

= Meat (Torchwood) =

" Meat " is the fourth episode of the second series of British science fiction television series Torchwood , which was first broadcast by BBC Two on 6 February 2008 . It was written by Catherine Tregenna , who had previously written episodes for the first series of the show , directed by Colin Teague and produced by Richard Stokes and Chris Chibnall . The episode featured the five initial series regulars John Barrowman , Eve Myles , Burn Gorman , Naoko Mori and Gareth David Lloyd plus recurring actor Kai Owen in a central role .

Torchwood initially depicts a small team of alien @-@ hunters known as Torchwood Three , based in the Welsh city of Cardiff . In the premiere episode of the first series Gwen Cooper (Eve Myles) is introduced as a newcomer to the organisation who keeps her job secret from boyfriend Rhys Williams (Kai Owen) . The episode " Meat " depicts the two aspects of Gwen 's double life coming into conflict as Rhys finds himself caught up in Torchwood 's investigation into a corrupt meat trade stemming from human exploitation of a stranded benevolent alien . Rhys helps Torchwood in their attempts to apprehend the human villains of the episode and his bravery makes Gwen realise that she should no longer keep secrets from him .

The episode was filmed in and around Cardiff between June and July 2007 as part of the second production block of the series . The production team used the episode to expand Rhys ' role in the series , due to their appreciation of actor Kai Owen 's performances in the first series and the contention of executive producer Russell T Davies that the character should be seen as less of a " sap " in the second series . The alien " space whale " seen in the episode was created using computer @-@ generated imagery , with the exception of a cut section wound where the humans had been carving meat from . Tregenna characterised the monster as resembling " a giant kebab " . A more elaborate design was previously considered , but both Tregenna and Davies felt that this would detract from the alien 's suitability to the plot .

According to consolidated figures the episode was watched by 3 @.@ 28 million viewers on its BBC two debut , aggregated to 4 @.@ 74 million viewers after taking into consideration two repeat broadcasts the same week . Reviews of the episode ranged from mostly negative to very positive . Most commentators praised the larger role of Rhys in the episode , the performance of actor Kai Owen and the realism of the acting and dialogue overall . However , a large proportion of reviewers criticised the special effects used to create the alien and it was subsequently compared by some to resembling a sock puppet or hand puppet . Whilst some reviewers identified with the plight of the alien , others felt that its poor realisation meant that it was hard to feel any sympathy for it .

= = Plot = =

= = = Background = = =

The central premise of the first two series of Torchwood is focused on a team of alien investigators known as Torchwood Three tracking down alien life which arrives in Cardiff via a space @-@ time rift located in the city . Gwen Cooper (Eve Myles) , a South Wales Police officer , is recruited into the organisation by its leader , Jack Harkness (John Barrowman) , in the premiere episode but due to the pressures of her work keeps it a secret from her boyfriend , trucking manager , Rhys (Kai Owen) . He believes reports of alien sightings to be a result of hallucinations induced by psychotropic drugs in the water supply and Gwen 's job to be working in " special ops " . By the second series Gwen is the second in command of Torchwood Three and now engaged to Rhys , who still remains in the dark regarding her vocation .

= = = Events = = =

Rhys is out driving when he is telephoned by his secretary Ruth (Patti Clare) , who informs him that one of their firm 's lorry drivers has crashed . At the crash Rhys discovers that one of his

employees and friends has died whilst transporting meat to an abattoir . As he contemplates moving the lorry , a police officer (Colin Baxter) tells him that there is something suspicious in the back and that Torchwood want to investigate . The secret alien response team appears on the scene and Rhys spots his fiancée Gwen amongst them . The Torchwood team confiscate the meat that the lorry was transporting , due to suspicions that it originates from an alien . Gwen recognises the lorry as one from Harwood 's ? Rhys ' firm . Back at their base of operations , known as the Hub , the team briefly consider that Rhys may be involved with the alien meat . Toshiko Sato (Naoko Mori) rings Rhys ' office for information , pretending to be the police . Meanwhile , analysing a sample of the meat , Torchwood 's resident medic Owen Harper (Burn Gorman) conjectures that it is being used for human consumption . Rhys texts Gwen asking for her to come home . He attempts to get her to confess to being at the crash site by questioning her on the police response to the lorry crash , but she is evasive .

After following Gwen from home , Rhys sees her meeting up with her boss Jack Harkness near the invisible lift in Roald Dahl Plass and follows them to a warehouse on the outskirts of Cardiff . While there he is captured by a group of men (Garry Lake , Gerard Carey and Matt Ryan) and subsequently taken inside the warehouse . Jack and Gwen see this and mistake his actions for collaboration . When questioned by his captors Rhys informs them of his colleagues death and in an act of self @-@ preservation claims to have destroyed the meat sample and offers to assume his colleagues job in trafficking the alien meat . The men subsequently show Rhys that they have captured a live " space whale " (nicknamed the " cash cow " by its captors) which is the source of the meat and which continues to grow despite them cutting chunks of its flesh away while it is still alive . Back at their flat , Rhys and Gwen argue over his presence at the warehouse and her presence at the lorry crash . Rhys suspects Gwen of infidelity with Jack . After their argument escalates , she is forced to confess that she catches aliens for a living . Rhys is initially disbelieving , and demands that she proves it . In response she takes him to the Hub . After recounting his findings and discussing the situation , Rhys agrees to help Torchwood investigate the warehouse .

As Rhys is expected by the alien 's captors , the team hides in his van as he drives them to the factory where the team sneaks in . They locate the creature and plan to stun the men and sedate it so they can move it back to the Hub until the Cardiff space @-@ time Rift reopens so they can send it back . They confirm that the creature is sentient , and experience empathy over its plight . The presence of Torchwood is discovered , Rhys is handcuffed by the three men . During the ensuing confrontation Rhys breaks free and takes a bullet for Gwen . Torchwood are able to stun the men and feed them amnesia pills . The creature becomes distressed and Owen can see no other option but to reluctantly euthanise it as it poses a threat to them by struggling . Back at the Hub , Owen patches up Rhys ' wound and Jack orders Gwen to give Rhys a pill too . After realising that Rhys is willing to support her life with Torchwood and that she enjoys being honest with him , Gwen cannot bring herself to do so . Jack relents , disappointed about this but unwilling to fire Gwen and face losing her from the team .

= = Production = =

" Meat " was made alongside " Sleeper " , the second episode of the series which was also directed by Teague , as part of block two of production which ran from 3 June to 5 July 2007 . It originally had the working title " Another Working Day " . In discussing the origins of the central alien writer Catherine Tregenna states that " we were just throwing ideas around and true to form Russell [T Davies] said " why isn 't it just a great big whale in a warehouse ? " " Davies states the alien was designed to be " one of Torchwood and Doctor Who 's biggest monsters " not in terms of concept but its " literal size " . He felt this provided insight into " the strangeness of life " . Producer Richard Stokes states that the concept design team created an idea of what they envisaged the whale to look like . Tregenna felt that the original design for the creature was " a little fanciful " in that it was a bit too " beautiful and exotic " before deciding " if it looked like that they [the villains] would exhibit it , it would be a freak show . " She characterises the final design as resembling " a giant kebab " . Contrary to observations from commentators , Tregenna did not intend the story to promote

vegetarianism as she is not a vegetarian ? she simply wanted to write an episode that was more action based than her series one episodes (" Out of Time " and " Captain Jack Harkness ") . The hypothetical size of the space whale resulted in Teague having to find this " huge great warehouse " and hire a fifty @-@ foot crane for camera angles . Whilst the main body of the alien was created using computer @-@ generated imagery a prosthetic version of the cut wound in the side of the alien was available for the actors to interact with on set . Actor Eve Myles describes it as being like filming within a " blood soaked , soppy big sponge " . The opening of the creature 's eye was created using green screen . Owen felt having to react to this to be the most unusual acting experience he 'd had whilst filming Torchwood .

In regards to the relationship between Gwen and Rhys , Davies felt that the episode provided a " rite of passage for the couple " . Director Colin Teague remarked that the character of Rhys " puts up with a lot from his wife to be . " The production team had previously planned to kill the character off at the end of the previous series but retained the character , partly because they liked Owen as an actor . In storylining the second series Davies states that " one of the first decisions we made was that we can 't make this guy look like a sap any longer . He 's got to be made aware of what 's going on . " Tregenna identified one of the central themes of the episode as the " love triangle between Gwen , Rhys and Jack " . The argument in which Gwen ultimately reveals to Rhys that she catches aliens for a living was partly improvised by Owen and Myles . The denouement of the episode sees the character of Rhys take a bullet to protect Gwen . To create this scene Owen 's clothing was fitted with a minor explosive , the gunshot effect " [nipped] a bit " which both Teague and Owen felt helped with the timing of the actor 's reaction . Location filming for the episode took place around Roald Dahl Plass on 3 July for several scenes , including the final scene with Gwen and Rhys on Mermaid Quay , and the earlier scene where Rhys observes Jack and Gwen by the water fountain . A warehouse near Roath Dock , Cardiff Bay was used as the location for the abandoned warehouse @-@ meat processing plant , whilst the Imperial Park Bypass was used for some of the road scenes . During the episode Gwen asks " What is this , Scooby @-@ Doo ? " in regards to Rhys ' suggestion the team hide in his van in order to carry out a sting operation . Torchwood Magazine suggest that this was a knowing reference from Tregenna to the critic and satirist Charlie Brooker 's reaction to the first series of the show .

= = Broadcast = =

On overnight returns , The Guardian reported that the episode had an 11 % audience share and 2 @.@ 9 million viewers for its first BBC Two broadcast at 9pm on 6 February . According to consolidated figures released by the Broadcasters ' Audience Research Board the episode 's first broadcast had an estimated total audience of 3 @.@ 28 million viewers . The episode had an audience appreciation index of 85 , regarded as excellent . A late night repeat of the episode aired on BBC sister channel BBC Three the same night at 11pm and a further pre @-@ watershed repeat , edited to be child friendly , of the episode aired the next day , 7 February , at 7pm . Stephen James Walker , a writer of reference works on Doctor Who and its spin @-@ offs , noted that " Meat " " was one of the more heavily edited episodes of the series for its pre @-@ watershed repeat " . Cut scenes included " some of the particularly gory scenes " and an exchange between Gwen and Jack which implied the latter performing oral sex on an alien . The dialogue in Gwen and Rhys ' big argument was also censored with two instances of the phrase " piss off ! " being removed , whilst Rhys ' line " you fucking him (Jack) , or what ? " was redubbed to the less profane " you seeing him , or what ? " . The edited repeat had an air time of 49m 33s , as opposed to the original episode 's air time of 50m 15s . Overnight ratings suggested that the pre @-@ watershed version of the episode was viewed by 1 @.@ 00 million viewers and had a 4 @.@ 9 % audience share . Final figures released by BARB indicated that the total viewing figures for the BBC3 repeat and the pre @-@ watershed BBC2 repeat were 0 @.@ 37 million viewers and 1 @.@ 09 million viewers respectively , giving the episode an aggregated total of 4 @.@ 74 million viewers across its three initial broadcasts .

A corresponding 10 @-@ minute episode of Torchwood Declassified , a behind the scenes

documentary on the production of the show , entitled " Save the Whale " was broadcast on BBC Two following the episode between 9.50pm and 10pm and featured contributions from Tregenna , Davies , Teague , Myles and Owen .

= = = Reception = = =

Previewing the episode as one of his TV choices for the day , The Guardian 's Gareth McClean stated that amongst " the snarling , shouting and awful , contrived sexual tension between Captain Pratt and the team , there 's an interesting idea here ? the consequences of leading a double life . " He described Gwen as " the moral centre of the show " and joked that her " nice @-@ but @-@ dim boyfriend " must be the last person in Cardiff not to know of Torchwood 's existence . He concluded by stating " that a giant telepathic alien manatee is involved should by no means discourage viewing . " The Daily Mirror 's Jane Simon also selected the episode as her single pick of the day , praising scenes where Rhys and Torchwood formulate their infiltration plan as containing " the kind of sharp , sarcastic banter that made Buffy such fun to watch " . However , she felt that it was a " shame they can 't keep it up for the entire episode . " Ben Rawson @-@ Jones of Digital Spy gave the episode four out of five stars , feeling it to be a " juicy treat to devour , combining heightened drama , genuine emotion and nice touches of humour . " He praised the decision to foreground the character of Rhys , the contrast he provided to the operations of the Torchwood team and the realism of the arguments between him and Gwen . He also felt that the episode 's " eco @-@ friendly plot " made it easy to sympathise with the alien space whale stating " the emotive howls of pain , big puppy @-@ dog eyes and heartfelt score all [combined] to test the tear ducts . " However , he criticised the human antagonists for being " two @-@ dimensional plot functions rather than humans " and pointed out the " moral black hole " of Torchwood continuing to buy meat products despite condemning the plight of the space whale . Richard Edwards of SFX magazine also gave the episode four stars , feeling it highlighted how the " series has evolved " in that " the in @-@ fighting and gratuitous swearing have been replaced with slick dialogue that sizzles with humour and drama ? not to mention a team that feels like a properly cohesive unit . " He also praised the increased role of Rhys and opined that the episode made the relationship between him and Gwen " the show 's most believable . " However , he felt that Jack , as the leader of a top secret organisation , should have pressed harder to have Rhys ' memory wiped .

Alan Stanley Blair of Airlock Alpha gave the episode a mixed review . He felt it was refreshing to have a story about aliens that weren 't invading and opined that " the brutal scenes at the abattoir and the whale @-@ like moans of agony from the beast tug on a few heartstrings . " However , he criticised the realisation of the alien describing it as " basically a giant , moaning turd sitting in the middle of a warehouse " and " a large lump of putty with eyes " . He felt that the episode gave Rhys " a chance to step into the spotlight for a change and prove he has what it takes to carry a story " and felt his reaction to the existence of aliens to be " perhaps the most realistic that the genre has produced " . Despite this , he felt that Rhys finding out about Torchwood put an end to the " fun " of Gwen " keeping secrets and concealing her double life " and expressed disappointment that Jack didn 't wipe his memory at the end of the episode . Travis Fickett of IGN rated the episode 7 @. @ 6 on a one to ten scale and felt it provided a " messy , odd and somewhat unsettling twist on alien encounters " but felt the episode had several weak points . He felt it was hard not to see Rhys as " a buffoon " and questioned why Torchwood would use a civilian during a sting operation . He also felt that it pushed " beyond the limits of its capacity to create convincing special effects " and the creature itself looked like " a hand puppet " . Andrew Mickel of Den of Geek felt that Rhys has always been the " Welsh heart of the show " and praised his role in the episode for being " actually rather entertaining , approaching everything with invigorating gusto . " However he also criticised the denouement of the episode for being " daftly mawkish " and opined that " it ? s always impossible to care about CGI characters " .

Jason Hughes of AOL TV felt the creature to look like a " sock puppet when it was loose and flailing about angrily " and felt this to be " almost like a nod to old Doctor Who , which had awesomely awful special effects at times " . He also felt that Rhys becoming aware of Torchwood " adds a new and

interesting dynamic to the show . " Stephen Frank , writing for the gay and bisexual male entertainment site AfterElton indicated that he was " all in favour " of getting " to know our favorite Cardiff cuckold [Rhys] a little bit better " . Though critical of Gwen 's characterisation in previous episodes , he praised her defense of Rhys ' memories at the end of the episode as her " finest moment on this show " and stated that it " helps rehabilitate her " . He stated overall that " Meat " had " performed something of a minor miracle in the way it ? s made me reassess my views of both Gwen and Rhys and their relationship . " Alasdair Stewart of Firefox News felt that Tregenna had written some of the strongest episodes of the series in the past and stated the episode " should be one of the highlights of the series " but " instead , it 's a mess " . He criticised the plausibility of the villains , the poor special effects of the alien and the incompetency of the Torchwood team , describing the episode as containing a " total lack of consistency " and " a total lack of basic understanding of what Torchwood are supposed to be capable of " . He felt Kai Owen provided " a bright spot in the episode " describing him as " clearly a powerhouse of an actor " and opining that " the scenes where he uncorks on first Eve Myles and then John Barrowman " also brought out " the best in both actors " . Conversely , io9 's Charlie Jane Anders felt the alien half of the episode to be " one of the best examples of a humans @-@ are @-@ the @-@ real @-@ monsters story ever " but felt that " the other half of the episode was Torchwood at its rock @-@ bottom worst " . She criticised the argument scenes stating : " I was having psychic chunks carved off me by a man in a yellow helmet , every time Gwen screamed at Rhys or Jack " and felt overall that the episode contained " too much screaming " . She enjoyed the innuendos made by Jack , but criticised the scene where Gwen stared " psycho @-@ killerishly " at him whilst kissing Rhys .

John Beresford of TV Scoop felt that " Meat " finally provided " a story that was well conceived , realised and paced " opining that at last " Torchwood came of age " and that it was " easily the best Torchwood story so far . " He did have some problems such as " really pathetic alien , the odd off @-@ colour innuendo about alien " meat " and the lazy convenience of the amnesia pills " but felt that these were relatively minor . The strongest points of the episode for him were the acting which he felt to be " uniformly better than usual and on occasion almost incandescent " and the dialogue which was " so natural it didn ? t actually sound like " dialogue " at all " . Stephen James Walker , in his own analysis of the episode , gave a mostly favourable review . He criticised the alien space whale as the " one less @-@ than @-@ wonderful " aspect of the episode but praised the opening sequence and the use of the " bleak industrial setting " by director Colin Teague . He felt that the expanded role of Rhys was one of the most pleasing aspects of the scripts and praised the humorous interactions that constituted " male bonding " between him and Jack . He singled out a scene where Gwen turns " a gesture of affection " toward Rhys " into a teasing come @-@ on " to Jack by making eye @-@ contact with the latter whilst kissing the former as characteristic of the " moral ambiguity " which makes her " such a great character " . He also felt that whilst they did not have much to do , Tosh , Owen and Ianto had some good scenes which further demonstrated " Tregenna 's adeptness at handling the show 's regular characters " .