

Hub Magazine

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CONTENTS:

FICTION: *A Soldier's Tale* by Simon Frayne

REVIEW: *Moon*
Sights
Torchwood: Children of Earth

FEATURE: *Interview: Stan Sakai - Part 2*
LGBTorchwood: Sexuality Issues in Torchwood by Janet Neilson



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EDITORIAL:

by **alasdair stuart**

The Hard Choices

(Torchwood: Children of Earth spoilers below)

There's a discussion rumbling along at the moment about who actually owns a story. Is it the writer, whose job it is to create it? The fan, who is, to my disgust, at least technically an 'end user' and as a result should have a say in the 'product'? Or is it somewhere in between?

The answer is of course, yes to all of the above. A writer's principle job is to create the best story they can, it's really that simple and definitely that subjective. You write to your best because that's the only way you can look yourself in the mirror every morning and everything else, the consequences, the reaction, everything else is secondary.

The fan's job is a little more complex and a lot more mutable. Fans enjoy the story, discuss it, spread the word about it and a lot of the time act as grass roots support. If the writer is a general, the fan is infantry and anyone who thinks they can't achieve anything should look at the renewal of the original Star Trek, of Roswell and more recently Jericho and Chuck. If enough fans speak, people act. If enough fans speak, they can change the course of a story and currently, fans at savethecoffeeboy on Livejournal and saveiantojones.com are attempting to do just that by sending coffee to the BBC in the hopes of resurrecting Ianto Jones as well as donating to Children in Need in the character's honour.

The charitable donations are beyond laudable but what's interesting, for me, is what the campaign

says about where fiction stands close to a decade into the 21st century. We're living, as we have been for years, on the edge of the singularity and the role of the writer, the fan and fiction itself is changing. Stories are becoming mutable, adaptable and the tools to make stories are becoming more and more commonplace. We're at the start of a process that will see fiction and how we read and watch fiction change almost completely over the next twenty years and it's going to be a very hard road. That being said, the destination promises to be fascinating.



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FICTION

A Soldier's Tale

by **simon frayne**

Death has a smell. It's a smell I've come to know well over the last few years, fighting for my kin and the glory of my species. The battle fields change as I move from planet to planet fighting those who will not bend to the Empire's will, but the smell is always the same. It's the sweet aroma of blood, faeces and urine as they flow from a broken body and mix together in a way that nature never intended. It clings to nostrils and skin, and burns itself deep into the mind. Once smelled it's never forgotten.

I can smell death now as I cradle this mangled, dying body. I think I know the young soldier; but it's hard to tell with his face so distorted in pain and fear.

Is it Nai?

Or is it Bao?

The young recruits come and go so frequently that it's hard to remember their names and faces.

They're always the same when they first join the wars; full of enthusiasm for the kill. Force fed the usual propaganda about the enemy; brimming with tales of the horrors they have committed against the helpless. This enthusiasm doesn't last long, after they've committed a few horrors themselves they lose their self-righteousness and get down to the real facts of war. Kill or be killed.

It's Nai.

I've just seen his name and rank tattooed on his breast plate. Like its wearer, the armour has sustained critical damage. Its adaptive camouflage flicking between desert yellow and jungle green like a confused chameleon.

He's taken a hit from that last wave of micro missiles. One of them locked onto his heat signature and tracked him. The finger sized missiles are one of the deadliest weapons in the current enemy's arsenal, but we have worse and they would soon crumble like all who had stood up to the Empire before them.

Unfortunately for Nai this particular missile malfunctioned and didn't detonate when it penetrated his armour. If it had he would have died instantly, his body being blown apart by the small missile; it would have been messy but quick. Not such an easy death for this young man. The missile has passed straight through his body but it's taken a large chunk of his breastplate with it. What's left of his intestines is trying to work its way through my fingers and make its way to the muddy ground I kneel on. I should turn him over and look at the exit wound but there's not much point; there's nothing I can do for him.

His screams are slowing; it must be the morphine implants kicking in to dull the pain, not that it'll last. The implants will soon be expended and then the pain will be back with a vengeance.

Fluids slowly pump through my fingers as his life flows out into the mud. Another one of our enhancements is kicking in, slowing his bleeding, trying to keep him alive, but for this wound it'll only prolong his pain and a quick death is his only salvation.

I should release him from his suffering but I haven't the means to do it. I can see my rifle lying in the mud, but it's useless. The barrel warped and smouldering from sustained firing; fighting back the wave of

missiles. But it served its purpose; I'm alive and unharmed.

Nai's weapon is by his side but it's also useless, its systems have shut down to stop it suffering the same fate as my weapon. This is a safety feature all new weapons have to prolong their life, usually at the cost of the owners. This is a fact of war, equipment is harder to replace than flesh and blood, there is always another warm body waiting in the wings ready to pick up the gun and carry on the fight.

The new recruits always laughed at me (never to my face of course) when they first see my kit. The old weapons I use look antique next to the sleek new models they proudly sport. But they soon learn the reason why I stick to my tried and tested models; poor Nai here learned the hard way. My gun carried on firing well past the point his had shut down. I can still see the look on his face now when his state-of-the-art rifle stopped firing and went dead in his hands, and then he saw the missile bearing down on him. A lesson learned; but one he would never have time to learn from.

He's doped up enough to talk now. I talk back to him; the same conversation and the same lies I've had to go through too many times in the past.

"Yes you've been hit."

"It's not as bad it looks, you'll be fine."

"Yes it's a good sign the pain is going."

"I know you want to go home; we all do."

"There's a medical-unit on its way; hold on."

The last isn't a lie, my heads-up display shows a unit closing in on us, Nai's suit would have notified it as soon as he was hit. A blinking red medical symbol on the map shows it to be half a mile from our position.

I request information from the unit, it's not good news; it's a Mark I; or a butcher unit as we old hands call it.

The medical-unit isn't one of the Mark III units that this soldier would have been introduced to at boot-camp. Those models could cope with the worst injuries that war had to offer. I remember the first (and only) time I came face to face with one in my early days. To demonstrate its abilities our drill sergeant shot a volunteer in the stomach, and we had watched as the unit anaesthetised and operated on the wound in front of our eyes. When the volunteer had woken all they had was a stitched scar to show that they had been shot. But those units were for troop moral only. Let them think they could survive any injury, and they would gladly march to their deaths. Out here in the field I've seen men with non-critical injuries die under the knife of an old and poorly maintained Mark I. It was another of my facts of war; if you were wounded and could get to a field hospital; shoot any medical-unit that came your way.

This isn't something Nai has to worry about though. I can feel his breathing getting slower. He's not talking anymore, he just looks at me with a resigned look in his eyes -- he knows he's dying. He's trying to say something but the strength is leaving his body. I could probably guess what he's saying anyway.

"Tell (girlfriend/mother) I love them, and died a good death."

Always said in the hope it would ease the pain when they found out he wouldn't be coming back; I suppose it's the done thing to say.

His breathing has stopped now -- he's dead.

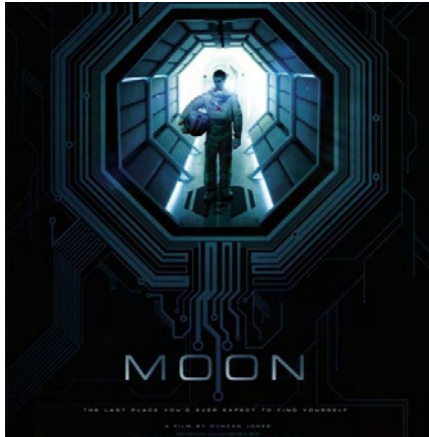
Another life sucked in and churned out of the war machine, and another young soul will take his place.

I'll leave the body here -- the days of shipping bodies back home are long gone.



Moon

reviewed by richard whittaker



Directed by Duncan Jones, written by Duncan Jones and Nathan Parker

Starring: Sam Rockwell, Kevin Spacey, Dominique McElligott

Certificate: 15, 97 minutes

The number of big- (or even medium-) budget hard sci-fi movies to earn a cinematic release in recent years can almost be counted on the chelae of one Barsoomian Kaldane. Ever since the brief spurt of studio-backed science-driven fiction that began with *Gattaca* and ended with *Solaris*, it's been up to the indie end of the spectrum to carry the banner for hard SF, and leave the space opera to the blockbuster crowd. *Moon* is undoubtedly an indie pic, a \$5 million art house flick that just happens to be set in space. What it shares with its rare antecedents is a daring and magnificent insight into the outer realms of the human condition, and how the edge of scientific possibility raises the oldest questions.

It also does it with a remarkable simplicity and elegance. It is structured basically as a three-handed chamber piece (although the chamber in question is in orbit). Sam Rockwell plays Sam Bell, an astronaut who has spent the last three years alone on the Moon, tending the massive machines that roam its surface mining Helium 3. Kevin Spacey provides the voice of Gerty, the childlike AI that runs the moon base and tends to Bell's every needs. And Sam Rockwell plays Sam Bell, an astronaut who has recently arrived on the Moon to start a three year contract, tending the massive machines that roam its surface, mining Helium 3.

Yes, you read that right.

The big argument amongst critics has been whether to reveal the film's central conceit: Some have done so by using the clumsy tool of spoiler alert, but that's because they confuse criticism with a plot synopsis, and think that the fact that there are two Bells is what the story is really about. In fact, when the newly-arrived Bell finds the other Bell in a crashed lunar rover, that's when the story begins.

It's also a point of idleness amongst some critics to say that this is influenced by *2001: A Space Odyssey*, or a derivative of it, or the antithesis of it. If its debt lies anywhere, it is to David Bowie's *Space Oddity* - and not because writer/director Jones is Bowie's son. This isn't about Stanley Kubrick's opaque mysticism, or Arthur C. Clarke's plodding techno-fetish. Jones instead takes Bell on the metaphysical journey of isolation and the craving for human connection that his father started for Major Tom.

As a feature director, Jones has left an outstanding calling card with this debut. Having made a reputation as a shock-crash commercial director, he instead pays homage to the classic blue-collar sci fi of *Outland* and *Silent Running*. His *Moon* is quiet, bleached, dusty, and removed from time: There isn't a single wasted frame, or moment where style drowns emotion. Instead, it is all dedicated to giving poignant space for Rockwell to examine a man confronted with his once and future self.

This is a grimy near-future, where the steady wear and tear of Bell's air-locked bachelor lifestyle has taken its toll. In his three years in isolation, with only the odd image of his wife and infant daughter for company, he has softened from his brash younger self. Surviving by whittling a small wooden replica of his home town, developing an endearingly mutually supportive relationship with Gerty, and occasionally talking to his collection of potted plants, he's ready for contact with real people again. To be confronted with his younger, surlier self, cocky and obnoxious, is a spiritual slap in the face, one made especially cruel when his alter ego rescuer is so obnoxious that he refuses to give him the simple human contact of a high five. Yet that division allows Rockwell to present arguably his most subtle and tender performance(s) to date.

It helps that the state of film technology has reached a point that the interaction between the

two Bells is seamless, but it's really about what Rockwell does to make them altered versions of the same man. They are not that different: There's no evil twin here, just two men, or one man, or two man, or one men, depending on the viewpoint, scrabbling at defining who they are when everything they had taken as true is thrown into doubt. Their lives, their individuality, the love of their wife Tess (McElligott) as expressed through her occasional time-delayed video missives – everything is in question. It's mostly down to Rockwell to provide the emotional heart, and he doesn't dabble with the extremes of kookiness that have marked his most memorable roles. Where *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind* saw him leap boldly into the abyss of quirk, *Moon* requires him to be moving and mournful, and his quiet yearning for home and the certainties of life amongst people is the heart of this film.

The final part of this equation is Gerty (how Rockwell made this movie without either his other self or Spacey on set, both added in post-production, is only further testament to his virtuosity). Again, the idle route is to compare Bell's best friend to HAL, but in fact he has about as much in common with ORAC from *Blake's 7* – absolutely nothing. A block of metal on roof-mounted tracks, its simulated emotions are transmitted not through Spacey's calming tones but through a series of smiley faces on a small screen. Yet Gerty adds to the film's sense of restrained mystery. Exactly how intelligent this AI is, and what the artificial part of that means, is as pivotal to the plot as Bell's own multi-pathed journey to self-awareness.

It's hard to imagine that, in the current cinema climate, *Moon* will become a massive success or be given the opportunity to become one (gotta keep all those multiplex screen clear for another screening of *Harry Potter!*). But its quiet, elegiac discussion of what individuality means will give it a life beyond the screen for those lucky enough to see it.

Slights

reviewed by ellen j allen



By Kaaron Warren

Published by Angry Robot Books

RRP £7.99

If the measure of success of a novel is its impact on the reader, *Slights* is a very successful novel indeed. It's an extremely well-written nasty, insidious piece of work: it crawled inside my head and changed the way I look at the world, and there aren't many books I can say that about.

Slights is told from the point of view of Stevie, a young woman of limited social graces, who has an obsession with what happens at the point of death. She idolises her father, a policeman who was shot and killed when she was eight. In her eyes, he's a hero. Her older brother, Peter, remembers a very different man, prone to violence. The novel follows Stevie's exploration of her obsession and her gradual discovery of the truth about her childhood and about her father.

Living in her family home, largely estranged from her brother, Stevie comes close to death time after time. She isn't suicidal; it's just that every time she dies she finds herself in a room surrounded by everyone she's ever slighted. And Stevie isn't good with people: her older brother, Peter, is the one with all the charm, so that adds up to an awful lot of people who feel slighted by her. Even when she tries, she can't help insulting, ignoring, angering the people she comes into contact with. They all want a piece of her, and at the point of death they're determined to take that piece by force.

Desperate to know if what she experiences is what's waiting for everyone, Stevie turns to more and more drastic measures to find out. At the same time, she stumbles through life, slowly uncovering her past, her father, digging up secrets that show she's just like her father in more sinister ways than she could have imagined.

As her relationships break down, with lovers, friends, family, her father's ex-partner, and as the police close in, Stevie finally discovers the truth: about her past, about her father, and about what's waiting for her

when she dies.

Looking at the world through Stevie's eyes is an unsettling experience. While I was reading *Sights*, it coloured the way I saw people around me, influenced those quick little judgemental thoughts that flick through my head while waiting in line at the supermarket - you know the ones. Reading the local newspaper accounts of crimes, disappearances, everything took on a more sinister appearance. *Sights* made everyone seem as though they had dirty secrets to hide.

This is a fantastic book - relentlessly horrible to the very end. If you read no other horror this year, read *Sights*. I promise it'll be worth it.

Torchwood: Children of Earth

reviewed by alasdair stuart



Torchwood: Children of Earth

Starring John Barrowman, Eve Myles, Gareth David-Lloyd, Peter Capaldi, Kai Owen, Tom Price Katy Wix, Rhodri Lewis, Paul Copley, Nicholas Farrell, Susan Brown, Lucy Cohu, Cush Jumbo, Liz May Brice, Ian Gelder, Colin McFarlane and Deborah Findlay

Directed by Euros Lyn

Available now on DVD

Every child in the world stops and delivers a simple message: 'We are coming back'. Torchwood are targeted for assassination, something terrible buried in Great Britain's past returns to life and the moment Torchwood has talked about for years, the moment where everything changes, finally arrives.

There are three elements that make Children of Earth unique. The first is how much of an ensemble piece it is. Every actor listed above, from the Torchwood team themselves to government secretary Lois Habiba (Cush Jumbo) and the genial, amoral and deeply unsettling Mr Dekker (Ian Gelder) not only get moments in the spotlight but are intimately connected to and affected by each of the other characters. The arrival of the 456 is a pebble thrown into a very small pond and the ripples it causes make for drama which is both colossal in scope and deeply personal.

Which leads into the second unique element; the show's ambition. This is a series that nests Torchwood itself within a much larger narrative, exploring a remarkably grounded and profoundly dark view of first contact. There is no polite glossing over here, no 'oh people thought it was something in the water'. The very first episode features two characters openly discussing the fact that humanity isn't alone, everyone knows, no one's talking about it and it's driving some of us mad. This is a very different, very personal singularity and the series uses its large cast to explore multiple perspectives of the same event, an event that can be summed up in two words; everything changes.

But the series' greatest strength is its bravery. There's no Doctor here, no touching moment where humanity rallies around a hero, only a group of flawed, broken people trying to find the least horrifying solution to an impossible situation. Nothing goes right, nothing is easy and the series piles the darkness on until a scene in Day Four which is one of the best moments of TV drama in the last ten years. Faced with a demand for ten percent of the Earth's children, the cabinet debate the issue, gradually eliminating their own families until Deborah Findlay's character delivers a line which is grounded, pragmatic, utterly convincing and horrific in its implications. This is first contact under spotlights, humanity alone and frightened and making the worst chances possible. No one is right, no one is trustworthy and every victory comes at the steepest price. By itself, this would be an extremely brave thing to do but presented as part of a series that featured a Cyberwoman in a metal thong in its first run it's frankly astounding.

Children of Earth may well be the best piece of drama the BBC produces this year. Intelligent

enough to live up to its ambition and brave enough to make unpopular choices this isn't just *Torchwood* as it always should have been but BBC drama as it always should be; utterly committed and completely unmissable.

FEATURES



Interview: Stan Sakai - Part 2

with richard whittaker

For 25 years, Stan Sakai has been a quiet master of the American comic book with as author and artist of the world's least cuddly sword-wielding rabbit story, *Usagi Yojimbo*. In addition, he's also been a prolific letterer, working with talents as diverse as Stan Lee (*Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four*) and Sergio Aragones (*Groo the Wanderer*). Last issue, Sakai talked about his background in comics and his future plans for the bushido bunny. In this Q&A, he discusses the perils and perks of being an independent creator in the comics industry, and the absolute importance of keeping the rights to your own work.

Hub Magazine: You've talked about working with Sergio Aragones (Sakai is the long-time letterer on *Groo the Wanderer*.) How does that relationship work?

Stan Sakai: We started off as friends first. The way we met is that I found his name in the phone book. Strangely, right after that, he withdrew his name from the phonebook. But I found his name, I sent him a letter, he gave me a call, and we've been friends for about 30 years.

HM: But being a comic artist is often a very solitary experience.

SS: Most of the time, freelancers work within their own studios, which are very isolated. That's why in Los Angeles, we have an organization of print cartoonists. We get together once a month, and I also have a lunch group, and we get together once a week. I'm one of the newer ones in the group, I've been going for 18 years. The groups been going for 25 years, and we get together every Friday. You have to get that relationship with other cartoonists so that you'll be at least normal. You have to get out of the studio.

HM: At the same time, *Usagi* is very much all-your-own-work.

SS: Most of *Usagi* is just my own. I write the stories myself, I do the penciling, the lettering, the inking, all by myself. I do have an editor, and she's terrific, but all my contracts with all my publishers' have always been, "*Usagi* is mine."

HM: You've discussed how much research you do before writing a story. Does that keep your writing fresh?

SS: It does inspire me. I may read a book about a certain subject, like Japanese pottery making, and think of a story around that. Sometimes friends give me an idea. I remember, I had to do a story for *Wizard* magazine, just a three page story, and I was having a hard time. In conversation one day, [Aragones] says, "Oh, I'll think of a story for you," and he just starts rabbiting on, and it turns out to be a terrific story, but it's a 20-page story, and I said, I can't use that, that's too long. So I did something about netsuke, which are those little ornamental carvings they use for bags. But more often, the story comes from sitting there and think of a story in time for deadlines. Because you have to be practical, because *Usagi* has to appear at a certain frequency.

HM: Over the last 25 years, how has the comics industry changed?

SS: When we started making *Usagi* as trade paperbacks, there was no graphic novel market whatsoever. That's why *Usagi* is in that strange format that's not the same proportion as other books and graphic novels. However, when I wanted to turn it into trade paperbacks, there was no graphic novel market, but there was a trade paperback market, and it was hot. I think it started with *101 Things to do With a Dead Cat*, so that's why I went into that market. It has given it a longer shelf life. Book one is, I think, in its ninth print, and it's a good seller for Fantagraphics, so they keep reprinting it.

HM: But in all that time, you've always maintained ownership of *Usagi*.

SS: That was very important to me. So because of that there's been no loss of continuity between Fantagraphics and Mirage and Dark Horse - it's always been one continuous story.

HM: How have trade paperbacks changed the industry?

SS: It's taking comics out of the collectors' market and more into the readers' market. My trades are in libraries and school libraries and everywhere, which is something that is very gratifying for me. *Usagi* was voted one of 2009's best graphic novels for teens by the American Library Association, and I got an email from one of the judges saying that *Usagi* was voted on unanimously. That was very nice, and in May I'm talking to a conference of librarians in DC.

HM: Are there still stories that you really want to tell, anything non-*Usagi*?

SS: They'll still be within the *Usagi* realm. I do have a few other things, but they're still in the 'I want to do these' stage rather than the "This is what I'm going to do" stage." Right now, I'm really happy working with *Usagi*, and because I own it, I can do what I want with it. That's why *Grey Shadows*, the trade paperback, is all mysteries, because I love mysteries. I can do love stories or any kind of genre I want.

Stan Sakai's *Usagi Yojimbo Vol. 23: Bridge of Tears* is available now through Dark Horse Comics. The graphic novel *Usagi Yojimbo: Yokai* is scheduled for an October release.

LGBTorchwood: Sexuality Issues in Torchwood

by *janet neilson*

Owen: *Not who [Jack] is, not where he's from, not anything. Except... him being gay.*

Gwen: *No he's not. Really, do you think?*

Toshiko: *Owen does, I don't.*

Ianto: *And I don't care.*

The best thing about a good piece of entertainment is that when done properly, it appeals to a broad demographic, with each part of the demographic taking away a different message. In *Torchwood*, one of the relatively minor themes has obtained a very large part of the spotlight, and not entirely in a positive way: sexuality in the sense of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues.

From his earliest appearance in *Doctor Who* (Ecclestone season, "The Empty Child/The Doctor Dances"), Captain Jack Harkness has been portrayed as 'omnisexual'. His sexuality not only transcends gender but species divides, according to the Doctor, and the explanation for it gives an inkling of a future where the human race has come to terms with racial, gender and even species divides in terms of sexual relations, provided that the species is sentient and capable of informed consent. *Torchwood* continued with that line of thought from its earliest days; everything from Owen Harper's acceptance of sharing a girl with another man rather than getting pummelled in "Everything Changes" to Toshiko Sato's brief

relationship with 'Mary' in "Greeks Bearing Gifts", the idea of a presumed heterosexual pursuing sexual relations with a member of their own gender is fairly commonplace in the Torchwood setting. Given that the entire premise of the programme states that 'the 21st century is when everything changes', an audience is given hope that perhaps this is part of 'arming the human race against the future'. Not all change is bad, and if Harkness hails from a future where sexuality is not seen as a radio-button issue, Torchwood very much paves the way for the beginnings of the future that created Jack's mindset.

The relationship between Jack Harkness and Ianto Jones more or less underlined this. While perhaps established too abruptly (the audience goes from 'The Stopwatch Incident' in "They Keep Killing Suzie" to Ianto acting like a jilted wife in "Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang" with very little in the way of set-up), the Jack/Ianto romance, for lack of a better word, caught the attention of a fairly new audience for the science fiction community – the LGBT community.

Also, a little more predictably, it spoke to the hearts, minds and, quite frankly, loins of slash fans. While most science fiction fans who are also fans of male-on-male action must either write their own fan fiction on the matter or hope that a better writer than they will do so, fans of Torchwood could have a gay male OTP and actually see them kissing at minimum. The LGBT community, on the other hand, was understandably pleased that two homosexual males were portrayed as having a relationship and were not killed off at the end of season 2, unlike the heterosexual mixed-race couple that so nearly was, Owen and Tosh.

However, dissection of the series shows that Torchwood was never, at its core, about sexuality and gender issues. At root, Torchwood, like Doctor Who, is about being human. Jack says it himself, again in "Day One": "So remind us. Tell me what it means to be human in the twenty-first century." While sexuality certainly plays a part in being human, Torchwood's focus has always been on the larger issues; the terrible decisions that arise when personal morality clashes with the good of the many, the sacrifices one has to make to build a better world, and how good can sometimes look so much like evil and vice versa. The impact that an out and open gay couple, inasmuch as Jack and Ianto were a 'couple', on the small screen had on the audience as a whole and the LGBT community in general should not be overlooked, but neither should it be seen as the be-all and end-all of a wonderfully complex series.

That said, the reaction of a vocal minority of the fan base to Ianto's death in "Children of Earth: Day Four" indicates that there is no realistic way of separating Torchwood from its impact on all aspects of LGBT life. For the LGBT community, the survival of the Jack/Ianto relationship indicated an increase of the acceptance of male homosexual relationships in mainstream entertainment and, as a more exciting prospect, in science fiction, a genre traditionally (and erroneously) seen by the world at large to be a boy's club. The death of a man who was in a relationship with another man was seen to be 'burying your gays', removing an unacceptable homosexual relationship from the public eye in a blow against LGBT rights.

This was despite statements by both Russell T Davies and James Moran denying the whole idea and insisting that they were serving the needs of the story first and foremost. Meanwhile, those who saw the more sensual side of the Jack/Ianto relationship received the gratification of two very attractive men being physically and emotionally involved. Both segments of the demographic were watching for the relationship; intentional or not, the sexuality issue became the draw, more important – or at least more pleasant to focus on – than the sometimes bleak view presented by a show whose primary theme is difficult decisions and their consequences on the individual.

It seems unfortunate that the segments of the audience who watched primarily for the open homosexual relationship claim that one character death has killed the entire series.

It is interesting to note that the deaths of Owen and, most notably, Tosh never received this sort of fervent reaction. Despite the loss of forty percent of the main cast in one heart-wrenching swoop and killing off the only non-caucasian member of the cast, no one even contemplated the idea that Davies

was trying to end an 'unsuitable' mixed-race couple or any other racist reasoning behind the act. People were sad to see the end of a couple they would have liked to see develop, but that was the extent of the reaction. It is only when a man in a relationship with another man gets killed that cries of 'prejudice' start up. Torchwood is about life, choices and consequences, and no one, regardless of race, gender, age, faith or sexuality, is immune from life and its ultimate consequence – death. That seems to be inherently understood in the case of Toshiko Sato and Owen Harper, but in the case of Ianto Jones, it is seen as prejudice. Equality should not mean immunity from unpleasantness, and that's what Torchwood is all about. The reaction from the LGBT community in particular is proof positive that Torchwood has become so entangled with issues of sexuality that separating them is nigh on impossible.

Torchwood, though, has always been more than the sum of its parts, and more than the sum of its themes. Removing the issue of sexuality entirely from Torchwood would be impossible, but that only proves that Torchwood, while dealing with heavy themes, has the courage to address all walks of life in its quest to show real people dealing with difficult situations. That courage allowed it to flourish for two seasons, and for Children of Earth to be made, and will stand it in good stead when it, in spite of the loss of sixty percent of its original cast, continues for a fourth season.



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