have trouble walking tomorrow."

Ianto raised an eyebrow. "Challenge accepted."

Jack finished his preparations, including several texts to their friends, in less than forty-five minutes.

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By the time Jack and Ianto arrived at the hotel he'd received texts from all parties involved that the conference room was completely set up. The tables and chairs were in place, the decorations had all been hung and set out, the cake was safe and sound at the front of the room, the refreshments were all ready, and Toshiko had even brought her portable stereo system so that they'd have music, just in case anyone felt like dancing.

A blindfolded Ianto Jones shuffled forward slightly, being directed by hands on his shoulders. "Can I take this thing off yet?" he asked once they'd stopped.

"In a moment," Jack whispered, taking a look around. Everything looked amazing. He grinned at his friends and the rest of the guests, who, save for two, were all present and accounted for. "Okay, now."

Ianto pulled the cloth from his eyes and Jack watched those same eyes widen in surprise as everyone in the room yelled, "HAPPY BIRTHDAY!"

"Oh my God!"

"Surprise, Ianto," Jack told him, kissing his cheek.

Ianto turned to him, swallowing before he spoke. "Jack, this is too much. You didn't have to do this."

“Of course I did, Ianto.” Jack grabbed his hand, giving it a squeeze. “I’m not the only one who wanted to celebrate your birthday. Everyone here was in on it, and most of them also helped set it all up.”

There were tears in Ianto’s eyes but Jack noticed they didn’t fall. He watched him as all of their friends started to gather around, wishing him individual birthday greetings and practically dragging him deeper into the room. Jack smiled, getting a pat on the back from Owen.

“I think he was dutifully surprised, mate.”

“Yeah, I think so,” Jack replied, shaking his head. “I couldn’t have done all this without you guys. Thanks, Owen.”

“Don’t mention it. It was actually a lot of fun.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. After I decorated the walls with the streamers I decorated Adam. That was a blast.”

Jack smirked. He could see Adam and Katie talking with Lisa, Tosh, and Tommy. He was glad things had worked out the way they had. Owen had confided in him not long ago that he’d been pretty bitter about he and Katie not working out, but that Lisa was a great girl and he didn’t really wish Adam any ill will over the whole deal. After all, Katie had moved on, and so had Owen.

For a moment Jack was sort of surprised that Susie hadn’t made an appearance. He shouldn’t be, he knew. After all, she’d not responded to the invite he’d sent. But at the same time he knew she liked to be in the thick of things. Even after she’d moved away, they’d all kept in touch. He knew she’d gone through a really rough patch when she’d been thirteen. She’d gotten hold of her father’s gun and threatened the family as well as herself. After being in treatment for the last few years he’d hoped she’d gotten past all of that. Apparently she was still too embarrassed over everything that had happened to feel like a part of the group.

Jack watched a huge grin break out on Ianto’s face when Gray came flying up to him, barreling into his arms. He picked the boy up, spinning him around a couple of times before settling him on his hips. It warmed Jack’s heart that Ianto and Gray adored each other.

Jack’s mother smiled at him across the room where she was stood, arm linked through his father’s. He knew they’d stay long enough for cake and presents, which would both be done early for that very reason, and then they’d take Gray back home with them and leave the party to the teenagers.

Jack turned to the door when he heard it open, and his heart leapt. Rhiannon had entered with Bethan at her side, both in lovely dresses that complimented each other. Almost as if Ianto sensed something had changed, he spun around, his mouth falling open when he saw who was there.

“Mam?” he said softly. The rest of the party was watching in stunned silence. “But how did... When did... I just...”

“Well I couldn’t very well miss my baby’s seventeenth birthday party, now could I?” Bethan said with a wave of her hands. “Now get over here and give me a hug.”

Ianto was across the room and into his mother’s arms in a blur. The tears that had been pooled in his eyes now fell freely, and from the mood in the room Jack knew he wasn’t the only one fighting his emotions.

“Jack insisted we get new dresses for the occasion,” Rhiannon told Ianto, looking up and meeting Jack’s eyes. “How do we look?”

“Fantastic,” Jack answered, winking at her. “You both look amazing.”

“You really do,” Ianto croaked, pulling back from his mother and wiping his face. “I just can’t believe this. Mam...I...”

“I know, Ianto Bug,” she said, cupping his chin and looking him in the eyes. “And I can’t say it’s not terrifying to be out and about, but I wouldn’t miss this for the world.”

Ianto hugged her tightly again before turning to the rest of the party. “Okay, now really. Why the long faces? This is supposed to be a party, yeah?”

A chorus of voices agreed with him and then conversation began again, drowning out any lingering deep emotions and putting everyone back in a festive mood.

When it came time for presents Ianto took a seat at a table that was set up for just that purpose. He shook his head. “This is really too much.”

“You’re worth it,” Jack whispered in his ear.

“You deserve it, Ianto!” called Tommy, his arm around Toshiko. “You work ridiculously hard and take care of an entire household.”

“Well, Jack helps,” Ianto mumbled, face coloring.

“I’m only working part time,” Jack replied, this time loud enough to address the room. “Tommy’s right, you deserve this.”

Before Ianto could become emotional again Jack watched him reach for the first card and present. “This one’s from Owen and Lisa.” The wrapping paper fell away from the

small gift and Ianto opened the lid, grinning as he pulled out a gift card. “It’s to the little coffee bean house where I get my favorite beans!”

They all laughed. Jack knew it was a perfect gift and he grinned at his friends. For the next ten minutes or so Ianto opened the rest of his presents, each as appropriate for Ianto as the last. He received an iTunes gift card, a couple of DVDs, a new coffee maker, and a matching set of coffee mugs. The only gift he’d not yet opened was Jack’s.

Jack reached into his pocket and pulled out a small blue jewelry pouch, handing it to Ianto. “You can open this in front of everyone, or in private.”

Ianto looked up at him, eyebrow raised. “Jack?”

“Yeah?”

“Which would you prefer?”

Jack smiled. “It’s completely up to you. Trust me, it’s nothing too embarrassing.”

Ianto looked down at the pouch, pulling the top open and glancing inside. He looked up at Jack with a surprised expression and then back at the pouch, reaching two fingers in and pulling out a piece of paper. He read it to himself and swallowed hard before dipping back into the pouch and pulling out a silver band with a swirl of black running through it.

“Oh Jack, that’s beautiful,” whispered Lisa.

“Bloody hell,” said Owen.

“Oh, honey,” Jack’s mother added, putting a hand on his shoulder.

Jack watched Ianto carefully as he read the inscription lining the inside of the band aloud. “Rwy'n addo i chi am byth.”

There was a small gasp from Ianto’s mother and Ianto’s eyes welled up again. He slid the ring onto his right ring finger, as the small piece of paper had instructed, and stood up. He placed the pouch on the table and turned, reaching for Jack’s face with both hands and planting a kiss on him that nearly made Jack blush.

The room was silent, save for Adam, who asked, “Was that on the ring? What does it mean?”

Ianto pulled back from Jack, not taking his eyes off of him. “It means, ‘I promise you forever.’ It’s Welsh.”

Adam’s eyes widened. “Oh. Wow.”

“It’s a promise ring,” Jack told them, searching Ianto’s eyes. “It means that one day, when we’re both ready, I’ll ask Ianto to marry me.”

Jack and Ianto were suddenly swarmed with well wishes, hugs and words of encouragement. But they’d yet to take their eyes off each other.

“Hey!” a small voice said. Gray tugged on both of their arms. “Are you done making goo-goo eyes at each other? I want cake!”

There was a snicker, a snort, and then the entire room burst into laughter, Jack and Ianto included. Jack looked down at his little brother, ruffling his hair. “Alright, kiddo. We’ll have cake.”

Ianto and Jack headed for the cake table, hand in hand. “I can’t wait to get you alone,” Ianto whispered as they walked. “To thank you properly for this ring, and the party.”

Jack bit back a groan. “While I don’t need the thanks,” he whispered back, “I’m definitely not going to argue your methods, Ianto. When we get back home, by all means, thank me away!”

Ianto winked at him, letting go of his hand long enough to accept the cake knife from Toshiko. “Alright,” he said loudly, “who wants the first piece of cake?”

Gray bounced up and down. “ME ME ME!”

Jack joined in with everyone else having cake and punch, knowing that they still had a long afternoon ahead of them. And all he really wanted was to have his own private celebration with his boyfriend.

Soon, he thought patiently. Soon.

Chapter 21

Jack squeezed Ianto's hand. "Hey," he said, tilting his boyfriend's chin up with his free hand, "it's going to be okay."

"I know, Jack," Ianto replied, giving him a small smile. "I'm just...nervous."

"You're going to be a great uncle."

"Actually, no, just an uncle."

Jack mock-glared. "Very funny."

"I thought so."

Jack shook his head and smiled, continuing to hold Ianto's hand. He looked around the room, which was now sprinkled with people of all ages. He watched a little girl playing with a doll, while an older boy – likely her brother – played on a portable gaming system. The man and woman he assumed were their parents were talking in hushed tones, the woman occasionally glancing at the door to the room.

To that family's immediate left there was a young couple, snuggled together but quiet. He occasionally pressed kisses to the top of her head and once she sighed, looking up at him and smiling before lowering her head back to his shoulder.

Behind both families was a woman who appeared to be on her own. She was eyeing Jack occasionally and shaking her head.

"Should it be taking this long?" Ianto asked beside him, bringing Jack's attention back to the matter at hand.

"When Mom had Gray we waited for over twenty-two hours, but that's unusually long for a second pregnancy. It's entirely possible for a first one, though."

Ianto squeezed his hand. "It's already been fifteen hours. I really don't like hospitals, Jack."

"Yeah?" His boyfriend nodded and Jack released his hand, slipping it instead around Ianto's shoulders. "Bad experience?"

"Do you remember that day I came to school with bruises and scrapes on my arms?"

Jack did remember. They'd been about seven years old and Jack had already been smitten. "I recall not wanting to leave your side. You didn't want to talk about what happened."

Ianto nodded, leaning into Jack's embrace. "I think the teacher assumed I had been abused. I hadn't, of course, but I can see why it would look that way. But I had fallen out of that tree in the yard. Got myself all banged up and had to be taken to A&E."

Jack frowned. "So what happened there?"

"They were afraid I'd broken one of my arms, but luckily I hadn't. I was just crying because I was so scared." He looked up at Jack, his face a picture of misery. "While I was being cleaned up there was another woman rushed in. I could hear the nurses trying to calm her. But she wouldn't stop screaming. For months afterward I couldn't get those screams out of my head."

"What was wrong with her?"

"She'd been in a car accident," he answered, swallowing hard. "I could hear them talking about a sudden loss of blood, and needing to get her into theater with a surgeon. But suddenly the screams just stopped. She died there, Jack. She Right there beside me. The only thing separating us was a curtain."

Jack took a deep breath, wrapping his other arm around Ianto and hugging him even closer. "Rhiannon's going to be fine," he murmured into Ianto's hair, stroking his back. "She's having a baby. The most natural thing in the world."

"I know, I just..."

"Can't get those screams to fade away?"

Ianto snuffled. "Yeah."

Jack pulled back and saw that Ianto was trying to hold back tears. He pouted, leaning in and pressing a soft kiss to Ianto's lips. "I'm here, Ianto. I'll keep the screams away."

Ianto smiled, ducking his head and looking up at Jack under his lashes. "You must think I'm awfully pathetic."

"Never."

"I shouldn't be scared of a building."

"It was traumatic, Ianto. You were very young and easily influenced. It's nothing to be ashamed of."

Ianto leaned back into him, wrapping both arms around Jack's waist and tucking his head under Jack's chin. "I love you."

"I love you too, Ianto."

They sat that way for several minutes. Out of the corner of his eye Jack could see the old woman staring at them. He continued to ignore her, figuring she was just old fashioned and had a problem with two males expressing affection for one another. But suddenly she was approaching, and Jack tensed. Ianto must have felt it as he moved his head, looking up at Jack and then at the woman who was now standing just a couple of paces away.

She lifted a finger, shaking it at them. "This is a family waiting room," she said sternly, frowning at them. "How dare you taint it with your disgusting behavior? You should be ashamed of yourselves!"

Jack's eyes darkened but he didn't distance himself from Ianto. "I beg your pardon?"

"Jack..." Ianto started, pulling back.

"No, Ianto," Jack interrupted, tightening his hold and lifting his chin defiantly. "I'd love to hear what she has to say. Because evidently she's an authority on family."

"You gays think you can go wherever you want, spreading your diseases and your perverted filth. But you can't! There's a place for you. Both of you. You're going to burn in the fiery depths of Hell, you are!"

Jack was about to open his mouth to retort when the father of the children across from them stood up, gaining Jack's attention. He was tall, thin, yet made quite an imposing sight. As he stepped up beside the woman he met Jack's eyes, the intensity enough that Jack almost had to look away. The man nodded once, turning to the elderly woman.

"I believe that's just about enough out of you."

"Excuse me?" she sputtered, turning her attention to the man beside her in the brown coat and blue trainers.

"You heard me. You need to step away from these boys and keep a civil tongue in your head."

"Well I've never!"

"And maybe you should have," he told her, flinging his coat behind him and shoving his hands in his pockets. He rolled on the balls of his feet. "I mean it. Move away from them now or I'll make a call that will have security in here so fast your head will spin."

"Aren't you afraid for your children, my good man?" She waved a bony hand in the direction of the two kids seated on the floor. "Don't you care at all for their upbringing?"

"My children have been raised well, my dear. They've been taught never to judge lest they be judged. Believe me; the only thing that frightens me in regards to what they're seeing today is that now they know there is still such hate in the universe. Through all of

time and space there is but one constant...love. It's a fixed point. It cannot be defined by traditional standards. You'd do best to educate yourself. Now off with you. Get. Remove yourself from this room and wait elsewhere. This is a place of love."

The old woman was staring at the man with anger emanating from every pore. She opened her mouth to say something in response but at the tilt of the man's chin she let out a loud breath and spun on her heels, moving to the door and out of the room in a manner befitting a much younger person. Jack watched her go, eyes wide.

"Well, I think that took care of the problem," said the man, presenting them with a grin before he turned around to walk back to his family.

"T-thank you," said Ianto, sitting up and taking Jack's hand.

"Aw, it had to be said," the man replied, grin not fading.

Jack was in shock, looking from the door to the man and from the man to the door. He glanced at Ianto, who he noticed was now smiling, and then again at the man seated across from them. No, not a man. Some sort of force of nature.

"I'm Jack," he finally managed. "And this is Ianto. His sister's having a baby."

"Great to meet you, Jack, Ianto," the force replied. "This is my wife Rose, and these are our children, Mickey and Donna. My eldest daughter, Sarah Jane, is having a baby as well."

"We're pleased to meet you all," said Ianto. "And what's your name, sir?"

"Oh, people usually call me Doctor."

"Doctor who?" Jack asked.

The man grinned again. Or was that still? "Just the Doctor."

Jack and Ianto exchanged a glance and both shrugged, turning back to the man and returning his smile.

"Well thank you, Doctor," Jack replied, holding up their joined hands. "We both appreciate it."

"Is he your husband?" Mickey asked.

Donna shook her head at him. "Partner, Mickey Mouse."

"What do you know about it, anyway?" Mickey snapped back, and suddenly both children were tussling on the floor. Rose shook her head and bent over to tend to them while the Doctor raised his arms out wide and shrugged.

“Actually, he’s my boyfriend,” Jack explained to the kids once they were again settled quietly. “But you’re right. One day he’ll be my partner.” Ianto sighed beside him, leaning against his shoulder. Jack kissed his head.

“That’s cool,” replied Mickey, picking his game back up and focusing on the screen.

“I think you’re gorgeous,” Donna said, leaning her elbows on her knees and her face in her hands. “It’s a real shame you like boys. We could have gotten married.”

“Donna!”

“Oh, leave the child alone, Rose,” the Doctor said, lifting the girl onto his knee. “She’s just a flirt.”

“She’s six, Doctor!”

Jack laughed, hearing Ianto laugh along with him. “Maybe in an alternate universe,” he told the little girl, winking. She giggled.

The door opened and all heads turned to look at the real doctor who’d entered, a graying gentleman with a smile on his face and crinkling laugh lines around his eyes. Jack liked him immediately.

“Ianto Jones?”

“Yes, sir,” Ianto replied, getting to his feet and pulling Jack up with him. “That’s me, sir.”

“Your sister and your mother would like you to join them. I believe there’s a little girl waiting to meet you.”

Ianto beamed, turning to Jack and then back. “W-what about Jack? Can he go too?”

The doctor nodded. “Of course. Ms. Jones asked specifically for her brother Ianto, but advised I’d find him with the baby’s uncle, Jack.”

“That’s me,” Jack said, puffing out his chest. He really liked the sound of that.

“Follow me,” the doctor told them, waiting until they were right behind him before turning down the hallway and making his way to Rhiannon’s room. When they got there he waved his hand into the room. “Here you are. Congratulations, Ianto, Jack.”

Ianto was the first into the room, making his way to the bedside where he leaned down and placed a kiss on his sister’s forehead. “How are you feeling?”

“Like absolute rubbish,” she told him, smiling. “I’m sure I look it as well.”

“You look sensational,” Jack told her, coming to stand beside Ianto. He lifted Rhiannon’s hand and kissed her knuckles. “Radiant.”

“Oh stop, you flatterer, you.”

Jack grinned, turning to watch as Ianto lifted his baby niece out of his mother’s hands. She kissed Ianto’s cheek as he sat down on the chair beside her, cradling Mica in his arms. Seeing the four of them together warmed Jack’s heart. It had only been a few months since Bethan’s first venture outdoors, and she had made amazing progress in that time.

“She’s so tiny,” Ianto whispered, brushing the little girl’s head full of dark hair with the pad of his thumb.

“She’s a wee bit bigger than your sister was, Ianto,” Bethan told him. Tears filled her eyes. “I can’t believe my baby had a baby.”

Ianto leaned closer to his mother so she could wrap an arm around him as he held the baby. Her other arm reached for Rhiannon and she grasped her hand. Jack pulled out his mobile. He wanted to capture this moment.

“Smile,” he told them, watching as all three of them looked up. Ianto smiled and Jack’s heart clenched. Then Rhiannon and Bethan smiled as well and Jack snapped the photo. “Beautiful.”

“But you should be in the picture too, Jack,” Bethan told him, shaking her head. “You’re family.”

“Yes, Jack, grab a nurse.” Jack raised an eyebrow at Rhiannon, smirking. She narrowed her eyes. “So that she can take the picture, you naughty thing, you!”

Jack chuckled and walked over to the door, glancing around. He saw the nurse’s station and headed over, putting on his best smile. “I’m sorry, but do any of you have a moment to assist me?”

Three nurses stepped forward immediately. Two women, one man. Jack was amused, but indicated for only one of the women to follow him. The other two sighed and shrugged, turning away.

“If you could take a quick shot of me and my family, that’d be great,” he told the nurse, handing her his mobile.

She frowned for a second but then smiled. “Of course.”

Jack scooted over to where Ianto had moved, on the opposite side of the bed from Bethan. Rhiannon was now holding Mica. They all crowded in towards the bed,

surrounding the smiling mother and child, and the nurse snapped a picture. She checked it, nodded and then held out the phone to Jack when he reached for it.

“It’s perfect,” he said, showing the others. They all agreed and he looked back up to thank the nurse, only to find she’d already left. He smiled, turning to kiss Ianto’s cheek before reaching for the baby. “My turn.”

Chapter 22

The first few months of Mica's presence in the household were exciting and fun. They were also filled with long hours of crying and late night feedings. Although Rhiannon was breast feeding her daughter, Jack and Ianto had mutually agreed that she would need a break now and then. Therefore, there was always a fresh supply of pre-made bottles at the ready.

Even after Mica had begun to sleep through the night, she would often choose ungodly times to awaken. Jack was usually the first one up, so on days that the little girl decided that four in the morning was a good time to start howling, Jack was there with a bottle, ready to quiet her down.

It was during one of her early Friday morning feedings that he realized how much his life had changed for the better. He looked down at Mica's tiny hands curling around his fingers in an attempt to assist with the feeding, and smiled. Her eyes were closed and her face was scrunched up, as if in deep concentration. She was the spitting image of Ianto when he was frowning, and it warmed Jack's heart.

It hadn't even been a year yet but Jack knew he was exactly where he wanted to be. He couldn't imagine not having Ianto woven into his life as tightly as he was. They'd always been friends, of course, but now things were so much different. He went to sleep in Ianto's arms and awoke by his side, savoring those moments when Ianto didn't even know he was being watched. If Ianto caught him in "stalker mode," as he liked to call it, his eyebrows would draw together, his nose would scrunch up, and he'd pout, much the way Mica was doing now. It was a completely endearing look for both of them.

"I thought I heard a wailing baby this morning."

Jack looked up, smiling softly at the Welshman standing over his shoulder. "You're up awfully early."

"Couldn't sleep. Big day today."

"It is?" Jack tilted his head, trying to figure out what was happening today that was different than any other day. Then it hit him and he chortled, shaking his head. His birthday. Right. How could he have forgotten about that? He didn't know where Ianto was taking him, as it was a secret, but a new twist of excitement coiled in his stomach.

"You forgot already?" Ianto teased him, kneeling beside the rocking chair that they'd set up in the lounge and brushing a finger over Mica's cheek.

"I guess I did," Jack acknowledged. "We've been so busy. You with work, and helping to take care of your mother, and me with school and working part time, and both of us helping Rhiannon with the baby...I guess it just slipped my mind. It'll be nice to get away."

“Well, not to worry. It didn’t slip mine,” Ianto murmured, snuggling against Jack’s arm as he fed the baby. “I have everything organized and ready to go. I wish you didn’t have to miss school, but there’s really no way around that.”

“That’s alright; I was more worried about my parents. But they were quite willing to let me go after a certain Welshman spoke to them.” Jack pressed a kiss to the top of Ianto’s head before removing the now empty bottle from Mica’s mouth. Blue eyes blinked open at him and the little girl gave him a crooked smile. He lifted her slowly and set her against his shoulder, adjusting the cloth he’d placed there before thumping her back firmly but carefully. She burped loudly and Jack grinned. “That’s my girl.”

“I do believe she takes after you.”

“I think you’ll find that’s impossible, Ianto Jones.”

“So they say,” Ianto replied, taking Mica from Jack’s arms and giving her a cuddle. “But I’m not entirely convinced.”

Jack stood up and stretched his legs, removing the unsoiled cloth from his shoulder and placing it over the back of the chair. He slipped an arm around Ianto’s waist and placed his other hand on the baby’s back. “She may burp like me but she looks like you.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Ianto said, kissing the baby’s cheek. “She looks just like Rhiannon.”

“Right, and Rhiannon looks just like you!”

“Boys, boys, no fighting now!” Rhiannon appeared in the doorway, dressing gown tied neatly around her waist and a smirk on her face. She stepped into the room and reached for her daughter. “I’ll just take the little one. You two have things to do before your great escape!”

“See, even my sister remembered, Jack.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

tw tw tw tw tw

Ianto had told him that the drive should take just under four hours, so they’d left around noon, but the roads were slick and it appeared to Jack that everyone and their best friend’s uncle’s neighbor were on the road. By the time they turned down the drive that would lead them to their destination in Llanrwst – at least, that’s where the sign on the road had stated they were when Jack last noticed one – it was nearing six o’clock. Jack

figured it could have been worse. After all, they'd seen two accidents and at least one car that he presumed had stalled. They were lucky just to make it in one piece.

They pulled up to a beautiful castle surrounded by lush gardens that were covered in a fine white blanket of snow. It had been a particularly cold and wet winter, and Jack grinned when he saw the building and landscape. "Ianto? Where are we?"

"Gwydir Castle," his boyfriend replied, smiling back at him as they got out of the car. They'd taken Jack's as Ianto didn't trust his car to make the long drive. "It's a bed and breakfast. I thought it might be a nice change of scenery for your birthday weekend."

Jack joined him to haul their bags out of the back seat, setting them on the ground and wrapping his arms around Ianto the moment the door had closed. "Do you have any idea how much I love you right now?"

"Just right now?" Ianto asked, raising an eyebrow.

Jack buried his face in the Welshman's neck and squeezed him tightly. He pulled back and pressed a soft kiss to Ianto's lips. "Always," he amended.

The front door of the home – castle? He really wasn't sure what to call it – opened at that moment, and Jack expected a part of the staff or family to appear. He wasn't prepared for the sight that greeted him.

"Jack? Ianto! Oh, how bloody fabulous!"

Ianto tensed in his arms and Jack sighed softly, keeping one arm around the Welshman as he turned toward the castle. "Gwen. Fancy running into you here. In the middle of...nowhere."

She ducked her head back through the door. "Rhys, come here! You'll never believe who's here!"

Jack glanced at Ianto. His face revealed nothing, but Jack wasn't fooled. He tightened his grip around his boyfriend's middle. He felt Ianto do the same.

"Oi, look what the cat dragged in!" Rhys exclaimed, grin wide. "I can't believe it."

"Neither can I," Jack replied, reluctantly dropping his arm from around Ianto and reaching for their bags. When he straightened he sighed again, whispering into Ianto's ear, "I'm sorry."

"Me too."

They made their way inside and once they'd been officially welcomed and checked in, they were shown to their room. Rhys and Gwen tagged along, the latter chattering away

in hushed tones about something to which Jack was paid no attention. He was trying to listen to the history of the castle that was being given by their host.

“And here we have your accommodations, The King's Room. There's an en-suite through that door, and we do hope you'll join us for breakfast in the morning. Full Welsh, of course.”

“Thank you very much,” Jack said, smiling. He just wanted to get settled in their room and close the door. The sooner they could shut out the rest of the world the better.

“Should you need anything at all, please do not hesitate to ask. And be sure to take a gander at the gardens. They're quite lovely, even in the winter.”

Ianto added his thanks to Jack's and their host left them just inside the room. Jack was prepared to shut the door but Ianto shook his head at him. Jack pleaded with his eyes but it was no use. Ianto apparently wanted him to be civil.

“But it's my birthday,” Jack whispered.

Ianto's eyes were sympathetic, but as he opened his mouth to reply Gwen and Rhys filed through the door. Ianto's mouth closed and the mask he'd worn earlier fell back into place.

“Oh, it's beautiful, it is!” Gwen said, turning around the room, eyes wide.

“I'd wondered who'd booked this room when I couldn't get it,” added Rhys. He placed a hand on Jack and Ianto's shoulders. “So which one of you planned the romantic getaway months in advance? Jack, you old dog.”

“Actually it wasn't me,” Jack replied, a smile tugging at his lips. “Ianto booked the stay for my birthday.”

“Oh my God. It's your birthday! Oh, Jack, I'd forgotten!”

“Ah, well that's alright Gwen. Really.”

“No, don't be ridiculous,” she cried, beginning to pace. “Well, we'll just have to buy you two dinner! Won't we, Rhys?”

“Sure, sure, that sounds like a plan to me.”

“Oh, no, really guys, it's fine. Ianto and I...” He looked at his boyfriend, frowning.

“We were actually hoping to spend the evening alone,” Ianto continued. “Just the two of us. I hope you don't mind.”

Gwen's mouth pursed for a moment before she gave them a tight-lipped smile. "No, that's more than alright. I don't...we don't mind. You're here for the weekend, yeah? Maybe tomorrow then."

"Yes, tomorrow," Rhys agreed, grin still stretching from ear to ear. "There's a restaurant I'd like to try tonight, though. Come on then, Gwen. Let's leave these two love birds alone."

Before they could accept or decline the invitation for the next night's dinner Gwen and Rhys had exited the room and closed the door behind them. Jack moved to the door and locked it. Just in case. Then he leaned his head against the wood and closed his eyes, letting his shoulders roll forward as he sighed deeply.

"That was...unexpected."

Jack opened his eyes, straightened, and turned around. Ianto's mask was no longer in place and he looked so dejected that Jack felt his heart break. "Oh, Ianto."

"It's alright, Jack," Ianto said, walking over to the dresser and fiddling with the runner that lined the top. "I'm the one who brought you here. How were you to know that my idea of a romantic birthday getaway was going to be complete shite?"

Jack shook his head, walking over to him and turning Ianto around. He tilted the Welshman's chin up so that their eyes met. "It is not shite," he told him, stroking Ianto's hair and letting his hand settle at the back of his neck. "You couldn't have known who was going to book the other room. You got this room first, Ianto. And it's a great romantic birthday getaway."

"I wanted to do something special for you. Something as wonderful as the party you threw for me."

"And you did, Ianto." Jack kissed him softly on the mouth, then kissed his cheeks and his forehead before returning to his lips. The kisses were chaste, but they were meant to be. Jack was aiming to provide comfort. "This place is amazing. You're amazing."

A hint of a smile graced Ianto's face. "At least we have tonight to ourselves."

"Yes, we do. I don't think we can get out of letting them take us to dinner tomorrow, though."

"No, I suppose not." Ianto was silent for a moment, and then the smile broke across his features. "But tonight...tonight I have plans for you."

Jack's eyebrow rose. "Oh yeah?" He stepped even closer, letting his arms settle on Ianto's shoulders and his hands link behind his head. "And what did you have in mind?"

“Well, it starts with you, me, and...dinner. I’m bloody starving, Jack.”

Jack mock growled and then chuckled, pulling away from the Welshman and grabbing his hand. “Alright then, Ianto Jones. Let’s get out of here and get something to eat.”

They left their bags where they lay on the floor, and hurried out of the room back the way they had come. They didn’t run into Gwen and Rhys again and that was more than fine with Jack. Ianto obviously wanted this to be as special as possible, and Jack didn’t want anything to ruin it.

He hoped Gwen would forget about the offer of dinner for the following night but he wasn’t about to hold his breath. She seemed happy with Rhys now, but he knew that deep down she still had feelings for him. And knowing Gwen, she wasn’t going to let him go so easily.

Chapter 23

The walk to the restaurant that Ianto had selected was a pleasant one. They'd both left their coats in the car and picked them up on their way out, so the chill of the winter evening did nothing to deter from the beauty that surrounded them. It was spectacular, and Jack found himself smiling as they walked.

"Penny for your thoughts," Ianto said softly, squeezing his hand.

Jack's smile turned into a grin. "Just taking in the scenery."

"Present company included?"

Jack chuckled, pressing a kiss to his cheek. "Always included."

"It really is a beautiful place. The photos on their website didn't do the area justice. Especially the castle itself." Ianto stopped walking suddenly, frowning, and Jack stopped beside him. "Do you think Gwen and Rhys found out we were going to be staying here?"

Jack opened his mouth to argue that Gwen wouldn't go to such lengths, but closed it again when he realized that it was exactly the sort of thing Gwen was known for. He sighed, pulling Ianto close and kissing him gently. When he pulled back, Ianto's eyebrow was raised.

"Was that a yes or a no? Because it felt like a kiss."

Jack smiled. "That was just a kiss. As for your question...I really don't know. I can't say I would put it past Gwen. But I doubt Rhys knew anything about it. Staying there was likely Gwen's idea."

"Which means that Tosh must have told her."

"Tosh?" He'd told Tosh? Well, Jack thought, of course he did. Tosh was Ianto's closest friend, other than Jack. "I really don't think she would have said anything to Gwen, Ianto. As nice a person as Tosh is, she doesn't approve of Gwen's behavior and has said so openly."

"It's possible she overheard her discussing it, then. Since I was bouncing ideas around for your birthday, Tosh was helping me do some research. If she happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and said something aloud to Tommy, Gwen could have found out that way." Ianto shook his head, letting his shoulders slump. "I'm sorry, Jack. I really am. I should have kept everything to myself."

“Hey,” Jack replied, lifting Ianto’s chin so that their eyes met. “I’m having a great time, Ianto. Even if Gwen did decide to...stalk us...it doesn’t change the fact that you picked the perfect birthday getaway.”

“You really like it that much?”

“I adore it. And you.” He pressed another kiss to Ianto’s lips and this time he let it linger. When his stomach growled they pulled apart, laughing. “I guess we’ll have to save that for later.”

“I suppose so,” Ianto said, smiling.

They continued on, holding hands again and making their way along the snow-slicked road. When they arrived at the restaurant Jack felt his cheeks tingle at the change in temperature. Whereas the wintry air outside was crisp, clean and quite chilly, the restaurant was pleasantly warm and inviting. It also held all the smells of a home-cooked meal, and Jack licked his lips.

They were directed to a small booth meant for two in the back of the building. There was a fire burning in the hearth directly behind them, and Jack swallowed hard, seeing the flames dance across Ianto’s face as they were seated.

“Would you like me to take your coats?” their server asked, smiling at both of them.

“That would be lovely, thank you,” said Ianto, slipping the garment off and handing it to the young lady.

“Yes, thank you,” Jack agreed, giving her his coat as well.

“My pleasure,” she told them. “I’ll bring you a couple of glasses of water while you take a look at our dinner selections.”

Their waitress disappeared and Jack smiled across the table. “This is a nice place, Ianto.”

The Welshman blushed. “Tosh picked it out. She said their website called it romantic, with old world charm.”

“Well she recommended a good place, then. Although, we may be the youngest people in here.”

He watched Ianto turn to survey the room and then look back at Jack with wide eyes. “Jack,” he whispered, leaning closer, “I don’t think there’s anyone else in here that’s under fifty.”

“Doesn’t look like it, no.”

A smile tugged at Ianto's lips. "That means Gwen and Rhys went somewhere else."

"Yes it does, Ianto."

"And that means I have you alone for the evening."

Jack felt his jeans tighten at the look in Ianto's eyes. "I'm all yours."

They gazed at each other across the table for a few moments, until the grumbling in Jack's stomach could no longer be ignored and he winked, opening his menu to take a look at his choices.

When their meals had been ordered and coffees presented to them, Jack raised his cup to his lips and took a sip. "Mmm. Not as good as yours," he said, taking Ianto's hand across the tabletop, "but it'll do."

"No one's coffee is as good as mine, Jack."

"That's very true."

"Jack?"

"Yes, Ianto?"

"Are you ready for your actual birthday present now?"

Jack tilted his head, puzzled at the question. "I was under the impression this trip was my birthday present."

"Don't be silly, Jack," Ianto replied, giving him a toothy smile. "This vacation was just the perfect setting."

"Okay then," Jack said, leaning in and kissing Ianto's knuckles, "so what's my present?"

Ianto reached into his pocket with his free hand and removed an envelope, handing it across the table to Jack. "Go on, open it."

Jack removed his hand so that he'd have both to work with and picked up the envelope. It wasn't sealed so he pulled the flap open and removed the contents. He scanned the pieces of paper and his eyebrows furrowed together.

"I don't understand."

"It's a land deed, Jack. A parcel of land, on an island called Flat Holm."

Jack's eyes widened. "You bought land on an island?"

Ianto grinned. “Not exactly. You see, the land is still mostly undeveloped. It’s belonged to my family as long as I can remember, being passed on generation to generation on my father’s side. We’ve never had the proper funds to get it ready for use. When I was born the deed was put into my name, only I didn’t know that until recently. The only nice thing my father’s done for me.”

“Ianto, this has my name on it, alongside yours.”

“I know, Jack.” Ianto took the paper from his hands, folded it carefully, placed it back inside the envelope, and slid the envelope back into his pocket. “If we do decide to get married, I want to save money so that we can develop the land on Flat Holm and build ourselves a house there.”

“You signed the deed into my name too?” Jack felt tears well up.

“Yes.”

“And this land...who owns the rest of it?” Jack took a shaky sip of his coffee, trying to calm his nerves.

“No one, Jack. We own the island.”

Jack sputtered, spitting coffee out onto the table. He grabbed his napkin from his lap, quickly dabbing it at the small pools of liquid and putting his cup aside. When he was finished he took several breaths before meeting Ianto’s eyes once more.

“So...together...we own an entire island?”

Ianto chuckled. “Yes, Jack. Are you okay?”

Jack nodded, feeling a bit overwhelmed. A tear broke free from his careful restraint and slid down his cheek. “I don’t even know what to say, Ianto.”

“Just say you can see us settling down together. I mean, I know you bought me that ring, but...it’s just a promise ring, not an engagement ring...”

Jack reached over the table with both hands and curled his fists into Ianto’s shirt. He lifted him off the seat and slammed their mouths together. The kiss was fierce and nothing like the sweet kisses they’d shared earlier in the day. Ianto moaned and Jack deepened the kiss, meeting Ianto’s tongue feverishly as he tried to convey exactly what he was feeling at that moment. The clearing of a throat was what broke them apart.

“Um, your meals, sirs.”

Jack released Ianto’s shirt and settled back onto his side of the table, wincing when he saw the crumpled fabric. Ianto must have understood as he looked down at himself, grimacing and then meeting Jack’s eyes with a smile. “Sorry,” Jack mouthed.

Ianto just shook his head minutely, mouthing, "Doesn't matter."

"Thank you," Jack said, looking up to see the server's nametag, "Melissa. This looks wonderful."

"Mine as well," Ianto added.

"You two enjoy...your meals." She blushed prettily and scampered off.

Jack began laughing, and soon Ianto joined in. "Whoops?"

"I think we've scarred her, Jack."

"I think so too." Jack sobered, putting his napkin back in his lap and then looking up at the Welshman across from him. "I can't see myself settling down with anyone else, Ianto. I love you."

"I love you too."

"So...tell me about our island."

Chapter 24

Curled into bed that evening Jack watched his boyfriend sleep. They'd arrived back from the restaurant long before it was time for bed, but they'd both been exhausted after their trip that afternoon. Jack had been hoping to make love to Ianto, to show him exactly how much his birthday gift had touched his heart, but Ianto had fallen asleep nearly the moment his head hit the pillow.

There wasn't much light in the room, the castle tucked away from the lights of the town beyond, but there was enough for Jack to make out the soft smile on Ianto's face. He was dreaming. Jack returned the smile, even though he had no idea if it had been meant for him. He figured it was. He hoped it was.

"I love you so much, Ianto Jones," he whispered, tracing a cheekbone and then brushing his fingers through Ianto's hair. "More than I can even put into words."

And it was true. There had been times in Jack's life when he'd thought he would never find happiness. Sure, he'd been popular in school, and there had never been a lack of girls surrounding him as he grew up, but the one who'd held his heart had been just out of reach. While he'd always had Ianto around as one of his best friends, he hadn't ever admitted his feelings for him. Looking at Ianto now Jack was glad he'd had the opportunity to finally tell him, to get the chance to share that love with the one who'd stolen his heart so many years before.

Ianto stirred, his eyes blinking open in the dark room. "Jack?"

"Hey there."

"Are you watching me sleep?"

"Maybe."

Ianto rubbed his eyes, turning on his side to face Jack. "That's a bid odd, don't you think?"

Jack smirked. "Not really. I do it more than you think."

"Now that's just creepy."

Jack chuckled, pressing a kiss to Ianto's forehead. "I didn't mean to wake you up. You should try to get more sleep."

"As should you, Jack."

"I don't need that much. You know that."

“Still.” Ianto smiled at him, reaching up and stroking Jack’s face. “Are you alright, Cariad?”

Jack sighed, curling into Ianto and taking the Welshman’s hand. He rubbed his thumb over the knuckles, relaxing into his pillow. “I’m more than alright, Ianto. I’m...happy.”

“Happy is good.”

“That’s not even the right word for it,” Jack replied, sighing again. “We own an island, you and I.”

Ianto put his other hand on Jack’s, effectively enclosing it between both of his own. “Yes we do. I can’t wait to start building. It’s going to be beautiful, Jack.”

Kissing the corner of Ianto’s mouth Jack squeezed his hand. “When do you want to start?”

Ianto’s eyebrow rose. “We haven’t even begun to save yet.”

“My parents gave me a bit of money for my birthday present.”

“H-how much is a bit?” Ianto asked, a look of concern on his face. “I mean, you needn’t tell me, of course, but...”

“A few thousand,” Jack answered, watching as Ianto’s eyes went wide. “They, uh, thought I might put it towards a new car. Sort of a graduation present.”

“Jack...it’s only February.”

“A very early graduation present.”

Ianto moved his hand to pluck at a non-existent piece of lint on Jack’s t-shirt. “And you want to use that to start our island fund? What about the new car?”

Jack grinned. “My car works just fine for now. I’d much rather plan our future instead.”

“So...we’re going to do this?”

“Of course.” Jack’s eyebrows furrowed. “You didn’t think I’d want to?”

“I’d hoped you did. I just...” Ianto rolled back onto his back.

“Ianto?”

“I wasn’t sure you were ready.”

Jack's arm slid around Ianto's waist and he tucked his face into the Welshman's neck, pressing kisses to his skin. "I was thinking that if we started getting the island prepared now, by the time we're married we'll already have a house there. Maybe guest cottages for your mother and your sister and Mica, too."

Ianto turned his head to look at him. "Oh, Jack. Really?"

"Really." Jack kissed him softly. "And I want to go back to work for my parents full time once I graduate."

"For the summer, you mean?"

"No, permanently. Until I can find something else that pays as well that I really want to do for a career."

Ianto pulled out of Jack's arms and pushed himself into a sitting position. "Jack, what about university?"

"I can always go back," he replied, scooting onto his knees. He saw Ianto was about to argue and Jack held up his hand. "Ianto, look...I know it sounds impulsive, but I've been giving this a lot of thought. I want us to have a future together. Yes, getting further education can help, but I've already got a good start. My parents' business is thriving, and after a few years there I'll be able to find something that suits me even better."

"It does pay well."

"Yeah, it does. Now that they've moved us into full employment and we're not just interns we'll be making really good money. Pay raises will be every year. This gift from my parents can start the process on the island, and over the next few years we can complete it."

Ianto looked down for a moment, worrying his bottom lip between his teeth. "What will your parents say?"

Jack shrugged. "I know they want me to go to university now, but if I can show them that I've thought this out, planned it, they really won't have a reason to argue."

"And you're sure this is what you want? The job, the island...me?"

Jack's hand cupped Ianto's face and he kissed him. "More than anything. Marry me, Ianto."

"W-what?"

"Marry me. I've already promised to ask you. So...I'm asking you. Marry me?"

“I...” Ianto’s eyes were round and watery, and he nodded. “Y-yes. Yes, of course, Jack.”

Jack’s grin nearly split his face. He grabbed Ianto and tugged him against his body, rolling them until Jack was on his back and Ianto on top of him. “Yes?”

“Yes!”

Jack kissed Ianto hard, laying all his emotions on the line as tears started to course down his face. He’d loved this boy...man...since they were four years old, and now he was going to be able to love him for the rest of his life. They were young, of course, but that wasn’t going to stop Jack. Ianto would be eighteen in six months, and Jack in another year. They had as long as they needed to make things perfect.

Ianto broke away from the kiss, running a hand through Jack’s hair. “We should...probably have a long engagement, Jack.”

“I agree.”

“Maybe...a few years?”

Jack frowned. “That long? I was thinking one.”

“Jack, that’s far too soon. We’ll only be eighteen.”

“Okay, two then.”

Ianto shook his head. “I’d like a nice wedding. You know, with my family. We’ll need time to save for that.”

“But Ianto, we’re only going to be able to have a Civil Partnership.”

Ianto’s face fell. “I know. But we can still have a ceremony. All our friends can be there. Mam can walk me down the aisle and...and Mica could be the flower girl.”

“She couldn’t do that at two?”

“It’d be better if she were older. Three...maybe?”

Jack smiled up at him, kissing his nose. “Okay Ianto Jones. Three years it is. We’ll sign the registry but we’ll also have a full ceremony. And we’ll be twenty. Is that old enough for you?”

Ianto beamed, nodding vigorously. “Yes. Thank you, Jack.”

“My pleasure completely, Ianto. Now move that ring to your left hand so everyone knows that you’re mine.”

“I think everyone already knows that,” Ianto told him, grinning, but doing as he’d said and slipping his promise ring – now engagement ring - to his left hand. “There. Better?”

“Perfect. Come here.”

Jack drew the Welshman down until their lips met again, slipping his tongue easily inside Ianto’s mouth and deepening the kiss immediately. One hand held the back of Ianto’s head and the other slid between them, down into Ianto’s pajama bottoms.

“Jack...” It was a whisper into Jack’s mouth, followed by a moan as Jack’s hand closed around him.

It wasn’t long before Ianto was writhing above him, and Jack slowed his movements, not wanting to send him over the edge until he could join him. He’d rather have used lube, but didn’t want to let go of Ianto long enough to make his way over to their bags on the floor. Instead, he slipped his other hand to his mouth and wet his fingers. When he was satisfied, he brought them back down and slowly worked them into Ianto until the Welshman was again twisting and turning in pleasure.

“Please. Please, Jack!”

They moved to remove both of their pajamas, and then Jack froze. Protection. He needed a condom. He closed his eyes, willing himself to relax for a moment. He’d need to get up after all.

Ianto must have understood immediately as he shook his head. “Just you, Jack.”

“Ianto, we can’t. We have to...”

“No. No, we don’t. Jack, I’ve only ever been with you, and you with me. And we only ever will.”

Jack swallowed, considering that for a moment. He was right, of course. He had no intentions of ever sleeping with anyone other than Ianto, for the rest of their lives. “Are you sure?”

“Yes, Jack.” Ianto began kissing him again, moving his hips around until they were lined up and stroking each other. “Please...”

Jack’s eyes nearly rolled back in his head. He moistened his hand again and this time moved it to his own erection, slicking himself up as well as he could. And when he joined with Ianto he knew it was true. Ianto was his, and he was Ianto’s. Always.

Chapter 25

When Jack's eyes opened the next morning he was surprised to find Ianto up and getting dressed. He smirked. That was unusual. Ianto was almost never awake before him.

"Good morning, sleepy head."

Jack's smirk stretched into a grin. "Good morning. You're awfully chipper this morning."

"Well, someone wore me out last night," Ianto replied, sitting down on the edge of the bed and dropping a quick kiss on his forehead. "I slept rather soundly."

"Oh yeah? Anyone I know?"

"Mmhmm." Ianto stood, crossing the room. "Now get up and showered, Jack. I want to take a walk around the gardens before breakfast."

Jack frowned as he looked down at the clock. "Ianto, it's not even six!"

"And?"

"And we're on vacation, Ianto! Come back to bed."

"Jack," his boyfriend – fiancé – said, drawing out the vowels in that delicious Welsh accent of his, "being on holiday is a chance to experience new things, not just to have a lie in. Now come on...out of bed."

Jack groaned, knowing he'd lost the fight, twisting around to kick his feet off the side of the bed. Padding over toward the en-suite he caught Ianto's smile out of the corner of his eye and couldn't help but smile himself.

Later, as they strolled through the gardens, the sun was just peeking over the horizon. Jack wrapped an arm around Ianto, holding him close as the chill of the morning seeped in through his coat.

"This is beautiful, Ianto."

"I thought you might like it."

"I would have liked it after another hour in bed, as well." Jack chuckled as Ianto playfully shoved him away, and pulled the Welshman back into his side a moment later, kissing his cheek. "I'm just teasing you."

"Of course you are."

They were silent for a few minutes and then Jack couldn't help but sigh. "Do you think it's possible for a day to be more perfect?"

Ianto raised an eyebrow at him. "You must be forgetting our dinner plans."

Jack groaned for the second time that morning. "You had to remind me?"

Ianto shrugged. "Sorry, Jack."

"I really wish there were a way to get out of this."

"Not without hurting Gwen's feelings."

Jack stopped in his tracks, pulling Ianto to a stop beside him. It was his turn to raise an eyebrow. "You're telling me you're worried about Gwen's feelings?"

A smile tugged at Ianto's lips. "Well, not exactly worried." He blushed and Jack thought it was adorable. "I just don't see a reason to be rude when she's been somewhat reserved. Measured against her normal behavior, that is."

"Yeah, she hasn't been as pushy as usual. That probably means she's scheming."

"God help us."

They both laughed and continued their walk, heading inside and toward the dining room just before breakfast was to be served.

tw tw tw tw tw

Late morning and into the early afternoon found Jack and Ianto shopping in town. It wasn't normally something Jack liked to do, but he found that he was really enjoying just spending the day with Ianto. He didn't really mind the shopping part, and Ianto was enjoying himself.

"This is completely Tosh," he told Jack, wrapping a black scarf around his neck and then holding up two black gloves. "Do you think she'd like them?"

"I know she would," Jack replied, smiling at him. "You should get them. As a thank you for her help with setting all of this up."

Ianto frowned. "What about our wedding and island fund?"

Jack stepped closer, kissing the Welshman softly. "I don't think these will make a huge dent."

Ianto seemed to consider that for a moment and then smiled. "Alright."

A few minutes later, and with parcel in tow, they were on their way again. When they turned the corner and ran into Rhys and Gwen, Jack inwardly cursed. He plastered a smile on his face, however. Like Ianto had said, it didn't seem appropriate to be rude.

"Well then, that was a lucky break, wasn't it?" she asked them, eyes wide. "I suppose we can just make an early dinner of it."

"I was feeling a bit hungry," Rhys agreed, beaming. "What do you say?"

Jack looked at Ianto and Ianto looked at Jack. Both of them shrugged. "Sounds fine to me," Jack offered, turning back to the other couple. "Although I still feel that you don't owe me a birthday meal."

"Nonsense," Rhys replied. "And you should really try the pub we went to last night. Best chips in Wales, I can tell you that!"

The group made their way to the pub Rhys had mentioned, Jack holding Ianto's hand and squeezing it reassuringly. While Ianto had been quite calm about the whole Gwen situation, Jack knew that deep inside he was angry at the Welshwoman for impeding on their vacation. And if he were honest with himself, Jack was angry too. It didn't seem to matter that he hadn't talked to Gwen in months. She'd still managed to find a way to force her presence on them.

Jack had ignored her, not taking her calls, not answering her texts. And yet, here she was, four hours from home, in a castle that housed only two guest rooms, on the exact same weekend Ianto had booked for Jack's birthday. Even Jack was beginning to doubt that it was just a coincidence.

"Here we are," Rhys said, opening the door for them and ushering everyone ahead of him.

They settled into a booth, and much to Jack's displeasure he somehow ended up sitting next to Gwen, with Rhys and Ianto on the ends. He frowned when he felt Ianto sitting stiffly beside him.

"Want to switch?" he whispered to him, but Ianto just shook his head.

After a few minutes of perusing the menu they'd all made their choices and Jack said he'd go put in their orders. That brought on a scowl by Gwen who ushered Rhys out of the booth.

"Don't be silly, Jack," she said, shaking her head. "Dinner is on us, remember? Rhys, go on then."

“He can’t possibly carry all the drinks by himself,” Jack stated, indicating Ianto should shuffle out so he could get up. “I can help.”

“Well Ianto can go, can’t you Ianto?”

Ianto paused and looked from Gwen to Jack and back again. “She’s right, Jack. I’m already up. I’ll be right back.”

Jack swallowed, suddenly feeling very uncomfortable. He hadn’t been alone with Gwen since he’d told her he was leaving cheer, and their proximity in the booth set him on edge. He could feel the tension between them and knew he’d be able to cut it with a knife.

“So, Jack,” Gwen murmured, turning her head to look at him, “how are you? I mean really? How are you doing?”

“I’m good, Gwen. Thank you.”

“It must be tough, yeah? Being cooped up in that little house with Ianto’s family?”

He turned to face her. “Sorry?”

“You know...with all the problems they’ve been having.”

“What do you know about Ianto’s family?”

Gwen pursed her lips. “Oh, I know a lot, Jack. I do. I know that Ianto’s sister’s husband off and left her, baby in the womb and all. And I know Ianto has to work to take care of everyone, especially his mum.”

Jack shook his head. “That’s an awful lot of gossip. Ianto’s family is wonderful.”

“You’re having me on.”

“Gwen, did it occur to you that I made the choice to move into Ianto’s house because I wanted to be there? Because I liked it there?”

“That may very well be, Jack, but it doesn’t mean you have to stay. You don’t owe them anything.”

Jack opened his mouth to argue but closed it again, seeing Ianto and Rhys returning with their drinks.

“All ordered,” Rhys advised, sliding back into the booth and pressing a kiss to the side of Gwen’s head. “And what did you two get up to while we were gone, hmm? Any interesting conversation we missed?”

“Not at all, love,” Gwen told him, smiling sweetly.

Jack narrowed his eyes, looking away from the two of them and seeing Ianto’s eyebrow raised. He shook his head, indicating he’d talk to him about it later. He really didn’t want to upset Ianto with Gwen’s awful comments, but at the same time he couldn’t keep them from him. There were no secrets between them.

Their meals were delivered to the table a while later, and conversation flowed relatively easily. They discussed school, Rhys’s family, and then suddenly the topic turned to university.

“Did you decide where you wanted to go, Jack?” Rhys asked.

Jack swallowed his bite of steak down and then smiled. “Actually, I’ve decided not to go to university.” There was a gasp from Gwen but he ignored it. “Not right now, anyway.”

“But Jack, why?”

He turned to look at her, still smiling. “Well,” he said, lifting Ianto’s left hand from where it lay on Ianto’s knee and showing them the ring, “because I’ve asked Ianto to marry me, and we’re both going to be working full time to save money.”

Gwen’s fork fell to her plate and she blinked rapidly. “You can’t be serious.”

Ianto’s hand closed around Jack’s, squeezing tightly as he dropped them both beneath the table. “We’re very serious, Gwen. I’ve said yes.”

“But you’re both too young!”

“Gwen, love...”

“No, Rhys! They’ve said their piece, and now I’m going to say mine!”

Jack sighed.

“Jack, you can’t do this.”

“Why not?” he asked her, not letting go of Ianto’s hand. “Why can’t I work instead of university and marry Ianto? Hmm? I’d love to hear your insight.”

“Because it’s ridiculous, it is! You’ve already given up cheer for Ianto, and don’t think I haven’t noticed you’ve been distancing yourself from me, too!” She looked indignant. “You’ve abandoned your own family and moved in with his. You’re really going to throw your life away on a boy from the wrong side of town?”

“That’s enough out of you, Gwen!”

Jack's eyes snapped to his fiancé. He wasn't sure he could remember him every looking so angry, unless maybe when it was directed at Johnny. Ianto's ears were red and his brows were furrowed, and Ianto had released Jack's hand in order to grip the table tightly with both of his own.

"Not bloody likely," Gwen sputtered.

"Oh yes, Gwen. I'm not going to sit here and have you insulting both Jack and myself while you pretend I'm not even at the table."

"Now calm down, Ianto," Rhys started, holding up a hand. "I don't think anyone needs to be making a scene..."

"If anyone's making a scene it's your girlfriend," Ianto growled. "Gwen, I'm going to tell you this once, and you'd better bloody well listen to me. I love Jack, and Jack loves me. He's not going to sneak off with you behind Rhys's back, even though that's what you'd love him to do."

"What!?" cried Rhys.

"That's rubbish."

"No, Gwen, it's not, and you know it. Ever since we were kids all you've ever wanted to be was Jack's girlfriend. Do you really think I'm not clever enough to figure it out? Every step Jack's made towards me, you've clung a little bit tighter. Every smile he threw my direction, you scowled a little bit deeper. Well bloody well grow up, Gwen Cooper. Jack Harkness is in love with me, not you, and we're building a life together."

"You're a fool, Ianto Jones. Jack adores me."

"Gwen!" Rhys had stood up and was now staring at his girlfriend. "Don't you do this to me, Gwen. Don't you tell me you've been using me while fawning over Jack Bollocks!"

"Excuse me?" asked Jack.

"Rhys, sit down! I can explain."

"No, Gwen." Rhys shook his head. "No, I don't think I will." And with that he turned on his heel and left the pub.

"RHYS!" Gwen got out of the booth, starting to follow her boyfriend before spinning around and pointing a finger at Ianto. "You did this! How could you?"

"I think you'll find you did this to yourself," Jack corrected, slipping his arm around Ianto's shoulders. "And I also think you should leave. Ianto's right, Gwen. And so were you. I have been distancing myself. I'm done with your attitude and your behavior. Go

to Rhys, Gwen. Go attempt to salvage your own relationship and stay the hell away from mine.”

Gwen stood there for a moment with fury written all over her face. A moment later, she began to cry, turning away from them and hurrying away from the table and out the door of the pub.

Jack sighed deeply, hanging his head. He glanced up at Ianto and found him still watching the door. “Are you okay?”

Ianto sat rigidly for a second more and then relaxed into Jack’s embrace, leaning his head on Jack’s shoulder. “I’m sorry Jack. I shouldn’t have started all of that here in the pub.”

“Don’t,” Jack murmured, kissing his head. “It wasn’t you who started it, it was me. But even before I mentioned the wedding Gwen was back to her old self. She was going on about us while you and Rhys were getting the drinks and putting in our order.”

Ianto pulled back turning to face Jack. “What did she say?”

“Some very unsavory things about you, me, and our families.”

Ianto frowned. “I had a feeling her happy relationship was just a front.”

“I think it always was,” Jack replied, smiling sadly. “Poor Rhys.”

“Yeah.”

“For what it’s worth, Ianto, I’m proud of you.”

“You are? For what, Jack?”

“For standing up for yourself, and for me.” Jack leaned closer, eyes darkening. “It was pretty damned sexy.”

Ianto snorted. “It was childish.”

“No, it was incredible. You’re incredible.”

Ianto blushed and turned to look at the table. “I suppose we should pay Rhys back for our meals.”

It was Jack’s turn to snort. “You’re joking, right? Let Rhys get the money back from Gwen.”

“You think he would?”

“Maybe.” Jack grinned, thinking about how amusing it would be to watch Rhys demand his money back. He gently pushed on Ianto’s arm, indicating he should move out of the booth. “Come on. Let’s get out of here.”

Chapter 26

Telling his parents about their engagement had made Jack nervous, but the moment a grin broke out over his mother's face he relaxed. His father had patted him on the back, Gray jumped up and down like a mad man, and his mother engulfed him in a hug. He really did have the best family around.

The second half of his news, however, did not make his parents as happy. He'd started by explaining the birthday gift he'd received, and then went on to describe the work that would need to be done. His father's eyes had darkened a bit, as if he knew where the conversation was heading, and when Jack dropped the bombshell he just shook his head and said, "Oh, Jack."

"I don't see why your work on Flat Holm can't wait until after you've graduated university," his mother said, sitting down at the dining table after serving everyone cups of coffee. They'd already begun digging into the cake she had made for Jack. "After all, you won't be getting married for a few years yet."

"That's true, but we want to have the island ready so that when we do get married we can move into our new house right away."

"Son, are there problems with the house you're currently living in?"

Jack shook his head, placing his fork on his plate. "No, Dad. The house is fine."

"Well, I suppose it is a bit crowded," Ianto remarked, sipping his coffee. "At the moment Rhiannon and Mica are sharing a room. By the time she's three she's really going to need her own space."

"He has a point," added Jack. "And if we were living on our own, there will be a lot more room."

"Two mortgages?" Jack's mother asked, raising an eyebrow. "How would you afford that?"

Jack grinned. "Actually, no. Only the one mortgage. And not for very long, either. Since we're going to build our house on Flat Holm we won't need to finance more than the construction costs, and not long after the home is built we'll be moving Ianto's family out there with us."

"And we'll sell the property in which we currently reside," Ianto said, smiling.

Jack's parents looked at each other, then turned back to them. His mother asked, "And your new house will be big enough for all of you?"

“Actually,” Ianto replied, “we’re going to build the main house with just three bedrooms. Then there will be a couple of cottages for my mother, and my sister and niece.”

“That sounds practical,” Jack’s father said, rubbing his chin. “But what about university, Jack? Are you ever planning to go? I know it doesn’t seem important now, son, but a good education is nothing to take for granted. Your mother and I wouldn’t be where we are today if we’d not both attended ourselves.”

Jack nodded. “I do want to go. But right now, what’s important to me is my future with Ianto, and making sure that we’re both taken care of. Once the island is ready to be inhabited the costs of taking care of the other house will be gone, and we’ll be able to save a lot more money toward our golden years.”

“Whoa, whoa, Jack,” his mother cried, laughing. “You’re only seventeen. You’re really thinking about retirement?”

“Yeah,” he answered, shrugging, “I really am.”

“Will there be a room for me?” Gray asked, his voice tiny.

Jack grinned over at him, ruffling his hair. “Of course there will! You’ll be able to visit just like you do at our house now. Except there will be room to stay the night.”

“YAY!”

They all laughed, watching the little boy bounce around the room before he shot off into the lounge to watch the television. Jack sighed, feeling Ianto take his hand and looking up at the Welshman. How he’d ever gotten so lucky in life he wasn’t sure, but he knew his future was bright as long as he had Ianto Jones at his side.

tw tw tw tw tw

After leaving the Harkness residence Jack and Ianto headed home. They’d not been back to their house since the trip out of town, having wanted to break the news to Jack’s parents as soon as possible, and they still needed to do all their unpacking. Jack was glad to be full of birthday cake and coffee, as well, as it meant neither he nor Ianto would need any dinner that night. They could simply relax.

The unpacking and tossing of clothes into the wash didn’t take very long at all, and Jack and Ianto made their way into the lounge to collapse onto the sofa.

“I am so full,” Jack groaned, laying his head back.

“That will teach you to eat more than one slice of cake, Jack.”

“But it was so good!”

“Of course it was,” Ianto replied. “And now you’ll be feeling it for hours.”

“I thought I heard you two come in!” Rhiannon appeared around the doorframe, carrying a large bundle in her arms.

“Hey there,” said Jack, bringing his head back up in order to send a smile across the room. “How was your weekend?”

“Pretty good, actually,” Rhiannon said, sliding into the rocking chair. “Mica was quiet for the most part, and Mam has been doing well.”

“Is she resting?” asked Ianto.

“Yep. She was pretty active today, playing with Mica here in the lounge for a couple of hours.” Rhiannon wiped at her face. “You should have seen it, Ianto. It was like having the old Mam back.”

“She’s doing amazingly well, these days,” said Jack. “It’s quite an improvement, even just from the time I moved in.”

“She really is. So enough about us! How was your trip?”

Jack and Ianto looked at each other before both smiling. Ianto told her all about the trip itself, including what they saw, where they stayed, and the food they ate. Jack chimed in with an anecdote now and then, and then they both began telling her of their future plans.

“Oh Ianto, Jack,” she said, wiping her face again, “I’m so happy for the both of you! My baby brother, getting married!”

Jack took Ianto’s hand. “You’re brother has been one of my best friends since I moved to Cardiff, and I can’t imagine spending my life with anyone else.”

“Jack...”

“It’s true, Ianto.” He leaned closer and kissed his cheek, making the Welshman blush prettily. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Jack.”

At that point Mica woke from her slumber in her mother’s arms and began to wail. Rhiannon shook her head and grumbled, “No timing, this one.” She excused herself and disappeared down the hallway, presumably to her bedroom.

“She took all that a lot better than my family,” Jack thought out loud.

“Oh I don’t know. I thought your parents took it pretty well.”

“If you don’t count the frowns and lecturing.”

“There wasn’t much of that, Jack. They’re genuinely happy for us. They just worry, that’s all.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“Come on,” Ianto urged him, standing and holding out a hand to pull Jack up off the sofa. “I want to go look in on Mam and then I’m eager to just settle in for the night. Work tomorrow.”

Jack groaned, following Ianto out of the room. “School **and** work tomorrow,” he grumbled.

“It’s got to be done, Jack.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know.”

Ianto stopped in the doorway, turning around and cupping Jack’s face. “I really do love you, Jack. Everything we’ve decided, all our plans for the future, it all starts now.”

Jack smiled, holding Ianto’s hand against his face. “Yes it does, Ianto. Yes it does.”

Chapter 27

Jack smiled as he opened the front door, stepping into his finished house for the first time. Slipping his arm around Ianto's waist he whispered into the man's ear, "We're finally here, Ianto Bug."

Ianto shot him a withering look before a smile tugged at his lips. "It feels like it's been forever."

The three years they'd needed in order to complete the process of making their island inhabitable and building their home and two cottages had crawled by, but they'd needed that time in order to pay for the process out of pocket as much as possible. Incurring a large debt on top of their normal expenses wasn't necessary, as long as they took their time with construction. Their loan was now manageable, which left them money every month in order to save for their wedding and a small nest egg.

Walking into the lounge Jack sighed, loving the floor plan they'd chosen. "It's so open and airy," he commented, waving his hand around. "Perfect for entertaining."

"Planning to do a lot of that, are you?" Ianto teased him, nudging him gently.

"Well, between your family and mine..."

"Very true."

All that was left to do on the island was to move their furniture in, and that would be ferried across in a few days. With their wedding ceremony only a couple of months away and their move to Flat Holm nearly complete, Jack felt a large weight being lifted from his shoulders. All of their plans were coming to fruition and they could truly begin their future together.

Ianto's family wouldn't be moving in with them for a few weeks yet, as they were still finalizing the sale of their home and arranging for his mother's care. Jack couldn't wait, however, as he was used to having them so close by. It would be strange to live too far apart for very long.

"I'm glad you convinced me to go with paint instead of wallpaper," Jack said, stepping away from Ianto's side and running his fingers down the pale green, textured wall. "So much more we can do with it this way."

"Have you decided on the portrait to hang over the fireplace?"

"I'm thinking a wedding shot. Maybe us in our tuxes, looking dashing and debonair."

Ianto's eyebrow crawled up his forehead. "Debonair? You, Jack?"

“Sure, why not? I can be debonair when I want to.”

“Not sure you can pull it off. You are dashing, though,” Ianto said. “I’ll give you that.”

Jack chuckled, pulling Ianto into his arms and kissing him softly. “Pretty soon you’re going to be Mr. Harkness.”

“I think there’s already one of those running around here somewhere.”

“Mrs. Harkness?”

The glare Ianto fixed him with could cut diamonds. “I shouldn’t even dignify that with a response.”

“And yet you did,” Jack replied, smirking.

“How about I just remain Mr. Jones? I really don’t think it’s necessary for me to change my name.”

“No, not necessary. It could be fun though. Mr. and Mr. Harkness. Or Mr. and Mr. Jones, perhaps?”

Rolling his eyes, Ianto pressed a quick kiss to Jack’s mouth. “I’d prefer not to confuse everyone,” he told him when he pulled away. “We should head back soon.”

Jack’s brows furrowed. “Already?”

“Dinner with your family, remember?”

“Ah, yes,” Jack acknowledged, nodding and turning to wrap his arm around Ianto’s waist once more. They locked up the house and Jack took a moment to admire the view outside their front door. “This is all ours, Ianto.”

“Yes it is.”

“This weekend I’ll have you all to myself on this little island.”

“Just the two of us, on this little island, for as long as it takes. Terrifying.”

“Really?”

“Yes, shivers down my spine.”

“You don’t look scared.”

“It...passed.”

Jack made a fist and shook it menacingly, then broke into a grin. “Let’s get out of here.”

tw tw tw tw tw

Settling into one of their overstuffed chairs Jack smiled. He watched as Ianto finished unpacking the last box, carefully placing a framed photo on the shelf above the fireplace. “Perfect,” he told him, holding out his hand.

Ianto turned toward him, taking his hand and letting Jack pull him onto his lap. “Well, not yet. We need a fire in the hearth and we’ll be all set. It’s rather chilly today.”

“Mmm, I can think of better ways to get you warmed up, Ianto.”

“Is that so?”

“Oh yeah.”

Jack moved his hand to cup the back of Ianto’s head, guiding him closer until their lips met in a messy kiss. Jack moaned into Ianto’s mouth when he shifted to straddle his lap, and Jack pressed up into him, eager to get more contact. Several minutes later they were both breathing hard.

“Maybe...we should...move this...someplace...comfortable,” Ianto said, between kisses.

“I’m...comfortable,” Jack retorted, sliding his mouth to Ianto’s neck and sucking on his throat.

“Unf,” Ianto replied. “I meant...bed.”

Jack reluctantly pulled back, eyes dark with want. “Alright. Lead the way.”

Jack watched as Ianto extricated himself from his lap and clamored to his feet, heading down the hallway toward their bedroom. Jack followed close behind, shutting the door quickly before drawing the Welshman back into his arms.

Pressing him backward until Ianto’s legs touched the bed, Jack’s hands worked to pull up the jumper he wore, dropping it onto the floor over his shoulder and closing his lips around the soft, fair skin of Ianto’s bare shoulder. His hands continued to move, opening the catch of Ianto’s trousers and lowering the zip. He reached inside, under the elastic of the man’s underwear, allowing his fingers to wander.

“Jack,” the Welshman whispered, hips thrusting forward.

“You’re so hard, Ianto,” Jack growled, kissing, licking, and nibbling his way up to Ianto’s ear. “Do you want me?”

There was a derisive snort, and then a gasp as Jack squeezed his erection. “God, yes.”

Jack smiled against Ianto’s ear. He loved getting him so worked up. “How do you want me?”

“In-inside me, Jack.” There was a whimper when Jack tugged firmly on his flesh. “Fuck me.”

Jack let Ianto go and the man crawled backwards onto the bed, lying against the pillow, clothed from the waist down. Pulling his own shirt over his head, Jack dropped it atop Ianto’s, kicking out of his shoes and socks and then yanking down his jeans and pants in one deft move.

He climbed onto the bed, tugging off Ianto’s shoes, peeling away his socks, and reaching for his trousers. As he slid them down, he pressed his lips to Ianto’s cloth-covered cock, gaining himself a heady moan. Taking only a moment to inhale his lover’s scent, Jack pulled down the underwear, sliding them and the trousers before them off his legs.

Jack would have loved to have taken his time making love to Ianto, starting with a slow exploration of his body, but his lover was squirming on the bed, reaching for him the moment his clothes had fallen to the floor.

“Please, Jack!”

Reaching into their bedside table, Jack removed the bottle he’d just stashed there that morning. Slicking up his fingers he inserted first one, then two, and moments later a third as he prepared Ianto carefully but quickly. When he was sure his fiancé was ready, Jack added more lube to his hand and coated himself, dropping the bottle onto the table and thrusting into Ianto hard.

Ianto’s gasps and moans of pleasure drove Jack on, and he leaned down to kiss the Welshman as he moved inside him. He lifted his legs, wrapping them around himself and bringing their bodies even closer together.

“So good, Ianto,” he murmured, burying his face in Ianto’s neck. “Not...gonna last.”

“Oh, Jack. Please...please...”

Jack braced himself with one hand by Ianto’s shoulder, reaching between them with the other until he could grasp Ianto’s cock in his fist. He stroked him in time with his thrusts, lips merely a breath away from Ianto’s, eyes closed tightly.

Brief minutes later Jack felt his orgasm rip through him and he let out a groan, emptying pleurably inside the Welshman’s heat. Ianto was next, his release spilling over Jack’s hand and his own stomach as he chanted Jack’s name.

Jack collapsed next to Ianto on the bed, exhausted from both their unpacking and lovemaking. He felt Ianto shift beside him and cracked one eye open. The man was reaching for tissues, and Jack smiled, rolling onto his side. "Here, let me."

Ianto returned the smile, handing him the tissues and lying back while Jack cleaned them both up. "It's a shame we just made the bed."

Jack frowned, eyeing the dark stain on the duvet as he dropped the soiled tissues into the bin beside the bed. "Oops?"

Ianto shook his head. "It was worth it."

"Yeah?"

"Yup."

Jack glanced at the clock. "Maybe we could catch a nap, Ianto. After I throw the duvet in the wash, that is."

"Sounds wonderful."

Jack worked the duvet off the bed, bringing it to the utility room and dropping it into their washing machine. He started it up and yawned, making his way back to the bedroom. By the time he returned Ianto was already asleep, and Jack slid into bed beside him, pulling the remaining covers up over them both.

"Sleep well, Ianto Bug," Jack whispered, not bothering to set the alarm. They had nothing in particular to do the rest of the afternoon, and if they happened to sleep later into the evening there was no one there to stop them.

Jack curled into Ianto's side and nuzzled his chest, draping an arm across him. He listened to the sounds of his lover's slow breathing, enjoying the fact that he couldn't hear anything else. Not a television in the other room, not a toddler playing with her toys, just Ianto taking one steady breath after the next.

Soon the furnished cottages behind their home would be occupied. Bethan, Rhiannon, and Mica would be close, but they'd still be under separate roofs. They'd be near enough to visit regularly but still far enough away for privacy when needed, and Jack knew that he and Ianto required more and more privacy these days. With the island complete Jack was also ready to go to university, and he'd need the silence of the house during the day in order to get his work and revision done.

Letting those thoughts flit through his mind, Jack closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep, their pending union, school, and a bright future ahead coloring his dreams.