steamed milk

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steamed milk

by juette

Summary

Right now, Ianto's hand on his was the only thing he could think about.

"And then I press that button, right?" asked Juette, pointing at Ianto's favourite espresso machine.
- "Yes," replied Ianto.
Juette pressed the button with a *click*, and he watched the coffee flow into the small cup below until it was full.
"And... that's it?"
- "Yes, that's it."
Juette smiled. "Well, this one's for you," he said, turning around and handing the cup to his partner over the counter. He held his breath as Ianto took a sip. "Is it good?"
- "Very! You're learning fast."
Juette's smile widened, and he clapped his hands. He quickly removed the portafilter from the machine and cleaned it before turning back to Ianto. "Okay, now show me how to foam milk again."
- "Alright," Ianto said, coming around the counter to stand right behind Juette. "First, we need some milk."
- "Of course," said Juette. He had to stand on his tiptoes to reach the metal jug in the cupboard, but he managed to grab it, and he filled it up to the base of the spout with milk, just as Ianto had taught him.
- "Next, you have to purge the steam wand. It gets rid of any condensation or air that might be stuck inside," Ianto explained.
Juette nodded slightly and turned up one of the dials on the machine for a few seconds before turning it off again.
"Good," said Ianto. "Now, let the wand sit inside the spout, raise the jug a little— you only want the tip of the wand to be in the milk — and tilt it to the side. Then you can turn the steam on."
- "Wait," Juette said. "I'm not sure I quite have the hang of it yet."
- "I'll show you," said Ianto, but when Juette tried to move away from the machine, Ianto stopped him with a hand on his arm. He stepped in close enough that only a few centimetres were separating him from his partner, and he laid his hand on top of Juette's on the handle of the pitcher.

Juette's breath caught at the gentle contact. It wasn't like Ianto had never held his hand before (they *had* been together for quite a few months already) but he had been alone for so long, he sometimes couldn't tell he needed touch until he got it — until Ianto's fingers brushed against his while handing him a report, or until the man saw him hunched over his desk and massaged the tension away from his shoulders, or even until he softly cradled Juette's face in both of his hands before leaning in for a kiss. Right now, Ianto's hand on his was the only thing he could think about.

"Juette?"
The sound of his name brought him out of his thoughts. "Sorry, I was somewhere else."
- "No worries."
Even without seeing it, he had no trouble imagining the polite smile on Ianto's face.
"See that line here?" Ianto pointed at the joint near the tip. "That's about how deep you want it to be."
- "Okay."

- "When you turn the steam on," Ianto waited for Juette to turn up the dial to the max before continuing, "you want to lower the jug so that only the very tip of the wand is still in the milk. Do you hear that noise?"
Juette nodded, listening to the slurping sound the steaming was making.
"That's the sound of air bubbles being blown into the liquid." He took Juette's hand then, placing it on the side of the jug with his on top. "Keep your hand there, it'll help you keep track of the temperature."

Ianto's hands were warm. The pitcher was steadily growing warmer under Juette's fingers, but he couldn't focus on anything but the warmth of Ianto's hands seeping through his, almost radiating through his entire body.

"Blowing air into the milk is what gives it its volume," Ianto kept on explaining, seemingly unaware of his effect on Juette. "When you have the volume you want, you can raise the jug back up to the line I showed you." He stepped closer then, his chest against Juette's back now. He guided his partner's hands, raising the jug just as he'd said.
Juette tried to focus on Ianto's deep, soothing voice to understand his instructions, but it was proving more and more difficult.
"The churning movement breaks up the air bubbles into smaller ones," he continued. "When the jug becomes too hot to hold, count two or three seconds before turning the steam off."
- "Okay," Juette nodded slowly.

It wasn't long before the liquid reached the target temperature. Juette turned the machine off then and set the foamed milk aside.
"Before you do anything else," said Ianto, stepping away from his partner, "you have to clean the steam wand."
- "Yes," Juette replied. He cleaned it as best as he could, somewhat disappointed that Ianto was so far away from him now. He felt the aching need for closeness in his chest: he almost wanted to turn back and drag Ianto to him, but— it was almost embarrassing to admit how much he wanted this, so he kept quiet.

"Letting the milk sit still for a bit weakens the biggest bubbles, so they pop more easily when you gently tap the jug against the counter." Ianto tapped the pitcher himself instead of waiting for Juette to do it. "The final set is simply to swirl the milk and foam together until it looks glossy. This way the foam won't stay floating inside the jug when you pour it into your cup."
Juette took the jar, his fingers brushing against Ianto for an unbearably short instant, and he mixed the milk and foam together until Ianto indicated it was enough.
"And there we have it!" said Ianto. "Do you understand better, now?"
- "Maybe," said Juette, wiping his sweaty hands on his shirt. "I'll see how much of it I'll remember next time."
- "I could always show you the process again, if you want."
Juette clenched his fists at the thought of him and Ianto doing this together again. "Yes, I'd like that," was all he said.
Ianto smiled softly and went back to his seat.

Juette stood there for a moment, unsure of what to do with the feelings that had awoken inside of him. He always wondered whether Ianto felt the same way, whether he, too, craved

touch like air. Perhaps he would never know — he’d never been the best at reading other people’s emotions, and Ianto had a certain talent for appearing unaffected in any situation.

Juette tentatively reached over the counter to hold Ianto's hand. It wasn't much, not compared to the dizzying endlessness of *everything he wanted*, but it was a start.

Ianto met his eyes, and another smile made its way to his face as he laced his fingers with his lover's.

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