



## ***TORCHWOOD: IN THE SHADOWS***

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Hello. Okay. Right, can you hear me? (chuckles) Why am I doing this? Of course you can't hear me. Except he said- Okay, here's the thing. Yesterday, we met this trader from the planet Murgatroyd. Kind of like a door-to-door salesman, but with orange skin and breath that smelt of...well, Jack called it 'stardust'. It was more like fried eggs to me. So, yeah, anyway. Before we sent him packing, he gave me this copper ball thing, and he said if I spoke into it.. I'd be able to talk to you. So this is me, Gwen Cooper, trying to talk to you. I've been thinking back. Over the last few weeks. To something that happened ages ago. It was before the Daleks, before CERN. Before I got married. And it was before you. It was before Owen and Tosh died. It feels like a lifetime ago. And it was something that really made me think about whether there's life after death. Or whether... when it ends, it really is just... darkness.

(Torchwood theme plays)

'Hello? Is anyone there? Can anyone hear me, please? There must be someone! Please, god, tell me someone's there! Please!'

A few seconds later, midnight. Steven Ballard is standing at the top of Queen Street and he's screaming. It's all he can do. That, and remember what's brought him here.

A few hours earlier, 4pm, the inevitable ping bouncing around the office. An email:

*Anyone fancy a pint after work?*

*Just the one. Lol.*

More pings as everyone replies: *God, yeah! 5pm, shutdown*

*Are you sure you wanna shut down the computer?*

Oh yeah, they're sure. Grabbing coats, and bags, and piling into lifts. Ping, second floor. Ping, first floor. Ping, freedom.

5:15 and he's standing at the bar. 6 pints of lager, 2 glasses of wine, 3 packets of smoky bacon. Sitting down, lager splashing. And he's telling them all about the party he went to on Monday night. Oh, yeah. He goes to parties on a Monday night. Grinning as they hang on his every word.

Fast forward, it's 10pm and everything's starting to blur. The lightweights and the marrieds have gone. It's just Steve, Fat Bev, the Chinese dude from Marketing and... of course, Darren. Stupid, little Darren. Fat Bev wants to go to Exit. It's full of gays but the music's decent. And Steve knows he can always pull some student bint, especially if he takes Darren. Looking down at Darren, always looking back up at him and making Steve look good.

10:30 and they're still trying to decide. Chinese dude's asleep, so he's out. Steve's realising that he can't be arsed to walk to the club, so instead he's getting Darren to get another round in. Flaming Sambucas, olay.

10:35 and Darren's back from the loo. Steve's still laughing at the red burns on the idiot's top lip. He'd remember that for next time. Because there'll always be a next time. Darren No Mates, following him around like a dog. Talking of dogs, Fat Bev is snogging the barman for a free aftershock. Bloody hell, go to bed with her and you'll really feel the aftershocks. Steve laughing away at his own joke.

11pm, and they're being kicked out. Fat Bev asleep in the gutter, Steve knowing what's coming. It was the same every night. Darren asking if they can 'You know, maybe like, you know, possibly share a taxi.'

Maybe the little tit fancies him, who knows, who cares? Steve knowing at least he won't have to pay the fare. And there's a taxi coming round the corner. So tempting just to push Darren in front of it. He's wittering on about how much fun he's had. Like getting hammered is still some kind of big new thing for him.

And they're climbing into the taxi and collapsing into the seat. The taxi's moving and he's watching the streetlights pass, and some girl chucking up on the pavement, her mates crowded around.

Head lolling and sitting in silence, except for the radio plays and god-awful song he's never heard of. And they're moving through the streets. And gradually he's realising that Darren's talking. Asking the driver if he's had a busy night. And Steve just can't take it anymore. 'Who cares? He doesn't know you. We don't know him. Do you have to say the same crap every bloody night?' And he's pleased because Darren looks like he's about to cry. So he carries on. Gotta get your kicks somehow. 'You know what, Darren? No one likes you. They don't. Sorry, man. You know why they talk to you? Because they think you're my mate. They don't even notice you. Loser, man, that's what you are. Stupid, little loser. So just, for god sake, shut the hell up.'

Midnight. Screaming at the top of Queen Street and Steven Ballard's realising that was probably a bit harsh. It's just he'd been drunk and he'd had enough of work and the routine and the sitting in the pub, getting wrecked with people he didn't even like. Wasn't exactly Darren's fault. And he's trying to remember what happened next.

11:15 and he's looking out of the taxi window at everything blurring past. Bloody Darren, snivelling. But all Steve cares about is his bed. Few hours sleep then back to it all tomorrow. Yellow streetlights blurring past him, yellow lights blurring. Yellow lights. Mellow yellow.

BANG!

Suddenly, he's opening his eyes, moment of panic. How long has he been asleep?

11:45, he's turning to Darren, but Darren's gone. He's realising he-he's not in a taxi anymore. Okay. Weird, but still. Okay. He's standing in the street looking up at a sign. Eyes focusing. Charles Street. Just off Queen Street. Lighting a cigarette, big draw of dry nicotine. Big mistake. Big headrush. Staggering onto Queen Street. Something wrong but he can't work out what. Wishing he was sober.

Then he's on Queen Street and he's realising what's missing.

Silence. He can't hear anything.

Bing! His mobile. Taking it out of his pocket and looking. No message. No network. Clicking to contacts to call someone, anyone. But the contacts are gone as well. That's mental. But... it's still all okay. Everything's mental at this time of night. Mental is normal, it's okay. And then, looking down Queen Street, he's noticing there's nobody there. They're all gone. And he's thinking about that film. The one... with the zombies in London. That guy waking up and everyone's gone.

Throwing away the cigarette 'cause he really needs to clear his head. Because it's seriously strange now. Not just mental, there's.. Something properly wrong.

Listening and there's just no sound. Nothing. No distant thumping from a club, no arguing couples, no cars, nothing. There's nobody. Christ, there's nobody!

Midnight. And he's standing at the top of Queen Street and he's listening, and he's looking, and he's checking his phone and he's realising. At long last, he's realising. 'Hello! Anyone? Can anyone hear me?'

And he starts to scream as his mind finally makes sense of it all. Because it was at midnight that Steven Ballard realised he was the only man left on Earth. So, yeah. He kept on screaming.

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Gwen Cooper looked up at Rhys and grinned. It didn't matter that people kept getting in their way. It didn't matter that the sun was tickling her nose. None of it mattered because she was

with Rhys. And they were getting married. Married! She still felt that thrill leap up inside her whenever she thought about the word. And she was marrying Rhys Williams. The man she loved. The man she'd cheated on. The man she saw die. The man she nearly sacrificed the world for. The man she was now gonna buy cushions with. She couldn't help it. She laughed.

'What?' asked Rhys, stopping. That bemused look she adored, plastered all over his face.

'Nothing.' she replied with a grin.

'You're mad you are.' he smiled back.

They linked arms and continued walking down Queen Street. The sun shining, the city beautiful, everything just perfect. And that, of course, was when her mobile started to ring.

'Tenner says it's Torchwood.' said Rhys, clearly forcing an "I-don't-mind-really" smile.

She reached into her pocket and pulled out the phone.

'There's a tenner you owe me then. Hi, Andy.' Gwen smiled her thanks at Rhys as he left to go stare into a shop window. She knew he was doing it to be polite, which is why he wouldn't have realised he was looking at a display of baby clothes. She'd wind him up about that later.

'Gwen are you listening?'

Suddenly she realised that PC Andy Davidson had already launched into a story.

'Sorry, Andy. What was it?'

'Well, there's been this murder, yeah? But it's all a bit weird. All a bit... Torchwood.'

She looked over at her fiancé. She was meant to be- oh, but Rhys would forgive her, wouldn't he? He always did.

'Okay, Andy. Do you want me to come down there?'

'Well,' Andy replied, 'I mean, as long as you're not too-'

She cut him off before he could have a go. She walked over to Rhys, "Forgive-me" smile forced onto her face.

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'Can I help you?'

The young PC behind the desk didn't recognise Gwen, which was fine because she didn't recognise him either. It'd been well over a year since she'd worked at the station. She gave the PC a winning smile and was about to introduce herself, when a familiar voice sounded behind her.

'Oh, Gwen, what's occurring?'

She turned away from the desk to see Andy bounding over. Bless him, he looked excited.

'Hi, Andy, how's it going?'

'Fantastic.' He took her arm and led her quickly through to the morgue, a grin plastered across his face. 'Oh, Gwen, this is soo Torchwood.'

Gwen looked down at the skeleton. 'So?'

Andy turned to her, with big, wide Bambi eyes. 'He's dead, Gwen.'

Part of Gwen wanted to punch him. But she couldn't help grinning. When she'd first been partnered with him, Gwen had suspected Andy was a bit... well, thick. And that's what many of their colleagues had thought. She remembered how Sargeant Rollands had introduced him as a 'nice lad, down to earth'. And that's all people thought there was to Andy. But she'd soon discovered that, as well as actually being pretty intelligent, he also had a heart of gold and was solely in the job to help people. That's what made him happy. Of course, all that didn't stop Andy Davidson from sometimes being a grade A prat.

'Yes, thank you. I can see he's dead. In fact I can see that he's clearly been dead for a long time.' She patted his arm, 'What with him being a skeleton.'

'Ah, you're wrong there' Andy grinned mischievously 'In fact, he didn't die ages ago. Our man died this week.'

Gwen remembered a time when all she seemed to say was 'But that's impossible!' These days, of course, she knew anything was possible.

'Fair enough.' she shrugged. 'Tell me about it.'

'Medical records,' Andy handed Gwen a print out. 'Steven Ballard, 24. Worked for Faires Auto Finance and lived in Splott.'

Gwen studied the records. 'And when did he disappear? I'm guessing that he disappeared.'

'Two days ago. After a night out boozing. Then yesterday morning, Skeletor here was found in the doorway of Smith's on Queen Street. The guy who found it thought it was some kind of practical joke at first. But we brought it in, and dental records confirmed it's... he's our missing Mr. Ballard.'

'But that's impossible!' Gwen's mind shouted. But out loud, she summarised. 'So, our man disappears two days ago and his skeleton turns up yesterday and...' She waited for Andy to give her the punchline.

'And the remains have been examined. And Mr. Ballard was about 70 years old when he died.' Andy smiled again. 'So. That Torchwood enough for you?'

Gwen nodded. 'Oh, yes.'

She ran through various possibilities in her mind as Andy led her to the door. Alien abduction? Rift activity? Some kind of cloning...thing?

'Oh, there's one more thing,' Andy said, turning back to her and doing his best Colombo impression. 'We've arrested the man who killed him. It was all captured on the ol' CCTV.'

'So.. why do you need me?' asked Gwen.

'Well, there's something odd about that as well.'

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Toshiko Sato took off her glasses and leant back, rolling her eyes. The figures on the screen in front of her had started to blur and she needed a break. She looked around the empty Hub and let out a melodramatic sigh. Once again, she was there alone, working away. Good old Tosh. Analysing some random alien artefact while the others went out and... well, had a life. Jack had taken Owen to some car park weevil hunting. He'd normally have taken Ianto, but Toshiko suspected that he wanted to do a bit of team bonding. Gwen was out with Rhys, shopping apparently. Toshiko felt a twinge of jealousy. She liked Gwen, she really did. But she felt that... it was all just that tiny bit unfair. Toshiko hated the idea of being judgemental, but after all, Gwen had cheated on Rhys with Owen. And yet she still got the happy ending. 'It's not like I even have anyone to cheat on.' She thought to herself. As she found her eyes glancing down at the empty medical bay. She sighed and idly spun around on the chair. It's not like he even notices I'm here.

'Tosh.'

She jumped as Ianto Jones suddenly appeared at her shoulder.

'You alright, Tosh?' he asked, as she looked up at him, composing herself.

'Uh, yes, thanks,' she muttered. 'Were you deliberately trying to give me a heart attack?'

Ianto, as ever, was the picture of innocence. 'Not at all, Miss Sato.'

'What can I do for you?'

He held out a package. 'Parcel from Gwen.' Ianto pulled a seat over and sat next to her. She tried not to laugh as he spun himself slowly in the chair, pushing round with his feet.

Sometimes he could be so childish.

'Apparently, she's been called in to investigate a suspicious death,' he said, spinning around 'It was all captured on the CCTV. So she had a DVD burnt off, and couriered over to you. WEEEE' She giggled as he pushed back on the chair, went sliding back across the floor towards Jack's office. 'I can help if you like.' he called over.

She took the DVD out of its case and inserted it into her work station.

'A coffee would be lovely, thanks.'

He leant back, pushing against the far wall and the chair slid back towards her. He steadied himself and put both hands into his jacket pockets.

'Even better than that,' he replied, pulling out two bottles of lager. She looked at him and raised an eyebrow. Amused, but slightly concerned that she suddenly felt like his mother.

'Oh, go on,' he said, opening a bottle and passing it to her. 'It is Friday.'

'You're a bad man, Ianto Jones,' she replied, taking a sip from the lager and turning to look at the screen.

'That's why they like me, ma'am,' he said, opening his bottle and resting a chin on her soldier.

She resisted the urge to pat his head and instead concentrated on the now loaded up black and white CCTV footage. Watching as two men fell into a taxi.

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'We weren't... that drunk. Honest.' Darren Sowersby stared up at Gwen. His eyes red and raw from a night crying in the cells.

Poor kid, Gwen found herself thinking as she looked down at the slightly pathetic looking lad in front of her. 22, short and skinnier than Owen but without Dr. Harper's dubious charms. His hair was all over the place and he looked like he'd been in the same jeans and t-shirt for days.

'It's okay, Darren,' she said 'I'm not saying that you did anything, but I just need-' She broke off, startled as Darren suddenly jumped to his feet.

'They think I did! They think I killed him.' He was pointing at the door that led out to the rest of the police station.

Gwen reached over and gently put her hand on his shoulder. 'No, they're just trying to find out what happened to Steven. You want to help us find out what happened to him, yeah?' She looked at him and smiled. 'All we want to do is find the truth.'

Darren sniffed unattractively and slowly sat back down. Gwen sat down opposite and looked at the tape recorder between them.

'Tape paused by Gwen Cooper at 14.36.' She said as she switched off the machine. She leant across the table and looked at Darren with a beaming, friendly smile. 'Now it's just you and me, yeah?'

Darren looked at her nervously. He nodded, glancing over at the door.

'It's okay, they can't hear you,' said Gwen, catching his eye 'Look at me, Darren.'

He sniffed again and looked down, wiping his nose on his sleeve. 'I didn't do it. I swear.'

Gwen nodded. 'So what happened? I promise that I'll take you seriously, no matter what you tell me.'

He shook his head and his face scrunched up, his eyes filling with tears again. 'You won't. They said they'd believe me and they-'

Quickly, Gwen reached over and rested a hand on his arm, trying to ignore where he'd just been wiping his sleeve. 'I'm not the police, okay? You wouldn't believe what I deal with on a daily basis. Whatever you tell me, I will take it seriously. Look at me, Darren. You can trust

me.' She could see that she was getting through to him, so she gave his arm a comforting squeeze. 'Please.'

He cleared his throat. 'We... we'd been out drinking. Y-you know, after work and everyone else had gone, I think. And me and Steve, well, we always get a taxi together because we both live out in Splott. And, well... because we're mates, y'know? He was my mate.'

Gwen nodded. 'And what happened? When you got into the taxi?'

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Toshiko and Ianto watched the taxi drive off the left side of the screen and then reappear on the right as another camera picked up the car's progress.

'Picked them both up outside the Manor Arms Pub on Wood Street.' Muttered Toshiko.

'So?' Said Ianto. 'What happened next?'

Both took a sip of lager as they observed the taxi making its way through the black and white streets of Cardiff.

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Darren smiled weakly at Gwen. 'We were, well... we weren't really talking or anything because.. Steve was tired. He used to work dead hard, you know? And he was a real party animal. He was out every night. And he had so many mates and...' Darren's voice went quiet. 'I really liked him.'

Again, Gwen squeezed his arm gently. 'Tell me, Darren. Did you... y'know, fancy him?'

Darren stared at her, his eyes wide. 'No! No, it wasn't like that, I just liked him. He was my mate.'

Gwen looked at the scruffy young man in front of her and guessed that there'd been a bit of hero worship going on. She'd seen Steve's picture and...looking at Darren, she couldn't exactly see the pair of them being buzzing buddies.

'And what happened in the taxi? Did you.. have a fight or anything?'

Darren immediately shook his head. 'No, nothing. I told you, we said nothing. We were drunk, I mean n-not that drunk that anything could've kicked off but-'

'Yeah, got you.' Gwen interrupted him before he could launch into another 'I'm innocent, me' speech. 'Look,, Darren, it's really important you tell me the truth. I'm here to help you, but you have to tell me the truth.'

There was a pause. Darren looked terrified. 'What if...do you think it could have been me?'

'What could've been you, Darren?'

He looked past her at a blank spot on the wall, staring into space, then quietly he continued. His voice was low and steady. 'He shouted at me, alright. He said I was stupid. But I'm not. I just liked him, and he made me angry.' And suddenly he turned back and stared directly into her with cold eyes. 'And you know what? He shouted at me, and for just a minute I wanted him to die.'

Gwen shivered as she felt Darren's arm violently twitching under her hand.

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'Okay, they're turning onto St Mary's Street.'

Toshiko and Ianto continued to watch the taxi's progress. Ianto's eyes narrowed as he spotted something. 'Pause it and go back a bit.'

Toshiko's hands flew over the keys and the image froze.

'Now zoom in,' continued Ianto. 'Onto the back seat and play it back at a slower speed.'

They both watched as the murky figure on the right of the back seat leant forward drunkenly, apparently talking to the driver.

'I'm guessing they've had a few,' said Ianto, as suddenly the figure on the left started to wave his arms about, clearly shouting at the other passenger.

'They're definitely having some kind of disagreement.' Agreed Toshiko.

'Drink's a dangerous thing, kids.' Replied Ianto, sipping his lager.

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Gwen felt the room go cold.

'You wanted him to die?'

Darren shrugged. 'Not really, I don't know.' He mumbled.

'Darren did you do something?'

He looked away again and Gwen could see that he was absolutely terrified.

'Darren.'

'W-what if it came true? What if I wanted him to die and that's why it happened?' He looked at her, tears in his eyes. 'What if it happened because of me?'

Suddenly he jumped to his feet, feeling very alone in the small interview room. Gwen flinched as he looked down at her and hissed, 'What if it was me who killed him?'

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Ianto and Toshiko watched as the taxi continued its journey, winding its way through the grey streets of Cardiff. It had been a few minutes since the two passengers had argued and everything had returned to normal. Quiet. Two men in a taxi on their way home. Except... they knew one of them wouldn't make it. It was all strangely hypnotic. And then, as they watched, the inside of the taxi simply switched off. Ianto swore as he dropped his lager in shock.

'What the hell was that?'

Toshiko's eyes were wide with the thrill of something new. 'It just went black!'

And then the image froze.

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'My mind's just blank,' Darren was shaking his head as he struggled to remember. 'I mean, I just thought- well, there's loads of nights I don't remember how I got home.'

Gwen smiled. 'So you don't remember anything after the argument?'

'No. It just goes black. I woke up yesterday on my bed, still dressed, with a bugger of a headache and I just drank a lot of water and went into work. Then they told me he'd gone. Steve had disappeared.' He paused. 'Then, they came and told us that he'd died. We had to send a card for his mum and dad.' He buried his face in his hands on the desk. 'I'm not a bad man, I'm not! I know I wished it for a minute but I didn't do it. I'm not bad, you've got to believe me!'

Gwen could tell he was also trying to convince himself.

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Ianto wiped up the last of the spilt lager as Toshiko set a myriad of programmes running, trying to analyse the footage. The image was still frozen. The inside of the taxi still black.

'So, whatever it is interfered with the CCTV?' asked Ianto, looking up.

'Looks like it,' Toshiko replied 'This is like nothing I've seen before.'

They watched as the image on the screen flickered and then the inside of the taxi returned to normal. One of the passengers had now gone. Neither the driver, nor the other passenger appeared to have noticed as the taxi continued on its journey.

'He just disappeared.'

Toshiko didn't reply as she rewound the footage and played it again. She would find out what had happened. She felt a guilty flicker of excitement as she started to work on solving this latest puzzle. She was sorry for the dead man, of course. But this was something new.

Something different. Something she could focus on. A mystery that only she could solve.

After all, she thought, risking a quick glance at the empty medical station, this was her life.

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'Do you mind?' said Doctor Owen Harper, with a scowl. 'You broke in the light.'

He was crouched between two cars waiting for a struggling weevil to succumb to the anaesthetic. He looked up at the tall, well-built man standing over him. The man was good looking, dashing in his big, old-fashioned coat, standing for all the world as if he owned the municipal car park. He was winking at a pretty office girl walking by. He was Captain Jack Harkness.

'Is it the cheekbones, do ya think?' asked Jack 'Or the eyes?'

Owen sighed as he finished cuffing the weevil. 'I'm sure it's the whole package, Jack.' He instantly regretted using the word 'package'. 'Just remind me never to go clubbing with you.'

Owen looked over at the office girl and sighed. There'd been a time when he'd drop everything to chase after her. Bit of patter, tell her she looked great, buy her a drink. Then back to his for a night of messy, sweaty, frankly brilliant sex and hope she'd be gone by breakfast. But... he was changing. He didn't want that anymore, he was bored of just getting drunk and one-night stands and it all not really meaning anything. He was growing up. Getting old, wanting to settle down. He knew it was only a matter of time before cuddles and suburbia didn't sound like his idea of Hell. And he also knew that he was unlikely to find anyone When Captain Jack 'Cheekbones' Harkness was all-

'Scared of the competition?' Jack laughed and knelt down. 'You got him sedated?'

'Well, he's not struggling anymore, so yeah, Jack. I'd guess so.'

Jack patted Owen on the shoulder and pulled a hood over the weevil's face. Together they hauled it to its feet.

'Right, let's get him back to the Hub.' announced Jack, as they left the deserted car park.

They started to walk back through the busy street towards where they'd parked the SUV. An elderly woman pushing a tartan trolley tutted at them. 'Drunk.' She pointed an accusatory arm at the hooded weevil slumped between Owen and Jack. 'At this time of the day? Should be ashamed.'

'Oh, I'm never ashamed, ma'am. Life's way too short.' He smirked at the woman as she shook her head and hobbled past them.

Owen sighed. For the leader of a top secret organisation, Jack could be very public.

'Yes, Ianto.'

Owen lurched as he suddenly felt the full weight of the weevil on his shoulder. Jack had stood back, legs apart, coat flapping in the wind, and his finger pressed to his ear. There was a pause.

'We'll be right there.'

He came back and helped Owen support the weevil. As they approached the SUV, Owen raised a questioning eyebrow.

'Apparently there's been a mysterious death. Gwen's bringing the suspect in, Tosh has analysed the CCTV footage, and Ianto's got the coffee made. And there was me thinking I was in charge.'

'No, Jack,' replied Owen, as they dumped the weevil on the back seat 'That's just what we like you to think.' He climbed into the SUV, reached over and opened the passenger door.

'Well, don't just stand there looking like a prat.'

Jack shrugged and climbed in. 'You driving, then?'

Owen nodded and started the engine.

'That's okay,' said Jack, his face breaking into a grin. 'I like a man who takes control.'

'Yeah, stop that.'

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Ianto steadied the tray of coffees in his hands and entered the boardroom. The rest of the team were sitting round the table, looking up at the image on screen of Darren Sowersby sitting in one of the cells.

'He doesn't look too bothered.' Ianto pointed out, as he handed out the drinks.

'Perhaps he likes being locked up.' replied Jack with a wink. Ianto fought back the urge to grin like a madman, remembering the other night. When the two of them had... explored some new horizons. He finished handing out the drinks and sat down next to Gwen, trying to put all thoughts of handcuffs and safety words out of his mind.

'I've done some research on him,' said Gwen 'Turns out that Darren's a bit of a.. Geek.'

'Oh, God! Not another Eugene.' interrupted Owen 'Why do we never get the cool kids?'

'He's just a bit...well, sad, really.' continued Gwen 'I mean. You know when people come in here, they usually panic a bit? Freak out. Well, Darren wasn't like that. He was... excited by it all. He's a bit of a geek, not many friends. And he definitely had a bit of hero worship thing going on for the victim. He's someone who's had a pretty sad lonely life and being locked up next to a weevil is probably the most exciting thing that'll ever happen to him.'

Jack was studying the screen. 'You know, if he did something about his hair, I reckon I could show him some excitement. He's kinda cute.'

Ianto kept the slight smile on his face, keeping that sudden pang of jealousy hidden.

'Yeah, thanks Jack.' said Owen, who, as usual, looked irritated. 'So do we think it was him? I mean sad, lonely, hero worshipping, whatever. He's a classic serial killer waiting to happen. Did he do it? Whatever 'it' was.'

'I've been running tests on the CCTV footage,' began Toshiko, as she changed the image on the screen. The same few seconds of inside the taxi blanking out, repeated over and over, each time different colourful waves and lines were superimposed over the footage.

'Yeah, that's... very pretty, Tosh, but what does it tell us?'

Toshiko looked hurt at Owen's comment. Ianto felt for her. He'd worked out long ago how she felt about Dr. Harper. But, ever the professional, she continued.

'Okay, it's not rift activity, that much is certain. The footage shows that Steven Ballard definitely disappeared, but other than that I wasn't able to get anything. So, I scanned the

area where it happened, the corner of Charles Street and Queen Street, and there's still a trace of alien energy in the local atmosphere. Lots of gases and energy particles that I can't identify. But there was one that, when I cross-referenced it with our records...' she changed the image on the screen again, this time to a spinning 3-Dimensional model of some kind of molecule. Something about it itched at the back of Ianto's mind, but before he could say anything, Owen had dramatically started to bang his head on the desk.

'Why, Tosh? Why?' he jokingly wailed 'Just for once, can't you skip the science bit? We know you're clever, just tell us what you found out.'

She sighed before answering. 'It's some kind of ancient energy that the scientists at Torchwood One had managed to recreate. Those sparkly, shiny things on the pretty screen?' She paused and gave Owen a patronising smile 'They're called-'

'Huon particles.' interrupted Jack, staring at the screen. He looked deadly serious and suddenly Ianto knew where he remembered it from.

'They were working on that stuff while I was there.' he said 'It was all very top secret. Nobody knew what it was for.'

Jack stood up and faced the group. 'Huon energy's from the dark times. It's very ancient and very bad. And one of its side effects is it transports people. And we're not talking your basic Star Trek transporter. These particles can send you a long, long way away.'

'But Steven's body was found in the doorway of WHSmiths.' said Gwen 'On Queen Street. That's hardly Narnia.'

'So the question is, where did he go between Darren sending him away and his skeleton turning up like a free DVD with the morning papers?' asked Jack.

'Darren says that Steven had a go at him,' replied Gwen 'He admits that he wished the guy dead. Are we talking some magic wish granty alien thing? Perhaps he really didn't know what he was doing.'

As the others discussed various ways forward, Ianto shut himself off. There was something bothering him, but... he couldn't think what. He looked up at the screen as Toshiko returned it to the image of Darren in the cell. The boy sitting there. Ignored. He looked around the team, Toshiko making eyes at an oblivious Owen, Jack and Gwen arguing about how to question Darren. All of them talking and planning and ignoring and-

'You never thank me for the coffee.'

They all turned to him. Jack looked sideways at Gwen and raised an eyebrow. 'O-okay?' He said 'Everyone thank Ianto for the coffee.'

Ianto shook his head 'No, I mean you all ignored me. Because I just give you the coffee. You take it for granted.'

Gwen gave a sympathetic smile and rested a hand on Ianto's arm.

'What I'm trying to say,' he told them, with a hint of a sigh 'Is that we're assuming Darren is responsible because he knew Steven and was angry with him. But there's someone we're all ignoring. And we're ignoring him, because like the guy who delivers the coffee, he's invisible.'

They all turned to look at the screen as Ianto changed the image back to the CCTV footage. 'Owen mentioned serial killers. Well, most serial killers aren't known to the victims. They're invisible.'

And there, partially hidden in the gloomy black and white shadows, and minus one passenger, the taxi was continuing its journey.

....

Harsh green lasers flashing in her eyes and everyone is screaming. Rob Dougan's Furious Angels pulsating out of the speakers and into the souls of the people dancing. Only they're not dancing. They should be dancing, but they're not. They're standing still. And they're staring at her, whispering. And Jade Russell, standing in the centre of the club, lit by a single spotlight is remembering what's brought her here.

5pm and striding down Queen Street, mobile pressed to her ear, telling Steph all about the new girl on reception. 'Oh, she's a real cow.' She's ranting as she's pushing through some old loved-up couple. 'And she's no right to be. Not with those thighs.'

5:05 and she's at the top of Queen Street and she's tapping her foot as she waits. 'She fuffed about so much, she made me late! Yeah, I know, I'm having to get a taxi!'

Standing, surrounded by the whispering clubbers and Jade's really wishing she hadn't got into the car.

5:10 and leaning forward, telling the driver to take her to Bar Reunion. Then, sitting back and continuing with the bitching. 'And then the stupid fat cow won't let me go without signing some goodbye card for some guy I've never met. I know! Some geek who works in accounting. I mean, accounting! Aren't they like on the 5th floor or something?'

Glancing into the mirror and staring at the taxi driver who's watching her. 'You got a problem?' She's saying before returning to Steph. 'So anyway, tell me about what happened with Heather. Did she really throw up in the video shop? I told you she's pregnant, she's definitely pregnant, stupid cow.'

Standing in the spotlight and looking over at Heather and Steph as they look back at her, and they're whispering.

12 minutes past 5 and she's giving it all 'So, yeah, I'm gonna be there in a few minutes but you better not be lying, Steph. If Annie's there, I'm gonna leave. I mean it. I'll turn around and I'll walk out. The lying cow told everyone I'd chlamydia. Only she should know what that feels like.'

Looking up and the taxi driver is still watching her.

Standing alone in a spotlight and listening to the whispering voices, crying and begging for them to stop.

'Yeah, alright, you can stop here.'

5:15 and she's getting seriously annoyed with the taxi driver. 'And you know it's rude to listen to other people's conversations?'

And then the taxi driver turning to face her. And his eyes are dark. And she's feeling sick inside as she unconsciously pushes back into the seat.

'Are you alright?'

The taxi driver nodding. Then he's reaching into his pocket and he's taking out a box of matches.

Standing in the spotlight and staring and begging for them to stop. The whispering voices surrounding her.

'Doesn't she look fat?'

'Ugh, she so shouldn't be wearing those jeans'

Looking over at her mum, pleading with her to stop. 'Silly little bint used to have nightmares about Reninston Be, had to come into bed with me and her dad.'

Standing in the spotlight and she's screaming for them all to stop.

5:20 and she's asking the taxi driver what he's doing. And he's tilting his head as he looks at her. And then he's whispering 'Go. To. Hell.'

She used to pick her nose in school. She got drunk and threw up at her nan's funeral . She gets her clothes from Primark. She thinks people like her but they don't.

And she's standing in the spotlight. And everyone she has ever met is surrounding her. Furious Angels still blasting floor, green lasers still in her eyes. She's remembering what the taxi driver did.

'Ring a Ring a Roses'

5:22 and he's opening the matchbox. And he's staring at her, quietly singing.

'A pocket full of posies'

And she's getting scared now. Realising that this so isn't normal.

'Atishoo, atishoo.'

And she's got her hand on the door handle, ready to jump. And it's too late because he's opened up the matchbox. And she's screaming as- what the hell is that?

5:23 running down the street. The thing chasing her. Screaming for help, but they think she's just off her face. Running and trying to get to Bar Reunion, but the thing is catching up and nobody else can see it. And then she sees the club. The priory. Its closer, the door's open. So there's staff in there. And if she can get inside, she'll be safe.

5:25 and it's suddenly dark as she's running through the doors.

5:26 and the Priory isn't empty. She doesn't understand. It's too early to be open, but she's running onto the dancefloor and she's begging people to help her and then she's realising that she knows them. She knows everyone. And she's so scared, because some of them are dead but there they are! Dancing! The music is hypnotic and euphoric and it's flowing through everyone she knows. A writhing mass of bodies, bathed in an unholy light. And she's turning and she's running back to the door, but...the door has gone. It's just a wall. And that's when she starts to scream. And the others have stopped dancing and they're turning to her as she's standing in the spotlight and she's pointing to where the door should be. Which is when they all point at her and... as one, chant 'Forwards. We all fall down'

43 days later and having eaten all the crisps she can find, Jade Russel's lying in the middle of the dance floor. She's curled up, foetal, shivering, unable to speak. But, she doesn't need to speak anyway, because everyone she's ever met is standing there pointing and whispering.

212 days later and she's still not dead. She doesn't understand because she's stopped eating. She doesn't understand anything anymore. The green light's still flashing. Pretty laser shining in her eyes. And... it's so pretty how it turns all the people into silhouettes. She can't see their faces anymore. They might be anyone. Jade is happy now though, because she can't hear the whispering anymore, or the music. She can't hear anything anymore. Because to stop the Furious Angels, she's torn off her ears. It's peaceful, really. And the warm blood still trickling down the sides of her face is quite nice. She knows it'll stop soon. It'll all stop soon.

4.306 days later and she's still there. The blood still trickling, her friends and family still silently whispering. And the lights. They're still flashing. And she's waiting. She'll die soon, though. Won't she? God willing.  
'Please, let me die soon.'

....

'Okay, Darren Sowersby, how are ya?'

Darren looked up at the man standing on the other side of the glass and pulled a face. 'Are you the boss?'

'Captain Jack Harkness, and oh yeah, I'm the boss.'

Darren instantly felt a pang of jealousy. Jack was tall, good-looking, confident, everything he wasn't. Yeah, he was another Steve Ballard. 'Why am I here?' Again he looked around at the dingy, dank stone walls surrounding him. And again he did what he always did when he was scared.

'It stinks in here,' he started to babble. 'And it's damp. I could catch pneumonia o—or a cold or something. I told that Gwen woman I didn't do anything, so I don't know why she's brought me here.'

'Maybe she fancies you,' the man, Jack, replied with a smirk as he pressed a button to the side of the door. A glass panel between them slid to one side.

Darren snorted. 'Ha, funny guy.' He was trying to think of something else witty to say, when suddenly Jack rushed in, grabbed him with the top of his t-shirt and slammed him up against the stone wall.

'Get off me, what are you doing? You can't do this!' Darren was desperately hoping he wouldn't wet himself. He tried to turn away as Jack's face turned into a vicious snarl. 'What happened in that taxi?'

Darren shook his head desperately. 'I don't know, I passed out.'

'Huon energy. You know what that is? Do you?'

Again Darren shook his head. 'Some kind of...sore powder?' he squeaked as Jack forced him higher. His feet barely touching the stone floor. 'I don't know, I swear!'

Jack tilted his head to one side and smiled. 'Okay, Darren,' he said gently. 'Either you tell me what happened or I kill you. It's quite simple.' Darren started to shake uncontrollably. 'We're Torchwood. We can make you disappear. It's been a while since I killed someone, but it's... not something you forget how to do. What happened? You find something on eBay and work

out how to use it? Decided to test it on Steven Ballard?’ One of Jack’s hands suddenly let go of his t-shirt and grabbed Darren around the neck. Then he shoved him right in the face ‘Tell me!’

Darren screamed and felt hot tears starting to roll down his cheeks. ‘I don’t know, I swear! I-it wasn’t me!’

Jack shrugged and let him go. Darren fell back and looked up as Jack’s face broke into a big, friendly grin. ‘No. Ianto didn’t think it was you, either. But I had to make sure. Tea or coffee?’

....

‘Please let me die soon.’ Skip Jameson wailed as he staggered into the Priory. He headed straight for the bar, poured himself a pint of water and gulped it down. ‘For the love of God, will the pain ever end?’ He muttered, desperately trying not to throw up.

The previous night had been big. Bigger than big. It had been epic. He’d met up with Lee at lunchtime for a quick drink, but they’d ended up in Temple and hadn’t made it home until 6am. And now he had to open up the club and spend the night serving scabby students. Joy. Still, he figured, remembering what Jon and Brendon had said. At least he was prettier than Lee.

‘You look terrible!’ Skip looked up at Ken, the red-faced bouncer.

‘Yeah, thanks, Ken. We can’t all look as good as you, can we?’

Ken laughed. ‘Good looks are a curse, Skip. Should count yourself lucky.’

Skip shook his head, trying to wake up. Was that Ken being witty, he thought to himself. The world has actually gone mad. He looked up and over at the dancefloor as something caught his eye.

‘Who was clearing up last night? Somebody’s left a bag or something.’

‘Is it a bomb?’ Ken called back.

Skip ignored him as he walked over to the- ‘Oh, ‘ell, what is it? It stinks! Put the main lights on.’

‘Lazy arse,’ Ken called as he pressed the switch. ‘Let there be lllight!’

Skip looked down. Saw that it wasn’t an abandoned bag and screamed. Then he threw up over the corpse that lay rotting at his feet.

....

‘Jack, reports coming in of another body,’ said Toshiko. ‘Well, possibly. A barman at the Priory nightclub has found...’ she checked the report again. ‘Something... smelly and seriously rank.’

Darren singered. He’d been dumped onto a sofa against the back wall of the Hub. He was sitting and staring at the madness around him. He’d seen it all when Gwen had brought him in, but now he had the chance to sit there and take it all in properly. Well, it was all a bit mental.

‘A huge underground base?’ he’d asked the guy in a suit, Ianto.

‘Best place for us.’ Ianto had replied.

And now he was sitting there, watching them as they worked. This wasn’t a bunch of people who were just doing it for the money. They were moving around like choreographed dancers.

A team who clearly loved what they were doing. As far as he could make out, the Japanese girl, Tosh, was trying to trace the taxi he and Steve had got into. He liked Tosh. She didn't seem as... cocky as the others. The big guy, Jack, was all swaggering and posey and the Doctor, Owen something, he was just another bloke who looked down his nose at people like Darren. The kind of guy who could sit in a bar, drinking trendy drinks without walking into a table like a pillock.

'Okay,' called Jack, leaving his office and coming over to Darren. 'Owen, Gwen, you're with me. Ianto you talk to our friend Darren here. Find out if he can remember anything else. Get him to open up about his little friend. We need to know why the taxi driver chose Steven Ballard as his victim.'

'I am here, y'know,' muttered Darren. He'd always hated people talking about him like he didn't exist.

'Oh, sweet,' Jack looked down at him and ruffled his hair. 'Oh, and Ianto. Maybe suggest some hair styling tips.'

'Oi!' shouted Darren. But Jack was already striding towards the big door that led out to the real world, Owen and Gwen following him like well-dressed sheep. As the door rolled open, Jack turned back. 'And Tosh?'

'Yes, Jack?'

'Find that taxi.'

Jack turned to Darren, winked, and with a dramatic swish of his coat, he was gone.

'Is he always like that?' Darren stood up and went over to Tosh. 'Bit of a tit?'

'Busy,' she replied, not looking up.

Darren was about to reply when he felt a hand fall heavily on his shoulder. He tried not to squeak, turned around and looked up at a stony faced Ianto. 'Time for a chat, Mr. Sowersby.'

....

Skip was drinking a medicinal double vodka as he told the woman, Gwen about the thing he discovered. She put her hands around his to steady the shaking glass. 'I mean, I've seen stuff, you know? I've seen fights an' that. But... why would anyone do that?' He pulled a hand free and pointed over at the dancefloor. 'It is a body, isn't it?'

Gwen looked over at the guy who's crouched down, examining the corpse. He looked up at her, nodded. 'It looks like it, Skip. And you've no idea who it could be?'

He shook his head. 'I've texted everyone who works here and... nobody, they're all okay.'

Skip took another gulp of vodka and blinked the tears out of his eyes. He just felt black inside. Physically sick. As if someone had punched him in the gut. As if someone had just- 'Holy mother of God, who is that?'

All thoughts of dead bodies vanished as he watched the man who'd just entered the club. He was... indescribable. Like an advert for gay shampoo. Gwen sighed and rolled her eyes.

'That's Jack. My boss.'

Skip watched him stride across the floor, the most beautiful man he'd ever seen. 'Oh, I would work under him any day.'

....

'What is she doing?'

Ianto had taken Darren up to what seemed to be a greenhouse full of alien plants. It overlooked the rest of the Hub. They were bathed in a green light, drinking beer, and it was all strangely surreal yet calming. It reminded Darren of that time he'd gone to his brother's engagement party. Matt and his fiancée Michelle had just bought this very suburban semi in Chester and during the party, Matt had taken Darren up into the attic. He was growing his own weed. This lovely little house had an attic that looked like something out of a film. They'd been surrounded by pot plants, bright lights, foil. Yeah, this was pretty similar. Except the plants here were all apparently alien.

Ianto standing next to him. Darren looked down at Toshiko, engrossed at her work station. 'She's working.'

Darren took a sip of his beer. 'Yeah, but doing what?'

Ianto shrugged. 'The taxi's number plate was dirty, so she's trying to do... something clever.' They both went to sit down on some chairs, set up in the middle of the room. Darren shook his head, grinning. 'Bit mad, you lot.'

Ianto nodded and put his feet up on the table between them and rocked back on his chair.

'So, come on. This Steve. What was he really like?'

Darren sighed and looked over at the strangest flower he'd ever seen. 'He was... alright, y'know?'

Ianto just looked at him.

'Well, you know that Jack? Your boss. Steve was a bit like him. All very confident and...cocky.'

Ianto nodded, a small smile forming on his face. 'Yeah, I know what you mean. So, he said something? In the taxi?'

'Yeah.' Darren put his feet up on the table next to Ianto's and took another sip of his beer.

'He said that... he said that I was a sad case. Y'know, that he was popular and I wasn't. Stuff like that.'

'He made out that you were... irrelevant?'

Darren nodded. 'That's it, totally.'

'When I first started here, that's how the others treated me, y'know?'

Darren was surprised by this. 'But you all get on dead well.'

Ianto shrugged. 'Wasn't always like that. I was quiet, a bit...shy.'

Darren watched Ianto's face. He wasn't stupid, he could see that there must've been more to it than that. But he decided not to push it.

'And Jack. I used to be in awe of him, I guess. He was so... loud.' They both laughed. 'He was Mr Perfect and I was nothing. I didn't even know how to talk to him. But after a while I realised there was more to him than that... showy exterior.'

Darren nodded eagerly. 'Exactly. Steve was like that. Yeah, he could be rude, but he was a nice bloke as well. When I started at Faires, there was this guy and he kind of took the mick out of me, but Steve stuck up for me, y'know? That one time he stood up for the new guy. It made all the difference.'

Ianto took a swig of beer. 'Shows you can't judge from first appearances.'

Darren looked at Ianto. He guessed that's what everyone did. People did it to him all the time. Looked at his clothes, and his headband instantly decided what category he fitted in to. But it wasn't true. Yeah, he could be geeky and quiet, but that wasn't the real Darren Sowersby. He reached towards Ianto with his bottle. 'Cheers.'

Ianto raised an eyebrow, and did the same. They chinked their bottles together and sat back.

'I was wondering,' began Darren, an idea forming. 'The taxi driver.'

Ianto took another sip of beer, encouraging Darren to do the same. 'Go on.'

'Do you think that's what he did? It's just... he could've killed either of us. But he chose Steve.'

'And he chose him based on what happened in the taxi?'

Darren shook his head sadly 'That's it, isn't it? I get drunk, I irritate Steve, he has a go at me and taxi driver decides, what? That I'm good and he's bad?'

Ianto looked thoughtful. 'He judged you both.'

Darren watched as a shadow fell across Ianto's face. As if he was remembering... something. As if the mask had fallen. 'You alright?'

Ianto sighed and smiled. 'Yeah. There was this time, I did something, something bad. But they forgave me, Jack forgave me.'

Darren took a swig of beer and encouraged Ianto to do the same. 'I suppose we should tell the others what we think happened.'

Ianto nodded. 'It's always the quiet ones, isn't it?'

They both smiled and stood up. Darren held out his hand. Ianto looked surprised. 'Shaking hands? That's very formal.'

'Says the guy in the suit,' said Darren with a smile. 'Thank you.'

Ianto took his hand and shook it. 'What for?'

'For taking me seriously. For not... judging me.'

....

Jack Harkness stood in the middle of the dancefloor and watched his team work. Over by the bar, Gwen was comforting the man who'd found the body. At his feet, Owen was expertly running the Becheran Deep Tissue scanner over the decomposing remains. He knew that back at the Hub, Ianto would be getting Darren to open up and Toshiko would be locating the taxi driver. Pride might be a sin, but it's what he felt. They were a good team. Hard-working, professional and- he grinned to himself. More importantly, they were fun. Of course, it wouldn't do to let them know that too often.

'Owen.' He looked down at the doctor. 'It's been five minutes, I'm getting old here.'

Owen looked up and made an offensive gesture with a scanner. 'They body's decomposing quickly, but I've work out that this,' He pointed down at the remains, 'was a woman in her 80s and she apparently died of natural causes. There's nothing wrong with her internal system and her wounds- well, I say no wounds.'

Jack raised an eyebrow. Owen looked back at him. 'As far as I can tell, her ears have been removed. Or rather, judging from tiny remnants under her fingernails, she tore them off herself. But that's not what killed her, she died of old age.'

'Nice,' Jack replied 'Any chance of IDing her?'

Owen nodded. 'I just need to get some DNA back to the Hub. Then we can-'

Jack held his hand up, cutting Owen off. 'Yes, Tosh.'

Toshiko's voice sounded over his earpiece. 'Jack, I got the taxi's reg for you.'

Jack grinned. He'd seen how dirty that number plate had been on the CCTV. 'Excellent work, Tosh. Go ahead.'

She gave him the registration number. 'It's registered to a man called Patrick Jefferson. He lives in Grangetown.'

'Gwen,' Jack shouted over to the bar. 'We are heading to Grangetown.'

'Wait, Jack,' Toshiko interrupted. 'He's not there. He's just used his credit card. In the petrol station on Newport road.'

Again, Jack grinned. 'Tosh, I could kiss you.'

'I'll remember that.' she replied.

Jack looked around the nightclub and, taking command, put his hands on his waist. 'Okay. Owen, you take the remains back to the Hub and identify the victim. Gwen, you're with me. And you.'

The barman sitting next to Gwen looked up through his eyelashes. 'Yes, sir?'

'You're cute. Give Gwen your number and maybe I'll give you a call sometime.'

The barman looked as if he was about to pass out.

'Okay, people, let's go.'

....

Toshiko turned off her comm and turned to Ianto and Darren, who were now standing behind her. 'All sorted.' she said, standing up and smoothing down her skirt.

Darren looked at the pair of them. 'And what now?'

Ianto shrugged. 'Well, there'll be a car chase.'

Toshiko nodded. 'And probably some shooting. Possibly an explosion of some kind. I don't know why people still live in this city.'

Darren shook his head. 'What about the taxi driver? He killed Steve.'

'Jack will deal with him,' said Toshiko, heading over to the sofa.

'And I'll lock away whatever he's using to attack people.' said Ianto, as he went over and slumped down next to Toshiko.

Darren stared at them. 'And that's it? It's all sorted?'

Ianto and Toshiko nodded.

'And we just.. stay here?' asked Darren, leaning back against the work station, before a pointed glance from Toshiko quickly made him stand up again. 'We just sit here in your underground base twiddling our thumbs?'

'We could twiddle each other's thumbs?' suggested Ianto.

'Darren.. It'll be fine,' said Toshiko. 'They'll call us if they need backup.'

Darren walked over to the sofa and sat down, forcing himself between them. 'Great,' he muttered. 'They all forget about the little people.'

....

'Great,' muttered PC Andy Davdison, as he stood outside the police station. 'Bring on the rain.'

Typical, really. Beautiful sunshine all day when he's stuck indoors. And then he finishes his shift and out comes the rain. He looked up at the grey sky, clouds tumbling over the horizon, seemingly aimed solely at him.

'Yeahhh. Thank you, God,' he sighed, as he started the walk home. Rain was already dripping down his collar, soaking his shirt. He'd chosen the perfect day to get his MOT sorted. And that wasn't all that was annoying him. As he ran and took shelter under a bus stop, he took out his mobile. No new messages. Yeah, like Gwen would've bothered letting him know what happened with Darren Sowersby.

'Last time I give her a case,' he muttered, sticking his arm out to the road.

Sod it. What with Gwen not calling, and the rain, he was buggered if he was going to walk home. Yeah. Taxi back to the flat. A few cans, footie highlights, and then an early night. Must be my lucky day. He grinned, as a taxi pulled up in front of him.

....

'Yeah, and same to you!' Gwen hollered, chucking her mobile down. She held on to the side of her seat as the SUV swerved around a corner. 'That was Rhys.'

'Yeah, kinda guessed that,' replied Jack, spinning the steering wheel back. 'Everything okay?'

Gwen took a breath, then- 'We were gonna buy this sofa, right? Only I thought it looked hideous, so we decided not to. But everything's fine. We get over it and I suggest we... we could get some new cushions instead. Which is what we were doing this morning when Andy called me. And Rhys is fine with it. Good ol' Rhys. Always fine with it and oh, so excited about Torchwood and aliens and everything. But then, he just has a go. Just then. He just... had a go because I'm gonna be late back, and apparently that means dinner's ruined. He drives me mad.'

Gwen paused for breath and Jack smiled at her. 'Can I ask you something?'

'What?' she snarled.

'The windscreen wipers.'

Gwen turned to face him. 'The windscreen wipers?'

Jack nodded. 'Do you think we should have flashing blue lights fitted to the wipers as well, or would that be too much?'

Gwen broke into a grin, then burst out laughing. 'You're an idiot, Jack Harkness.'

He winked at her. 'I'm sorry your day with Rhys was spoiled.' He paused. 'You know... perhaps you need a break.'

Gwen turned sharply and stared at him. 'You think we should split up?'

Jack glanced at her and raised an eyebrow. 'I meant that perhaps the pair of you should take a break. Away from all this. Away from Torchwood. That's what I meant.'

They stared into each other's eyes, daring or willing the other to look away. Gwen thought about Rhys and the cushions and spaghetti bolognese and the bullet he took for her. And she tore herself away from Jack, looking back out through the windscreen.

'Yeah. Perhaps you're right.' Then suddenly she shouted, 'He's there!'

Jack turned back to the road. 'Rhys? Where?'

'No, Jack, the taxi.'

Jack slammed down the accelerator as he swore.

'Jack, he's got a passenger.'

....

Andy leant forward as the taxi accelerated. 'Here, mate.' he called to the driver. 'You wanna slow down? The roads are pretty wet, you know? What with the rain and everything.'

The driver ignored him.

Great, thought Andy. Yeah, ignore me like everyone else.

'Seriously, I'm a copper and you're going over the speed limit. That's a bit daft, really'

The driver ignored him.

'Okay.' Andy undid his seatbelt and leaned forward. 'Pull over now, please. All I wanted to do was go home and watch the football and now I've gotta deal with you. Cheers, mate.'

The driver ignored him. Andy was about to grab his shoulder when he noticed the man was looking nervously at the rear mirror. Andy leant back, turned around, looked through the back windscreen. Was that-? Flash of blue lights? Yeah, of course it was. He quickly pulled out his mobile and called Gwen.

'Busy now, Andy.' she answered.

'Uh, Gwen?' he replied. 'Are you chasing me?'

In the SUV, Gwen leaned forward and stared at the taxi. It was directly in front of them now.

And in the backseat was Andy. He was waving at her.

'Andy, what are you doing in there?'

Andy turned back to face the front. 'I was just getting a taxi, what's all this about?'

'He's dangerous,' replied Gwen. 'Andy you have got to get out of there, now.'

Andy quickly hung up and leant forward. 'Okay, mate, you're under arrest. Like I said, I'm the police and if you could pull over then-'

Suddenly, the taxi swerved around a corner, sped across a pavement and crashed into some wasteland. Andy saw all this through the window before his head crunched into the passenger seat headrest and everything went black.

Jack and Gwen had jumped out of the SUV, guns held out ready for action. Gwen ignored the rain as she watched the taxi driver, presumably Patrick Jefferson, pull a groggy Andy out of the back seat.

'Okay, stop right there, Patrick.' she called, as they made their way slowly across the wet, muddy wasteland. The taxi driver was grey-haired and middle aged. Normal looking, very forgettable.

He tilted his head and smiled at her. 'Who are you?' he called to her.

'Torchwood,' replied Jack next to her, shouting over the rain.

The taxi driver laughed. 'Perfect. I've heard all about-'

Suddenly he cut off, doubling up as Andy elbowed him in the gut. 'Heathen!' muttered Jefferson as he straightened up and reached into his pocket.

'You okay?' Gwen asked Andy as he ran towards them.

'Yeah.' he shouted, running straight past her. 'You two hold him and I'll call for backup.'

Jack suddenly turned to the departing Andy and snapped, 'No backup! There's been two deaths already. We don't want any more.'

Andy dithered at the edge of the wasteland, unsure what to do.

Gwen turned back to Jefferson, saw he was now holding something in his hand. 'What is that? Put it down, now.' She wiped the rain out of her eyes and focused on the object. A box of matches. A simple box of matches. Yellow, with the word "Lucifer's" written on the side in red.

Jack laughed. 'You won't be lighting anything in this rain.'

The taxi driver looked at Jack and shook his head. 'Arrogance,' he said, tutting. 'That's a sin'

Jack cocked his head to one side. 'So sue me.'

Gwen suddenly felt very cold as Jefferson stared blankly at Jack. 'Oh, I can do better than that.'

And before they could stop him, he slid the box of matches open. For a second, it looked like nothing was going to happen, but then... without warning, something black emerged.

'What is it?' Gwen shouted, as thunder boomed over the wasteland. It looked like a shadow.

A dark, black shadow increasing in size, rumbling like the thunder. It launched itself from the open box of matches and tumbled across the wasteland towards them.

Jack fired his pistol once, twice. Nothing happened. The shadow just fell over him.

Swallowing him up. Consumed by the darkness, he started to scream in agony. His features slowly fading to black.

Gwen swore and Andy started to run back towards them. 'What've you done?' he shouted at Jefferson.

Gwen cocked a pistol and strode towards the smiling taxi driver. 'Whatever that is, call it off, now,' she shouted.

The taxi driver shrugged. 'I can't. And d'you know what they say? Don't shoot the messenger.'

'The what?' she yelled, trying not to lose it. 'What are you?'

'I suppose you could call me an angel,' he replied. Then with a heavy rain pouring down his face, he started to sing. 'Ring a ring a roses, a pocket full of posies.'

Gwen ran back to where Jack had been standing. In his place was just... black. A Jack-shaped shadow writhing in agony.

'Atishoo, atishoo.'

'What's he done?' asked Andy, running up to her.

'I've punished him for the sin of arrogance.' Jefferson called.

Gwen and Andy turned to face him. 'What have you done?' screamed Gwen, as suddenly the shadow disappeared, taking Jack with it. 'Where is he? Where's Jack?'

'Well,' Jefferson explained, 'we all fall down.' Then he smiled. 'I've sent him to Hell.'

(Torchwood music)

End of Part One

....

Beginning of Part Two

(Torchwood music)

'Hello? Is anyone there? Can anyone hear me?'

Silence. Darkness. Alone in a world of shadows. Jack Harkness had no idea where he was.

Then a woman's voice calling out. Calling to him from the darkness. A voice... he recognised. A voice... he feared. 'I'm Joline Masters, celebrity makeup artist. And I'm here to tell you about my new range of anti-aging products.'

And Jack Harkness knew he was in Hell.

He opened his eyes, dazed, confused, trying to take in his surroundings. He was sitting in an apartment, one he recognised from somewhere. Some time. In front of him, a blonde woman babbling away on a TV screen. 'The hottest anti-aging ingredient around are pestiponsides.' Jack resisted the urge to put his boot through the TV screen, and instead, fumbling around, picked up the remote control and changed channels.

The AMNN logo appeared on the screen. And a newsreader winked at him. 'You never liked being reminded about your ageing process, did you Jack? So scared of losing those pretty-boy looks.'

He recognised her. Trinity Wells. American. Good-looking but soo earnest. The network always wheeled her out when the big dramas happened. He grinned at her. Grinned at the TV screen. Grinned at himself for grinning at an imaginary TV newsreader on an imaginary TV screen.

'You know, if you ever get bored in your job, come over to Cardiff. That's where the real action happens.'

She looked directly at him, still smiling. 'Coming up, it's Suzie Costello with the weather. How's it looking out there, Suzie?'

Jack frowned as his old friend and colleague appeared on the screen. She was standing in front of a map of the UK and was wearing... Jack was quite surprised to see. A fluorescent pink shirt and jacket. Suzie grinned inanely out at her audience. 'Well, it's going to be an interesting day, Trinity. Patches of darkness moving towards the West, and there's something moving in the darkness and it's coming for you.'

'Thanks, Suzie!' said Trinity. 'That still to come, but first, breaking news. Captain Jack Harkness is dead.'

Jack shrugged, trying to take some control of the situation. 'That's breaking news? I die all the time!'

Trinity looked at him sternly. 'But this time, it's for good.' Then she smiled. 'So, let's take a look back at the life and times of Captain Jack.'

Jack yawned dramatically. 'You know, this is all so obvious. What are you gonna do? Play me a little "this is your life"? Show me the people I've let down, all the people who've died because of me? Been there, done that. Really, it won't break me.' He picked up the remote control and idly flicked through the channels. He wasn't surprised to find the newsreader on all of them. He tried not to react as she reported on all the darkness he'd seen. Abaddon. Greg. Alex. Suzie. Daleks. The war to end all wars. The one after that; so many wars. Creatures screeching as they swooped. All the Hell he'd seen. Hell.

On one channel, Trinity was interviewing Rhys Williams. 'I'm not glad he's dead, of course, that'd be wrong. But, me and Gwen... we would've been fine if it wasn't for him. And now she's gone and left me. Said I was never good enough. Not like him.'

The TV audience said, 'Awwwww.'

On another channel, Trinity was interviewing Ianto.

'Oh no,' Jack sighed, irritated already.

'Yeah, Eyecandy came to me once Jack had bugged off.' Captain John Hart was ruffling Ianto Jones' hair. 'We're the new Torchwood. And we're so good. Bigger and better than before.'

Trinity nodded thoughtfully. 'And you, Ianto?'

Ianto shrugged. He looked broken. His arm was in a sling and his eyes were dead. There were scratches on his face. 'John's better than Jack,' he intoned. 'Like John said, "bigger and better than before"'

John grabbed Ianto roughly and suffocated him with a kiss.

The TV audience said 'Oooohhh.'

Jack flicked to another channel.

Trinity was interviewing Toshiko and Owen.

'Jack going meant I finally saw what was in front of me,' Owen was saying, his hand gently resting on Toshiko's belly. 'And now we're...'

Toshiko took over as Owen just trailed off. He looked so happy, so contented. So at peace. 'We're thinking of calling the baby "Jack". In his honour.'

Toshiko took Owen's hand and held it. They beamed at each other.

'Soooo,' Trinity concluded, 'every cloud has a silver lining. Jack's death means happiness for you two.'

They both nodded and then all three slowly turned to face Jack. They winked at him. The TV audience cheered and applauded.

Jack yawned and put his foot through the screen. 'Yeah, yeah,' he said, to nobody in particular, shaking the glass shards off his boot. 'The world changes because I'm gone. And it's all so bad, and-'

Suddenly he stopped. Thinking about Owen and Toshiko. Why was this thing, whatever it was, saying that it'd be better for them if he died? He'd saved them. Refusing to be distracted, he pushed the thought out of his mind and stood up.

'I've seen it all before, but guess what? I don't care.' He looked around the flat and finally realised where he was. As he thought back to the guy who'd owned it, the front door opened. Jack fought back the pain as he looked at the man.

'Hey, Alex.'

Alex Hopkins, holding a gun, looked at Jack and laughed. 'So you finally died then?'

'Nah.' Jack shook his head. 'It's all a trap or uhhh trick or something, and you're just part of it.'

Jack's former boss stepped into the flat and towards Jack. 'No, Jack. This is real. This is Hell.'

'And you're here to greet me, my old boss. The man who killed his team. The man who shot himself. Whatever.'

Alex suddenly leant up and whispered into Jack's ear, 'There's a way out.'

'Yeah. It's always the same way out, isn't it?' Jack took the gun from Alex's hand and frowned. 'I miss you. You were... you were a good man.'

Alex smiled weakly. 'I saw what was coming. It was too much.'

Jack looked around the flat, remembering the mad parties they'd had leading up to the millennium. Part of him wanted to stay here a while, deal with old ghosts. But then something happened that changed his mind. Shards of glass rose up off the floor as the television screen reformed and Trinity Wells appeared once more. 'Coming up next, it's a song that Gwen Cooper has chosen to be played in tribute to that oh so wonderful, Jack Harkness.'

Jack turned away from Alex and looked over at the TV. Sunlight was shining through a forest glade. Clinky-clonky music started to play.

'Oh, God, no.' Jack shook his head. Shivers shooting down his spine. 'Do you know how many times I lived through that year?'

The music continued as the camera panned down to a man standing in the forest. He had his eyes closed. 'Okay, okay,' Jack sounded desperate, starting to raise the gun. 'You win' Jack turned back to Alex. Only, Alex was now Gwen. 'Everything I do, Jack,' she smiled, tilting her head to one side, 'I do it for you.'

On the screen, Bryan Adams started to wail about looking into his eyes, so Jack swiftly bought Alex's pistol up and put a bullet between his own.

....

Silence. Darkness. Alone in a world of shadows. Jack Harkness had no idea where he was. Then a woman's voice calling out. 'Where is he? Where's Jack?'

And Jack screamed as the darkness exploded into light. Gasping for air, he looked up at Gwen's anguished face. 'Come on, Gwen.' He smiled weakly. 'Have some faith in me.'

Breathing heavily, he looked around, trying to remember. Wasteland, rain, thunder, flash of lightning. Patrick Jefferson. He staggered to his feet. Gwen and thingy, come on brain, back to life. Andy! PC Andy, rushing to support him, looking around there. Patrick Jefferson with

his box of Lucifers. Jefferson was staring at him, terrified. Jack grinned at him. 'Hey!' he said. 'What's the matter, Jefferson? Never had someone come back alive?'

The Hub door clunked open and Jack pushed Patrick Jefferson inside. 'Welcome to your own personal Hell.' he said with a grin. He watched as Jefferson stood there, tears in his eyes, trying to take it all in. The man had been silent on the way back. Broken by Jack's return from the shadows.

'Jack.'

He turned to Owen, who was striding across towards them. 'I've identified the woman who died in the Priory nightclub. Her name was Jade Russell, and she was 22, going on 83.'

Jack looked down at the shorter man. 'So, just like Steven Ballard, then?'

'I've got a theory,' Owen began.

Jack put a hand on his shoulder and gave it a squeeze. 'We don't need a theory, thanks. I've got the man responsible.'

Jack laughed as Owen looked downcast. 'Hey, no, theories are good. If I hadn't got the Angel Gabriel here, then I'd be saying "bring on the theories".'

Owen smiled, obviously grateful for the reassurance. 'Right, well, I'll speak to Tosh about getting the deaths covered up, then.'

'Yeah, you do that.' Jack nodded. 'Gwen.' He turned to face her. 'Take Jefferson down to the cells and make him comfortable.'

Gwen grinned up at him, clearly still thrilled he'd come back. 'Oh yes, sir.' She gave him a cheeky salute then pushed Jefferson down, across the walkway and towards the cells.

'Sir?'

Jack turned and saw Ianto leaning against the doorway of his office. Ianto raised his arm, giving him a little wave. Jack grinning, bounded over to him. Ianto looked up at him, clearly trying to keep himself composed. It was one of the many things Jack liked about him. That cool, calm exterior, hiding the fire within.

'I heard you died. Again.'

'Yeah,' Jack replied. 'But then I rose. Again.' He grabbed Ianto and kissed him. 'It's good to be alive.'

Ianto stood back, blushing slightly. 'Um-'

'What is it?'

'You and me, we're uhm. We're, well- we're...'

Jack took Ianto's hands in his, trying to reassure him. 'What is it, Ianto?'

'You and me, we're... going steady, yes?'

Jack laughed then instantly regretted it as Ianto's eyes betrayed real hurt.

'Hey, what's going on? We-we're fine, aren't we?'

Ianto nodded then pulled himself away from Jack. He straightened his tie and smiled. 'Yes, I'm sorry, it's just... while you were out. W-while you were dead, someone sent you these.'

Jack looked into his office and raised an eyebrow at the bouquet of roses lying on his desk. The bouquet of grey roses.

'You've got the wrong man.'

Jack was sitting at his desk, reading the card again. It had been attached to the bouquet. A plain piece of card with "You've got the wrong man" written on it in black black felt tip. Ianto was standing, clearly uncomfortable, next to him.

'Interesting colour,' he muttered. 'Call me dull, but I'd have stuck with the traditional red.'

Grey. Rose. Jack picked a petal off one of the flowers. 'Ianto, this really isn't about you and me.'

'With respect then, sir,' Ianto replied. 'What is it about?'

Jack crushed the petal and let it fall. 'People I've lost. Mistakes I've made.'

'Mistakes? Jefferson's not the right man?'

Jack leaned back, stretching his arms. 'I saw him. He opened the Lucifers and sent me to Hell. The taxi's registered in his name. It's him.'

'Unless...' Ianto cleared his throat. 'Well, unless you got it wrong.'

'Impossible!' Jack jumped to his feet. 'Right. Time for a spot of interrogation.' He paused, then winked at Ianto. 'You wanna watch?'

To Jack's surprise, Ianto shook his head. 'No. Thank you. But I've got duties.'

Jack watched as Ianto walked out of the room. He looked down at the petal in his hand and then out at his team working in the main section of the Hub. Toshiko was trying to attract Owen's attention, but he was ignoring her. Gwen was shouting into her mobile again, something about lasagne. Ianto was standing silently at the coffee machine.

Jack looked down at the card again. The felt-tipped message had changed. "You've got them all wrong".

....

'Ring a ring a roses, a pocket full of posies.'

In his cell, Patrick Jefferson was sitting, hidden in the shadows. Jack listened as the man sang to himself.

'Atishoo, atishoo.'

Jack hammered his fist on the glass and grinned as Jefferson visibly jumped. 'Yeah, whatever. Nursery rhyme, tilting your head, very good. The clichéd psycho, what next? You offer me a nice Chianti?'

The killer stood up and stepped into the light. He moved towards the glass and looked up at Jack. Every move was slow and deliberate. 'Good evening, Jack. What you gonna do to me?'

Jack shrugged. 'The roses. What're they all about?'

'It's just a song, Captain Harkness. Nothing to be scared of.'

Jack resisted the urge to punch straight through the glass and grab Jefferson around the throat. He smiled. 'I meant the roses you sent me.'

Jefferson shook his head. 'I don't know what you're talking about.'

'The writing on the card changing? I'll admit, that's clever.' Jack operated the door control and, as the glass slid back, he stepped into the cell. The door slid back into place and Jack enjoyed the brief glimmer of fear in Jefferson's eyes. He was trapped and he knew it. 'So, yeah, I gave the card to Tosh, she's analysing it right now and trust me, that woman's a genius. She'll work out where it's from. What it is.'

'Pride,' muttered Jefferson. 'It comes before a fall.'

'And we all fall down,' said Jack. 'I get it.' Jack took a step closer to Jefferson, smiling as the smaller man stepped back, pressing himself against the wall. 'There is nowhere to go, Jefferson,' he said. 'You're gonna tell us where you found the matches, what the roses are about, and why you're doing this. You're going to tell me.' Jack paused as he carefully took the old man's forearm in his hand and gave it a squeeze. 'You're going to tell me or I'll break you.'

'Are you scared, Captain Harkness?'

Jack shook his head and squeezed the murderer's arm just that little bit harder. 'I could kill you right now and nobody would know. There's nobody coming to save you.'

'God will save me,' said the old man. 'I was doing his work.'

'You killed innocent people, I don't like that.'

'I've killed sinners. Those young people, you should hear them. They get into my car and they talk and their voices, their screeching little voices, reveal their black hearts. Black, sinning, evil hearts. You don't understand. I've heard about Torchwood and I'm sure you think you're doing good. You're trying to save the human race, but what if most of them don't deserve to be saved? What if you're wrong, Captain Harkness? What if they all deserve to die?'

Jack almost felt sorry for the old man. He had another guy who'd found something alien and let it consume him. Sometimes it felt like he was the only one on this planet who couldn't be tempted. He squeezed the man's arm harder and grinned as Jefferson whimpered and squirmed.

'Why did you send me the roses?'

Jefferson was silent.

'Tell me, or trust me, you'll wish you were dead.'

Jefferson stayed silent.

Jack looked down at him as the killer stared, unblinking, back at him. Jack felt the anger rising inside. 'Tell me!' he shouted.

Jefferson stayed silent.

'TELL ME!' he roared into the man's face. 'TELL ME!!'

Jefferson stayed silent. Then, he opened his mouth. 'Ring a ring a roses.'

Jack spun him around, slammed him into the wall and pulled the old man's wrist up, pushing it right up between the shoulder blades. Jefferson let out a small scream, but, in agony, carried on singing. 'A pocket full of posies.'

Jack pushed the arm up higher. 'TELL ME!'

'Atish- atishoo.'

Suddenly, Jack yanked the arm, pushing it right up until there was a loud CRACK and Jefferson, screaming in agony, collapsed at Jack's feet.

'We all fall down,' muttered Jack, looking down at the broken man. He crouched down and hissed into the crying man's ear, 'You want to know about sin? Oh, I can tell you all about that. Me and my little team, down here underground, we've all done so much. I wasn't joking when I said you were in Hell.'

And as Jefferson clutched his broken arm, gasping in so much pain, Jack told him about the sins they'd committed.

An hour later and Jefferson was delirious with pain. 'Please. Stop. You! All of you! The things you've done. The adultery, the deaths, all of it!'

Jack stood up and looked down at him. 'How's the arm?'

'Please, it hurts.'

'So, tell me. Where did you find the matches? Why did you send me the roses?'

'I- I didn't. You're wrong. You're wrong!' The old man started to cry again. 'I don't know anything about a bunch of roses. I just wanted to rid the world of sin.'

'Wrong answer,' said Jack, calmly, as he stamped his boot down onto the man's face. He looked down. 'Ohhh, lanto is not gonna be happy about that. These trousers are dry clean only.'

A few moments later, he was sitting in his office, his hands pressed together, as if in silent prayer.

'Knock, knock,' said a voice.

Jack grinned. 'Since when did you bother knocking?'

Gwen poked her head around the door and grinned. 'Me? I'm a good girl, I am. Always polite. So, has he told you anything?'

Jack shook his head. 'He's having a lie down right now. Where's Tosh?'

Gwen looked at him confused. 'Jack, she's gone home. She said you told her to.'

'What? No, I told her to work on the card. The one that came with these.' He pointed at the bouquet of grey roses. 'At least... I thought I did.'

Gwen stepped into his office and closed the door behind her. 'Jack... you never gave her a card.' She looked over at him, clearly concerned. 'Listen, are you sure you're okay? You've been to Hell and back, that must've been pretty intense.'

Jack was ignoring her, reaching into his pocket. He pulled out the card. It had changed, again.

'You've got everything wrong,' he read aloud. 'Yeah, cheers.'

Gwen walked around to his side of the desk and crouched down. She rested a hand on his leg. 'Jack, look at me. We don't know where Jefferson sent you. Y-you could've come back damaged.'

He shook his head. 'I'm fine,' he murmured. 'I'm just... it's like my head's not all... there. Things are... No, I'll be fine.'

'Even so, why don't I get Owen to take a look at you?'

Jack stood up suddenly, towering over Gwen. 'If I want Owen to look at me, Gwen, I'll ask him, okay? I don't need you fussing around me.'

She jumped to her feet, her eyes blazing. 'Okay. Okay, don't shout at me, Jack! I'm just tryna help. You're not well.'

'I'm fine, alright? I'm just... tired of you tryna take control round here. Just remember who's the boss! Yeah?'

Gwen stared at him, stunned. She looked as if she was ready to hit him, but instead she clenched her fists and her voice calm and steady, she replied, 'You ever speak to me like that again and I'm gone.'

Jack stared at her coldly. 'You don't mean that.'

She stared right back at him. 'You wanna try me?'

Jack collapsed back into the chair. He opened a draw in his desk and looked down. He reached in, and pulled out the box of matches. 'Lucifers,' he whispered. Then he looked at Gwen. 'I'm sorry I was rude. You're right, I'm just... I'm tired. And you're right, I should get Owen to have a look at me.'

'Cool.' Gwen came over and sat across the desk from him. 'Buy me a pint when we get out of here and all's forgiven.'

'A pint? You're such a lady.' His voice trailed off as he looked at the matches.

'Should we get lanto to lock them away?' Gwen asked.

'Jefferson told me that we shouldn't bother saving the human race.'

'Jefferson's an idiot.'

Jack laughed. 'Well, yeah, that's true, but...' He stared at the box of matches. 'We could use these, y'know? Next time the bad guys come. We could send them to Hell.'

Gwen laughed. 'Okay, you're starting to sound like him now. I'll go get Owen.'

'No, wait.' He looked up at Gwen. 'I'm serious. What if he's got more of these? They're the perfect weapon.'

Gwen reached over and took his hand. 'We've got weapons, Jack. We don't need that. You went to Hell. You know how bad it was. We're not here to judge people.'

Jack found himself staring at the box of matches. There was something buzzing in his ear.

Voices. His other hand reached back into the desk drawer. 'But think about it, Gwen. All those aliens. The darkness is coming, so let's be ready for it. Fight the darkness with darkness. Fight the monsters.' Jack paused, staring at the Lucifers. 'Fight the sinners.'

Gwen stood up sharply and Jack grinned at her. He saw the fear in her eyes and that made him grin even more. 'You're a sinner. Aren't you, Gwen?'

She was moving slowly back towards the door. 'Just try and stay calm, Jack. I'm going to get Owen.'

'Of course you are.' He tilted his head and winked. 'You like Owen, don't you, Gwen?

Sleeping with him behind Rhys' back.'

'That was a long time ago, Jack. I was... messed up. If this is some kind of joke, it really isn't funny.'

Jack felt his heart pumping. He was watching as she stood there, blushing, terrified, remembering her sins. The buzzing in his head was getting louder, clearer. Voices separating and becoming distinct. Voices telling him what he needed to do.

'Jack, put the matches down, I think... I think they might be affecting you.'

Jack just stared at her. Gwen Cooper. He brought her here, and she was always, always trying to tell him what to do. Always there with a bleeding heart, Gwen Cooper. Like she was anything compared to him. Her short little life, and her stupid little town. Who was she compared to someone like him?

'Please, Jack, put them down!'

Her voice was shrill and loud, slicing through his mind. He wanted to call out to her, get her to fetch Owen, but the pain was increasing. Instead, he tightened his grip around the matches, as his other hand in the drawer found what the voices were looking for.

'Oh, Gwen.' He grinned at her. 'Just go to Hell.'

And Jack raised the revolver and shot Gwen Cooper through the heart.

....

'What? It can't be.' Rhys Williams collapsed onto the sofa. 'It isn't possible.' He looked down at the microwave lasagne again. '42% of your recommended daily amount of saturated fat? What are we meant to eat, grass?'

He'd never really been bothered about such things before. Well, except for that one time he'd gone on a mad diet with Lucy from work, but now, well... he wanted to look good for the wedding. He wanted to look good for Gwen. Although, after the argument earlier, he wasn't sure why he was bothering. She was too busy with work to even notice what he looked like. Then his mobile rang. He looked down at it. Gwen calling.

'So, Mr Lasagne, there she is, and she'll be saying "sorry for earlier" and that it's "gonna be a late night". Do I accept the apology or do I have a bit of a rant first?'

He looked at the lasagne packet, waiting for an answer.

'No? Nothing. Fat lot of good you are. HA! "Fat lot of good you are!" You're full fat!'

Oh dear. Laughing at his own joke, he answered the phone. 'Hi, Gwen,' he said quickly, before she had time to speak. 'Yeah, alright, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have gone off on one earlier, it's your job, and the green men from Mars have invaded and I'll be fine. Gonna eat Mr Lasagne here, though. So, don't be mad if your husband-to-be looks like he's having a kid 'cause it's...' He trailed off. 'Gwen?'

There was silence the other end.

'Gwen, are you there? I mean it, I'm sorry about earlier. You know what I'm like. Gwen?'

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Jack jumped out of his chair and dropped the matches. The whispering and noise in his head had stopped. And he looked down at Gwen's body, blood spreading out from what remained of her heart. Her bleeding, broken heart. She was dead. He held up the revolver and stared at it.

'Oh, God,' he began. Then, he quickly dropped the gun and fell to his knees. He grabbed at Gwen, pawing her, stroking her. Staring, in horror, at her dead eyes. Tears poured down his face as he pulled her body up and into a bloody hug.

'I'm so sorry.' He started to move back, pulling her body with him, then together they hunched up, hiding under his desk.

'Please, Gwen. Forgive me.'

But she didn't answer. What with her being dead.

....

Rhys cleared his throat. 'Okay, phoning me, then giving me the silent treatment is kind of taking the mick. I've said I'm sorry for what happened earlier.'

'Rhys.'

'Yeah, it's me. Are you okay?'

He heard Gwen clear her throat. 'It's Jack. He's gone.'

Irritated, Rhys stood up and walked through to the kitchen. 'So? You told me he went away before. He came back, though.' He pulled the lasagne out of the box and started to stab at the plastic film with a fork. 'Cor, Gwen, had me worried for a minute there. He's a grown man. He can go where he likes.'

'He's dead.'

Rhys stopped stabbing. 'He's what?'

For a second there was silence except for the thunder rumbling outside. And then Gwen started to laugh. The sound chilled Rhys. He dropped the fork and fell back against the wall. His fiancée's laugh was wrong. Broken. Dark.

'Rhys. He's gone. Jack's gone to Hell.'

....

The shadows surrounded them. At first offering comfort and safety, but then smothering them with darkness. Jack, crying into Gwen's hair, felt her warm blood soaking through his shirt and onto his chest. He was rocking back and forth, whispering to himself. 'How? How could I kill her? Not Gwen. Oh please, not Gwen.'

He looked into her eyes. How was she dead? He knew. He'd always known that they'd all die. All of them. Everyone he'd ever met, ever loved. They'd all die long before him. But not like this. He wasn't ready.

Suddenly he shuddered and stopped crying, disgusted at himself. HE wasn't ready? He'd killed Gwen.

'No. No,' he muttered. 'Not me. The matches, the Lucifers. They told me to do it. It wasn't my fault. It wasn't my sin.'

And pushing Gwen's corpse to one side, he scrambled out from under the desk and started to run.

....

'Gwen? Gwen, love, do you want me to come to you?'

Rhys listened as Gwen Cooper lost herself. 'No no no, it's fine. The others are here and we're going to... well, we're going to work out.. What to do, but... you, please. Will you just stay there? In our flat. Stay there and I'll be home later. And...' She laughed again. 'We're going to get sooo drunk. We're gonna keep on drinking until I don't even know what city I'm in. You hear me?'

Rhys nodded.

'Rhys?'

'Oh, yeah, sorry. I nodded.' He laughed nervously. 'Oh God, I'm stupid. I don't know what to say.'

'You don't need to say anything, just be there for me. Rhys, I love you.'

'I love you too,' he replied. 'I'll see you later.'

....

Jack was running through the Hub, past the workstations and the coffee machine. Everything seemed wrong. Strange, distorted shadows loomed over him and the air tasted of blood. He called for help, but there was no one to help him. He had no one because they'd all died. Alex Hopkins, James Lawson, Suzie Costello. A list of the dead going back 100 years, and now Gwen. Whispering voices echoed around the Hub, but he couldn't hear what they were saying. They were the ghost's of friends and lovers. And they were whispering.

'lanto?' He knew that lanto was the one man he could trust. The man he... the man he knew loved him. 'lanto?' he called. 'lanto? Please, where are you?'

There was no reply, so he kept on running.

....

There was silence in the Boardroom. Gwen standing at the front looked down at the others. Toshiko's eyes were red from crying. Owen looked ready to hit someone. lanto... lanto looked dead.

'Okay. Jack's gone. Tosh? What can you do?'

Toshiko stood up. Her voice was shaking as he spoke. 'I've looked into the Huon particles and I was hoping I could... y'know. Find out where they've taken him and then... reverse it. Somehow. I don't know what I thought, but... I can't.'

Gwen put a hand on her shoulder. 'It's okay, Tosh. Owen?'

Owen didn't stand up. He didn't look at her. 'Steven Ballard and Jade Russel both died of old age. They didn't starve or die of any wounds or whatever. They spent the rest of their lives living in... well., according to Jefferson, Hell. And Jack.' He coughed. Then he coughed again, clearing his throat. 'God, lanto, I'd kill for a coffee.'

lanto was just staring into space. 'Jack can't die. Nothing can kill him. He's going to spend the rest of eternity in Hell.'

Gwen shivered as she watched lanto's heart shatter.

....

'lanto, where the hell are you?' Jack shouted as he ran past the base of the water tower. 'lanto!' He kept on running, trying to find the one person he knew would help him. The one person who was even close to understanding him. And he wasn't thinking about Gwen, not anymore. Not at all. Not thinking about her eyes staring at him as they clouded over, all the blood spreading across her shirt and staining his. He wasn't thinking about it. He wasn't going to think about it. He was going to find lanto Jones and everything would be okay. He'd help him. lanto loved him. He'd forgive him. He'd rescue Jack from the shadows.

And he burst through the Boardroom doors. And lanto was there. And he was with Darren Sowersby. He had his arms around Darren, and they were... Suddenly lanto broke away from the kiss and turned to Jack with a leering grin. 'You always forget about the little people, don't you Jack?'

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'Okay, well, that might be a good thing.' Gwen sat down and, without thinking, took lanto's hand. 'If he can't die, it means we can find a way to save him.'

The other didn't answer.

'Come on, you lot. We've lost him before and we got him back. There has to be a way. Tosh, keep working on the huon particles. They take people away and they bring people back. It's a two-way thing. Just keep trying.'

Toshiko nodded and stood up. She walked towards the door, pausing to rest her hand on Owen's shoulder. He nodded and she left.

'Owen, why don't you help her?'

He stared at her, his eyes burning with anger. But he kept his voice low. 'I'm not a scientist, Gwen. What can I do?'

'Just help her, keep her company.'

'Yeah, 'cause, I'm a bloody social work-' He stopped and took a deep breath. 'Yeah, you're right. What about you and... ' He indicated to lanto.

Gwen squeezed lanto's hand. 'We're going to talk to Jefferson. We're gonna find out where he got the matches from. We're gonna see if he can find a way to get Jack back. You with me lanto?'

lanto nodded slowly and stood up. 'Let's go,' he said.

....

lanto shoved Darren towards the back of the room. 'Get dressed and get out. This is between me and Jack.'

'I-I don't understand, lanto.' Jack had fallen back against the doorframe. He felt sick. lanto leered at him as he pulled on his shirt. 'Well, it's not like you stayed faithful is it, sir? I've spent months watching you flirt and kiss and carry on. If I'd ever trusted you, then I'd say my ickle heart would be breaking right now.'

Jack watched as his... friend buttoned up his shirt and pulled on his suit jacket.

'Thing is, sir. I never trusted you.'

Suddenly, Ianto turned and roared at Darren. 'I said, get out!'

The young man, still only half dressed, ran through the room and stumbled past Jack. Jack, staring at Ianto, didn't even notice.

'Sit down, sir. Let me get you a coffee.'

Jack, his hurt starting to give way to cold anger, sat down at the head of the desk. Ianto, for once, not bothering to put his tie on, went over to the side table and prepared some coffee.

'Did you really trust me, Jack? No, no, that's sweet. I mean, I suppose I fooled you the first time we met, so I shouldn't be surprised that you fell for it a second time.' He came over with two coffees, handing one to Jack, then sat down next to him.

'You killed Lisa.'

Jack blinked and turned to face him. 'I did what?'

'You killed Lisa.' He took a sip of his coffee. 'You killed the woman I loved.' Suddenly, he laughed. 'And think I then fall in love with you? I was using you, Jack. The same way everyone does.'

Jack shook his head. 'N-no, it wasn't like that. You grieved, you... moved on. We saved you from her, from your... madness.'

Ianto shook his head and put a hand on Jack's shoulder. 'Yeah, yeah, if that's what you want to believe.'

'Why?'

'I wanted to get close to you so I could hurt you the way you hurt me. And it was easy. So easy. I suppose, though... deep down, you've always known you can't trust people, haven't you?'

Jack pushed back into his chair, scared as Ianto's dark eyes bored into him, staring into his soul.

'Even your hero.' Ianto took another sip of coffee. 'Even he abandoned you after your first resurrection.'

'No,' said Jack quietly.

'And then there was Alex and Suzie, and how many others? Hey, Jack? How many others have betrayed you? And you go on and on about the darkness, but-' Suddenly Ianto flung his coffee against the wall. The mug shattered into a thousand pieces, the noise burning into Jack's mind.

'The darkness is here, Jack! It's in us. It's in all of us. You can't save us from ourselves. We all use you in the end.'

'No,' said Jack again. 'No.'

'Yes. Yes, I used you Jack. The same way we all do.'

'Ianto, I trust you. This isn't you. I know who you are, and this isn't you.'

Ianto stood up calmly. 'You always think you know best, don't you? But, yeah, you got it wrong again. Oh, you're not drinking your coffee?'

Jack shook his head.

'You think I've poisoned it?'

Jack nodded.

'You still don't understand, do you? God, you're stupid.'

Jack shook his head. The whispering voices were back, taunting him.

'I'm not here to kill you, Jack. I'm here so you can kill me. Like Suzie. Like Gwen.'

Jack looked up at the man he... the man he loved. Then, tears pouring down his face, he opened up the box of matches.

'That's it, Jack.' Ianto grinned. He held his arms aloft and laughed. 'Bring it on.'

Jack didn't look as the shadow lunged out of the box, enveloped Ianto and took him to Hell.

....

Darren Sowersby was blinking back tears as he stared silently into the cell. He'd thought he'd be fine with this. With seeing the man who'd killed Steve. It's not as if he and Steve had been that close. What with him then discovering all this madness underground, everything had changed. Life had suddenly become extraordinary. But watching the old man sitting calmly in his cell, memories of Steve had come flooding back. Steve had been like him. An ordinary bloke doing an ordinary job. Just someone living his life. Someone who made mistakes.

'Why did you do it?' he asked again.

Patrick Jefferson looked up at him and shook his head. 'You wouldn't understand.'

'That isn't good enough!' Darren slammed his hand on the glass. 'You killed my mate! Why?'

'He sinned.'

Darren felt the anger rising inside him. He started to hammer on the glass over and over again. 'What gives you the right? You're sick! You're a stupid, sick old man and you killed him. You killed Steve and... all he did was... you're evil.'

Jefferson shook his head again. 'No no, I'm not evil. I work for God.'

'You psychotic freak.' Darren started to kick at the glass, desperate to smash through it, grab Jefferson and... he stopped as he felt a hand on his shoulder. He took a deep breath and turned around. Gwen Cooper was standing there.

'You want to kill him?' she asked.

Darren wanted to scream out "Yes, yes, he deserves to die! He deserves to burn in Hell!" but he didn't. He looked at Gwen and, feeling so tired and defeated, he shrugged. 'It wouldn't bring him back, though, would it? Steve'd still be dead.'

She smiled and gently pulled him away from the glass. 'Go back. Owen and Tosh are working up there and I reckon they could do with some coffee.'

Darren looked over her shoulder and saw Ianto standing there. He nodded at him, but there was no response. Ianto was just staring into the cell.

'Go on,' said Gwen. 'You can leave him to us, okay?'

Darren nodded and, with one last glance at Patrick Jefferson, he walked out of the cells.

....

'Hello? Is anyone there?'

There was a pause, then Jack replied into his bluetooth. 'Yes?'

'Is this Jack Harkness?'

'Yes.'

'It's St Helen's Hospital here. I'm afraid I've some bad news.'

Jack, still crouched on the boardroom floor, looking at Ianto's broken skeleton, just laughed.

'Let me guess, it's Owen and Tosh? They're dead.'

'Um, yes.' The woman sounded surprised. 'Owen Harper and Toshiko Sato.'

Jack shrugged. 'Yeah. What was it?'

'They were in a car accident, Mr Harkness. I'm sorry, we did everything we could, but we couldn't save them.'

'Of course you couldn't. This is Hell. I'm killing my friends, stamping on people's heads, this is my Hell. Of course they're dead.'

'I'm sorry, sir. I don't-'

The woman's voice cut off as Jack ripped off his bluetooth. He sat there in the shadows, listening to the whispering voices. 'They're dead. They're all dead because of you. They've all fallen.'

Jack pressed his hands to his ears. 'Stop it. Leave me alone.'

But the whispering voices just sniggered and carried on singing. 'Ring a ring a roses, a pocket full of posies. Atishoo, atishoo, we all fall down. Ring a ring a roses, a pocket full of posies. Atishoo...'

....

'Stop that now,' Gwen commanded as she hammered on the glass.

Patrick Jefferson stopped singing and looked up at her. 'Gwen Cooper, adulteress.'

'I prefer Gwen Cooper, secret agent, myself but whatever makes you happy.' Gwen was trying her hardest to keep things light. She'd managed to hold it together for the others, only opening up to Rhys. She knew that there had to be a way to get Jack back. And she knew that Patrick Jefferson would be the answer. But even looking at him was difficult.

'What do you want Miss Cooper, I'm tired,' the man said.

'I want you to tell me where you found the matches.'

'They were sent to me. By God.'

'They're his Lucifers?'

'His angels.'

Gwen felt lanto tense up behind her. She knew he was struggling to keep his emotions in check and she'd considered just letting him go into the cell. Letting him beat the truth out of Jefferson. But she knew that wouldn't achieve anything. Jefferson was clearly psychotic.

'Okay,' she said. 'When did you first start doing God's work?'

Jefferson looked up at her. 'What?'

'You say you're working for God. So when did he first speak to you?'

Darren returned to Owen and Tosh with the coffees he'd just made. Part of him wanted to babble about how he made the coffee at work and how this was all quite normal and that there was nothing to worry about, but he didn't. For possibly the first time in his life, he stayed calm and quiet. He carefully placed the coffees in front of them and stood back, keeping out of the way. He watched as Tosh flicked through what looked like hundreds of different windows on her computer screen. Medical notes, newspaper clippings, drivers licence, school reports.

'Any records Torchwood had were destroyed in the Battle of Canary Wharf,' she was telling Owen. 'So, I'm focusing on Jefferson.'

'What've we got so far?' Owen asked.

'Born in 1963 to Christine Jefferson, father unknown. She was arrested for prostitution four years later and he was taken into care. He spent the next ten years in a Swansea children's home.'

Owen nodded. 'Okay, building up a profile. What happened to him?'

'Wait,' Tosh interrupted. 'It was the Bluebell Field Children's Home. Why does that ring a bell?'

As she started opening more windows on her screen, Darren found himself taking a step forward. 'It was closed down, wasn't it? I remember it on the news. There were reports of kids being... y'know. They said it went back years.'

'He spoke to me when I was a child.'

Gwen nodded. 'And what did he say?'

Patrick Jefferson was now sitting, legs crossed, looking up at her. 'He said he would always look after me. Even when...' The man's eyes went dark. 'Even when the bad stuff happened.'

'What bad stuff, Patrick?'

Patrick began rocking backwards and forwards. He started to sing again. 'Ring a ring a roses.'

'Please, Patrick. What happened?'

He looked down at the floor and his voice became childlike. 'I used to sing when they were sinning. When the bad things happened. I used to sing because that made me safe. Like God makes me safe. He stops the sinners, doesn't he?'

Gwen was about to speak when Ianto came and stood beside her. 'Mr. Jefferson. Patrick,' he said, then he crouched down, level with the prisoner. 'You wanted to punish the sinners, yes?'

Jefferson nodded.

'The matchbox. Where did you find it?'

'I told you, God sent it to me.'

Ianto cleared his throat. 'How?'

'It came in the post.'

Darren and Owen were standing to one side, letting Toshiko continue with her work. 'So, we know why he did it,' said Darren. 'But how? What's in the matchbox?'

Owen frowned. 'The energy it uses to transport people was created by... some old colleagues of ours. But how it ended up with Jefferson, I don't know. You got anything Tosh?' She nodded, still working urgently at her work station. They ran over to her. 'Earlier, I identified the Huon energy when I was examining the CCTV of Steven Ballard being taken. I stowed the particle composition into this system here and I left some tests running, which...' she trailed off and blushed. 'Sorry, giving you all the science again.'

Owen smiled gently at her. 'It's okay. What've you found out?'

She took a breath. 'If someone opened the matchbox again, if someone else went to Hell from here inside the Hub, I think the system could lock onto them and bring them back.'

Owen looked at her. 'You think? 'S a hell of a chance to take if you're not sure.'

He waited for her to say "Okay, I'm sure. I'm 100% sure." but she didn't.

Gwen was sitting down next to Ianto, talking to Jefferson. 'God sent you his angels in the post?' she found herself asking.

Jefferson nodded. 'There was a note. It said He knew I'd been sinned against. And that I could now punish all sinners. This was a few years ago and I didn't know what to do at first. I tested it on my dog. Because my dog had bitten me. And he went away. He went to Hell.'

'And then you started using it on people?' Gwen asked.

'Dirty beggars at first. They deserve it with their drugs and their alcohol and...' He broke off suddenly, giggling. 'Nobody missed them. Nobody. They deserve their punishment. "Big

Issue, help the homeless". Just get a bloody job.' He stopped giggling, serious again. 'But after a while, they weren't enough. They weren't the real sinners.'

Ianto's voice was low and steady, but Gwen could tell he was burning inside. 'It's not your place to punish sin,' he said. 'God said we should forgive.'

Jefferson looked up, surprised. 'You're a believer?'

Ianto shrugged. 'I dabble.'

Jefferson shook his head. 'The angels told me to punish, not forgive. That's why I send the sinners to Hell.'

'The voices. The angels. A-are just in your head,' said Gwen. 'The matches create an energy that transports people. It's science, Jefferson. Not God.'

'No, it's the angels. Punish, not forgive. Punish, not forgive.'

Sensing Ianto moving next to her, she turned just in time to see him stand up. 'Where're you going?'

He looked down at her. 'If this man can punish Jack, I can forgive him.'

By the time Gwen had realised what he meant and jumped up, Ianto was already running.

Owen was holding the box of matches. 'What about one of the weevils? We could send a weevil through and see if you can bring it back.'

Darren remembered the strange, frankly terrifying creature he'd seen down in the cells.

'Wouldn't it attack Jack?'

Toshiko nodded. 'One of us would have to go.'

Suddenly, Darren heard the sound of running footsteps. In the distance, he could hear Gwen shouting. He looked down at the lower level and jumped as Ianto cluttered through a door and onto the metal walkway.

'Gimme the matches!' he shouted as he ran towards them.

Owen held onto them. 'What?'

Ianto ran over to him. 'I said gimme the matches.'

Owen shook his head. 'Why?'

'The voices in Jefferson's head told him to punish the sinners. If I go to Hell, I can forgive Jack.'

Owen almost laughed. 'Ianto, you're talking about it as if Hell's real. Jack's not in Hell, well, not Hell Hell. He's gone to some other planet or dimension or something. Not Hell. Forgiving him won't bring him back.'

Ianto, catching his breath, started to calm down. 'I'm sorry. Of course. You're right.'

Gwen came crashing through the door 'Owen, stop him.'

Owen turned to look at her, giving Ianto the opportunity to grab his arm and snatch the matches from his hand. Owen fell backwards, grabbing a railing to stay upright.

Toshiko ran to her computer and desperately started to work. 'Ianto wait, please. I think if you go... I can bring you back, but you have to wait for me to-' She broke off as Ianto opened the box of matches.

Darren stared, horrified as the shadow emerged. He turned and watched Toshiko still working. 'Please, Ianto!' she shouted. 'The programme's only at 91%.' But the shadow didn't wait. It rumbled over Ianto and took him into the darkness.

....

Jack Harkness was in his office. He was alone because everyone was dead. The creatures, the ones from his nightmares, had come to Earth and they'd destroyed everything. He was

alone in the dark. It was dark because all the lights had gone out. The creatures had destroyed every power station on the planet. No electricity, no light. He was alone in the shadows. He'd tried shooting himself in the two years that he'd been in the darkness, but of course, that hadn't worked. Because he would never die. He knew that. He knew that he was starting to get confused by things. He was starting to think about things that didn't make sense. But even as he felt his mind crumbling away, he knew he would never die. That he would be here for eternity. Jack Harkness was in Hell.

Three years later and he was lying down in the cold, rank water at the base of the water tower. He was lying face down. His lungs slowly filling with the water that he knew wouldn't kill him.

He was trying to remember the faces of people. There'd been someone called Gwen and a doctor. Their faces were there. Sort of. Somewhere in his mind. But they were fractured like shards of glass.

He giggled, choking on some water as a random memory of putting his boot through a television screen suddenly appeared in his mind. He'd liked television, he remembered. He could see himself watching it on a Sunday morning with... someone. Ianto someone. He'd liked Ianto, but he couldn't remember what he looked like either. And as the black water filled his body and he tried to remember Ianto's face, an angel appeared.

He felt the angel first. Felt its hand on his shoulder. Felt its hands lifting him out of the water. Then he'd seen the angel. It looked like a man in a suit. A handsome man, in a nice suit. A man who then kissed him gently. He stared and the angel and tried to speak but the angel shook his head. 'It's okay. I'm here.'

The angel took Jack's hands and held them tight. 'I'm here. And I forgive you.'

Light suddenly filled the Hub, blinding Jack and he panicked as he felt something dragging him, pulling at him. The shadows were exploding into light and his body was screaming in agony as he was pulled away. Away from Hell. Out of Hell and into... light.

Darren stared at the two men who'd appeared out of thin air. Which was mental. But mental was normal today.

Ianto was holding Jack's hands as the Captain gasped for air. 'What-what happened?'

Ianto didn't answer.

Jack turned to look at Toshiko. 'I-I was able to bring you back. The system locked onto the Huon particles and brought you back.'

Ianto turned to Jack again, grabbed him and held onto him. 'We thought we'd lost you.'

Jack started to calm down, held him tight. 'You saved me.'

And as Owen, Gwen and Toshiko ran to join them, Darren stood back. He looked over at Toshiko's computer at the reading on the screen. "Programme 96% complete". He stayed quiet.

....

It was a clear night as Darren Sowersby stepped off the magic invisible lift and back into the real world. He looked up at the stars in the sky, suddenly realising what each one really meant. He looked down towards the Bay, past the different coloured lights that lined each side of Roald Dahl Pass, and looked out at the water. From all around him he could hear the

sounds of people heading to restaurants, cafes, bars, clubs. People laughing and chatting and arguing. Everything had changed but everything was normal. And it looked and sounded so beautiful.

'It's good, isn't it?' said Jack.

Darren nodded. 'So what was all that?'

Jack shook his head. 'I dunno. My guess would be that someone at Torchwood One created the matchbox and, knowing he was sick, they chose Patrick at random. They posted it to him, told him to use it. Maybe it was some kind of experiment. There were some real oddballs working there.'

'Well, thank God you lot are so completely and utterly normal,' Darren replied, ever so innocently.

Jack laughed, then stopped. 'I wonder... I wonder if they made any other Lucifers.' Then he shook his head. 'Well, if they did, we'll find them. But not tonight.'

'Excuse me,' said Gwen's voice from behind them. 'Are we standing here all evening, then?' Jack and Darren stepped back as she brought Jefferson down from the lift, which now looked like an ordinary paving stone. Suddenly, Gwen shouted out, 'Oh. Andy, what's occurring?'

Darren turned to see a policeman, one he vaguely recognised from this morning, walking towards them.

'Alright, Gwen?' he said. 'And hello again, Mr Jefferson.'

Patrick Jefferson just stared at him.

'Not very chatty, are you?' The policeman took Jefferson's arm, ready to take him away.

'Thanks, Gwen. Really appreciate this.'

Gwen put a hand on his arm. 'If it wasn't for you, we wouldn't have known about him. Thank you.'

The policeman suddenly grinned. 'Yeah. You're right. The lads at the nick are gonna love this. PC Andy's got himself a serial killer.'

'Careful,' replied Gwen, grinning back at him. 'You'll be pushing for promotion next.'

'Maybe I'll be after your job.'

Jack joined them laughing. 'Oh, I don't think so. Gwen's so much prettier than you.'

'That's the reason you keep her on, then? Yeah, it was the same at the station. Not much in the brains department but nice to look at.'

Gwen growled as the two men laughed. 'You're a dead man, Andy Davidson. And as for you, Jack. Oh, I'll think of something.'

Darren watched as Andy led Jefferson away, then he breathed out. The man who'd killed Steve was gonna face justice. It wouldn't bring Steve back, but at least other people would be safe. That was good.

'Darren,' called a voice. He turned to see Ianto walking up from the Bay.

'Hey, Ianto,' he replied. 'How's it going?'

Ianto came and stood next to him and they watched Gwen and Jack laughing. 'Jefferson gone then?'

Darren nodded then turned to face him. 'Will they have a problem, though? I mean, nobody's gonna believe in the...' His voice trailed off as he tried to think of the simplest way to describe what he'd seen. 'The magic alien matchbox things. The uhm, shadows from Hell or whatever.'

Ianto grinned at him. 'All sorted. Owen and Tosh are round at Jefferson's now. They're planting some spare bodies in his cellar.'

'Oh. Nice.'

'Welcome to Torchwood.'

Darren laughed, still so amazed by it all, then he stopped. 'And, uhm, what about me?'

Ianto raised an eyebrow.

'I mean... I've seen what you've all got down there. I know about Jefferson and I saw you and Jack come back from Hell. And earlier, while you were all in your meeting room, I think I saw.. Well, it sounds stupid really, but I think I saw a pterodactyl. Underground. In your underground alien base thing.' He shook his head. 'I've seen it all, so... well, does that make me dangerous?'

Ianto looked at him and suddenly there was so much pain in his eyes. 'I'm sorry, Darren, but yes. Where do you think we get the spare bodies from?'

For the tiniest, briefest moment, Darren panicked and then almost immediately he started to laugh. 'Yeah, alright, Ianto. Funny guy.'

'I try,' Ianto replied. 'As for you, well, we've got this thing. Retcon.'

Jack and Gwen, their arms linked, came over and joined them.

'Oh, I don't think we need to bother with that, do we?' said Jack.

Gwen and Ianto stared at him, clearly surprised.

'I died today. Went to hell, whatever. Maybe I've got a new appreciation for life. I know.

Darren, you understand you can't tell anyone about us.'

'Yes, sir,' Darren replied.

'Well, if you do, we'll be after you. And trust me, there are worse fates than death.' Jack was still smiling, but Darren could tell he was serious about keeping the whole thing secret.

'No no, I understand, really, I do. And I promise, I swear, I won't tell anyone.'

'Good man,' Jack replied. 'Well, maybe we'll see you around.'

Ianto reached out and shook Darren's hand. 'Thanks, mate,' said Darren. 'Thanks for... y'know.'

'Not a problem, Mr Sowersby. It was a pleasure to meet you.'

Then Jack and Ianto linked arms and started to walk back towards the Bay.

'No long goodbyes, then?' asked Darren, turning to face Gwen. He suddenly felt very hot as she took his hand.

'Not our style. Thanks for all your help today.'

Darren nodded, trying to think of something to say and he blushed as Gwen pulled him into a hug. She stepped back and smiled at him.

'Before you go, just one thing,' she said. 'Are you happy working at that finance place? Was that really what you wanted to do?'

Darren shook his head. 'Uhm, well, no. Actually, when I was a kid, I always wanted to be-'

Gwen cut him off. 'It doesn't matter. Whatever it was, go and do it, yeah? After life or no after life, you only get one chance here. So don't waste it, yeah'

He smiled as she pulled back from him. 'I won't. Thank you.' Darren watched as Gwen ran off after Jack and Ianto. He looked down at the paving stone that he knew was really an invisible lift. He looked up at the stars, and the moon, and the whole universe that was out there and he started to walk.

....

Andy Davidson was whistling tunelessly as he turned the car into Cathays Park. 'That's us here, then. You alright back there?' He glanced in the mirror as Jefferson stared out of the window. The man muttered something.

'What was that?'

Jefferson turned suddenly and stared at Andy's reflection. 'I said, arrogance is a sin.' 'Oh, don't start all that with me. It's over, yeah? Let it go.' Andy stopped the car and got out, looking up at the police station entrance. 'Yeah.' He grinned. 'PC Andy. No. Captain Andy's got a result.'

Inside the car, Jefferson chuckled to himself over. 'You think I'm the only one? You really think I'm the only one searching out the sinners? You think I'm the only one God sent his angels to?' He leant back in his seat and closed his eyes.

And as Andy opened the door and took his arm, Jefferson began to sing. 'Ring a ring a roses, a pocket full of posies.'

....

'Okay, so Hell?' asked Owen, returning with a round of drinks. 'What's that all about?' They were sitting round a table in the Crown and Thistle, finally able to relax after what Ianto kept calling "one hell of a day".

Jack shrugged. 'It was Hell. That's all.'

'Yeah... but where is it? Are we talking some dimension where all your nightmares come true or?' Owen trailed off.

The others all looked at Jack. 'What?'

'Hell?' asked Toshiko carefully. 'The system kept a lock on Ianto. But the coordinates. They weren't... well, they weren't coordinates. They were wrong. Hell, is it real? Is it a real place?' Jack paused then laughed, shaking his head. 'No, 'course not. The system didn't recognise the coordinates because we were in some other dimension. Remember Suzie? She told us that after you die, it's just dark. There's nothing there.'

'She also said that there was something watching. Waiting,' said Ianto, sipping his lager.

'Well, I'll guess we'll never know.' Jack grinned. 'It's more interesting that way.'

Owen took a big gulp of Guinness and belched, earning a disapproving glance from Toshiko.

'Yeah, thanks for that, Jack. There was me looking forward to a bit of peace and quiet when I go and now.. There's an afterlife. Brilliant.'

Jack smiled innocently. 'Well, if you've all been good little boys and girls, you've nothing to worry about, have you?'

And very quickly, the five friends decided to change the subject.

'So, Gwen,' asked Toshiko. 'How are the wedding plans going?'

'Oh my god, Rhys!' Gwen started to fumble for her mobile. 'I said I'd call him. Probably going out of his mind.'

'Maybe this'll help,' said Jack, pulling an envelope out of his pocket. He pushed it across the table towards her. She looked down at it then back up at him. 'What?'

'Open it.'

She opened the envelope and took out two plane tickets. 'Paris?'

Jack nodded. 'You need a break. There's been so much going on recently and I think you need to focus on Rhys for a while. Get away from Cardiff and us and have a weekend of Gwen and Rhys being coupley.'

'You mean it?' Gwen's face broke into a huge grin. 'Oh, Jack, thank you.'

'Just for the weekend, though. Want you back here, angst free, on Monday morning.'

She jumped up, grabbing her coat, then stopped. 'What about Torchwood? We don't really do weekends.'

Jack stood up and to everyone's surprise, kissed her on the cheek. 'We do now. Go on. We'll still be here when you get back.'

'Oh, this is brilliant, thank you, Jack. I guess I'll see you all on Monday, then.' Fumbling with her phone and pulling on her jacket, Gwen ran out of the pub.

Jack sat back down and sipped his water. He then became very aware of three pairs of eyes staring into him. Slowly, he looked up. Toshiko cleared her throat, Ianto turned away from him, Owen had his eyebrows raised.

'What?' asked Jack.

'And what about the rest of us?' said Owen. 'Don't we get a weekend away? Not you and me I mean, that would be weird. But Gwen gets Paris and we get...?' He stopped and sighed as a familiar loud, piercing beeping noise emanated out of Toshiko's bag. She downed her wine in one, earning herself an approving glance from Owen, and stood up. 'Rift activity. Something coming through.'

And as they raced out of the pub, Jack laughed. 'Sorry, Owen,' he said. 'No rest for the wicked.'

....

Shaftesbury Avenue. London. Music blasted through the doors of the White Rabbit pub as Johnny fell out, laughing. He managed to steady himself up against the wall as the girl, whatsherface, clattered out through the doors after him. She wrapped her arms around his neck and whispered into his ear, 'Back to yours, then?'

Johnny laughed and nodded. 'Come on.' He trailed off as he tried to remember her name. Not that it was important, really. He looked down at his watch, trying to focus. 'It's nearly 3am, I think we'll just have possibly missed the last tube.'

The girl was already at the edge of the pavement, waving her arm dangerously into the road and hollering for a taxi. Almost immediately, a black cab pulled up.

Johnny and... was it Stacey? Stella? Something, clambered into the back seat, pulling the door shut behind them.

'You're not gonna be sick, are you?' asked the taxi driver.

Johnny laughed. 'You're friendly. No, mate. We're not gonna be sick.'

'Fair enough. Where you heading?'

'Near Euston Station, thanks.' Johnny turned to look at the girl. 'While the wife's away, hey?' And as the taxi began its journey, the girl, pretty certain it began with an S, nuzzled Johnny's neck. Wasn't exactly turning him on, but at least she was still conscious.

'Hey, mate!' Johnny leant forward. 'Don't suppose you'd let me smoke, would ya? I'll open the window. I'll pay double fare, whatever you like.'

The taxi driver smiled into the mirror as he reached into the glove compartment. 'Go for it, mate. In fact, I think I've got a match here somewhere.'

....

So there you go. That's what happened. Did Jack go to hell? I don't know. Is there life after death? I don't know. But if there is, Owen and Tosh... I don't really know what to say. I want you to know that we still miss you. But we're carrying on. We're still fighting. We're still here saving the world we love. And... I just hope that... if you are somewhere, it's not... well. That it's not Hell. If you are somewhere then I hope... God, I hope you're so happy because you deserve it. Both of you. Sleep well. Gwen Cooper out.



