

# Forever

By Penny

- *Jack* -

Was someone calling his name? Jack lay on the ground, somewhere between the dark peaceful nothingness of death, and the blinding light and pain of being jerked back into life. He couldn't tell if the voice he heard was real or imagined, if it belonged to a stranger or a friend.

- *Jack* -

With a sudden gasp as he was thrust back into life, his arms flailed madly trying to find the owner of that voice. He searched in vain for one particular person, that one he wanted it to be, desperately needing the reassuring feel of those arms around him. But then he remembered... Remembered that Ianto would never be there again. Remembered that he would never feel the warmth of Ianto's arms around him. Remembered that Ianto would never hold him as he came back to life. The sudden utter despair Jack felt at that moment made him wish, yet again, that for once he would just bloody well stay dead.

- *Jack* -

Jack stayed on the ground, dazed, waiting for his breathing to return to normal before he tried getting up. Without someone there to catch him, he knew he would most likely fall down again if he got up too soon. For a brief second he thought he heard that much loved voice calling out to him again, and for one fantastic wild moment he even imagined he smelt the familiar scent of aftershave and coffee that screamed out Ianto Jones. All too soon though the dark cold reality set in and, as his senses returned fully, he heard Gwen running over to him.

"Jack!" she gasped. "Are you OK?"

Jack finally opened his eyes and looked around blearily. He knew then that that other voice was only his imagination. He tried to smile at Gwen, but it just came out looking tired and sad.

"I'm fine", he replied. "Just give me a moment."

Gwen tried not to look worried but she couldn't help but be concerned. Jack seemed to be taking longer and longer to come back to life each time he died, and took longer to recover when he finally did revive. Even his healing capabilities had slowed right down at the times when he was simply injured.

Jack had been part of her life for so long now, a source of comfort and a strong and knowledgeable leader. They had been through so many things together, things she would never have imagined were even possible before she had heard of Jack Harkness and Torchwood, and she simply couldn't imagine a time when he was not around.

Since Ianto's death though, it felt like he was withdrawing, slipping away from her. She knew Jack would leave one day and she dreaded that day. It seemed he had very little to hang around for with only her left out of the entire team. They both knew she no longer needed him around, but still, she was afraid of the day that she would wake up one day to find he had just upped and left without a trace.

She missed the old Jack – her Jack – the Jack that could flirt with her and Ianto and everyone else in the room, all with just one breathtaking smile. His million dollar smile never appeared anymore and he just seemed to be diving into a deeper and deeper depression. Ianto's death, it seemed, had been one too many for him.

It had been several years now since Ianto's death and Gwen was beginning to despair of Jack ever getting over the guilt he felt. No matter how many times she or Martha, or anyone else for that matter, had told him what had happened wasn't his fault, nothing seemed to sink in. She wanted to grab Jack by the shoulders and shake some sense into his stubborn head but knew that nothing she said would have any effect.

As she heard footsteps coming up behind her Gwen's thoughts moved on and she smiled fondly. Rhys. Through everything that had happened in their crazy lives, Rhys was always there for her and she knew he always would be. She felt his arms wrap around her and she leant back into his embrace.

Gwen knew exactly how lucky she was that she had Rhys. Their relationship had developed far beyond simple attraction or lust, and had long since matured into true companionship and understanding. Gwen had long realised her previous infatuation with Jack had been simply that: an infatuation and nothing more. As a couple, she and Jack could never have reached the levels of intimacy that she and Rhys now shared. Rhys was her rock and she needed him, and Anwen, with her always.

They sat and waited for Jack, together.

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In the distance, hidden within a perception filter, four tall humanoid creatures were watching them. They were dressed in identical uniforms, except where three of them had blue stripes on their shoulders, the fourth had red. The three with blue stripes were talking amongst themselves, the one with red stripes stood slightly apart, content to quietly observe.

They had arrived on Earth from Regnisent Triachnia one month earlier to observe Jack Harkness and the remnants of Torchwood team.

This was not their first visit to observe Jack.

The Regnisent Triachnoids were a race that existed outside of time and space, outside of all known universes. No one knew of them except the Shadow Proclamation. Not even the Time Lords had ever known for sure about them, which was somewhat ironic given the Triachs actually controlled the time that the Time Lords had so zealously watched over.

The Triachs would occasionally consult with the Shadow Proclamation on time related crimes but the Triachs had the final say in all disciplinary matters. One particular area they watched over was “fixed points in time and space”. At the beginning of creation all the fixed points had been agreed upon by the Triachnoid High Council. They were the Triach’s method of keeping the different universes on track and to keep them from colliding with each other.

They had come to Earth to investigate a fixed point that had been created artificially, and without sanctioning by the High Council. They knew of the events on the Game Station. They knew of Rose Tyler and Bad Wolf. And most importantly, they knew of Jack Harkness and his immortality.

The Triachs had travelled to Earth a number of times over the past hundred or so Earth years to observe him. The Doctor had once called Jack wrong, and according to the rules of time, he was. It was up to the Triachs to decide what needed to be done about him.

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Jack finally managed to pull himself back together, and with Gwen and Rhys’ assistance slowly stood up. Once Gwen was sure he was okay the three of them started to turn back towards the new Torchwood SUV. With Jack back on his feet and walking unassisted Gwen and Rhys went on ahead to open up the SUV and stash away the now-sedated Weevil that had been responsible for Jack’s latest death.

They had just opened the SUV doors when there was a bright flash of light behind them. They spun around to see that Jack had stopped walking and was simply staring at something. They couldn’t see what it was straight away. Gwen walked over to Jack only to be stopped by an invisible barrier. She yelled out to Jack but he didn’t seem to hear her.

Gwen pulled out her gun and intending to try and shoot through the barrier, aiming carefully so as not to accidentally hit Jack if she did manage to break through.

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The Triachs had spent a long time deliberating. They had previously reviewed the actions of Rose Tyler and had decreed that as the power of the Time Vortex had been removed from her and also, as she was now in an alternate universe with no means of return, no action needed to be taken against her.

The Doctor had been decreed as not having been responsible for any wrong doings at the start of their investigations and had not been investigated further.

That left only Captain Jack Harkness to be dealt with.

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Jack was the first one to see the Triachs as they lowered their filter and revealed themselves. As the Triachs started to move Gwen and Rhys could now see them as well. From both sides of the barrier Jack and Gwen aimed their weapons at the creatures as the Triachs came closer. In response, one of the Triachs raised a hand and a sudden force whipped the guns out of their hands before either of them had time to react, sending them clattering to the ground behind the Triachs.

The voices of the first three Triachs sounded in Jack, Gwen and Rhys's heads simultaneously. "We are the Disciplinary Panel of Regnisent Triachnia, operating under the authority of the Triachnoid High Council. We are here to pass the judgement on Captain Jack Harkness."

Jack felt a chill pass through him. "Judgement on what?"

"You are a fixed point in time and space. No human is permitted to be such a thing," the voices replied.

"But that wasn't my fault," Jack protested.

"Nonetheless action must be taken."

At this Gwen tried pushing her way forward again, only to find the barrier still in place. Jack waved her back. He had never heard of Regnisent Triachnia, but he could feel the power in the creatures' voices and he knew he and Gwen were powerless against them. Besides, he didn't have the strength to fight anyone any more.

"What action is that?" Jack asked uncertainly.

"It must be undone."

"Undone? How?"

"The life that was given must be removed. You will come with us to Regnisent Triachnia." With the announcement of their judgement made, one of the creatures gestured and the barrier was removed allowing Gwen to get closer to Jack.

"Jack, what is going on? What is this Regnisent Triachnia?" she asked in confusion.

Jack shrugged helplessly. He didn't know either.

The creatures spoke again. "In the Earth tongue it translates to 'Home in Heaven'. It is where the deserving mortal creatures go when they die."

"But I don't understand. Both Owen and Suzie said that when they died all they saw was a dark nothingness. Why didn't they see this Home in Heaven?" It was Gwen who spoke.

“Their deaths were not permanent. They were not permitted to see.”

The fourth Triach moved forward suddenly.

“You’ve heard *his* voice,” it said to Jack.

Jack nodded.

“They’re waiting for you. He’s waiting for you. The people who you love and people who love you.” It pointed behind him to where people were appearing out of nowhere.

Jack looked at them in shock. They were people from his past, people that had meant so much to him, and influenced his life so positively all began appearing. His family: Stephen and Franklin, and Gray was there looking like the innocent child he remembered so fondly. Estelle, Greg, Stella and even Lucia was there standing there behind her grandson. So many more people began to appear. Tears filled Jack’s eyes as he saw them continuing to appear, and all the good memories came flooding back. He turned away slightly as he realised everyone was there, everyone but the most important one.

Gwen turned abruptly, the movement causing Jack to look over at her. He saw the sudden matching smiles on both Gwen and Rhys’ faces. Gwen pointed behind him just at the same time as he heard that beloved voice calling out his name again.

“Jack!”

And then, all at once, he was there. Ianto Jones. His beautiful Ianto Jones. Emerging from behind one of the others like he had been there the whole time. The voice Jack thought he had only imagined sounded again.

“Jack.”

“Ianto!” Jack started to move towards him but stopped, suddenly unsure of himself. He had never stopped loving Ianto – even if it had taken Ianto’s death for him to acknowledge he loved him – but he knew that he himself had changed over the last few years. He wasn’t the same man Ianto had known before. Jack wondered if he was still a man that Ianto could love.

“Nothing could change how I feel about you Jack.”

Ianto, unsurprisingly, seemed to have read Jack’s mind. Jack grinned. Tears came to Gwen’s eyes when she saw it was back. That wonderful million dollar grin of his she had been afraid she’d never see again.

Jack wasted no more time and went over to Ianto and pulled him into a bone crushing hug. “I missed you so much Ianto.” He stepped back and took Ianto’s face into his hands. “I love you Ianto. I need you so much.”

Ianto smiled back, “I love you too Jack.”

Behind them the Triach's made their presence felt. It was time for them to go. Jack saw the others had already disappeared. Only the Triachs had stayed behind, making sure Jack and Ianto left as they should.

Turning from the Triachs, Jack and Ianto looked over at Gwen and Rhys. Gwen was barely able to hold back her tears. She knew that this time Jack was leaving and wouldn't be back, but to her surprise it didn't hurt as much as she had thought it would. Perhaps knowing that he would be with Ianto and that he would be happy was enough for her.

"I'll miss you," she said. "Both of you," turning to include Ianto. She hugged each of them in turn.

"I'm glad we actually get to say goodbye this time," Ianto replied. He kissed her forehead and then moved over to say goodbye to Rhys, giving Jack time to farewell Gwen.

Jack hugged her and heard her whisper in his ear, "I'm so glad you got him back. Just make sure you look after him properly this time."

Jack nodded. He was now crying as much as she was, but he had absolutely no regrets. He had the man he loved back, and this time he wasn't going to lose him. Letting go of Gwen, he shook Rhys' hand the same as Ianto had just done. Jack took a deep breath and then, holding Ianto's hand, he walked after the Triachs. At the crossover point he stopped and looked back at the Earth he was never going to see again. Nope, definitely no regrets.

With another million dollar smile for Ianto he listened intently as Ianto started telling him about where they now lived.

"And by the way, Sir," he said with a wicked grin of his own, pulling something out of his pocket and offering it to Jack. "I've still got that stopwatch..."