

Spoilers: 100 Days (obviously), The Broca Divide, There But for the Grace of God

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Warnings: I'm not of the school of thought that has Junior missing out on the fun. So, if you can't deal with the snake, this story is *not* for you. A squick warning for slash people - the Sam/Jack romance does rear its ugly head in here. There's a reason for it, really!

Disclaimer: I do not own these lovely characters. I just borrow them from very nice people who let me play with them every once in a while. I promise I'll try to put them back together when I'm finished. Don't worry about that; stain remover will get rid of it in a flash...

Feedback: Please, please, please

Archiving: Fire and Ice, Penemuel's Nest, Area 52, anyone else just ask first.

Summary: Jack's trapped on Edora. Sam's trapped in her lab. What are Daniel and Teal'c doing?

Author's Note: This actually started off as a lone story, but it fell over into a series of stories that began with a very strange dream.

## **The Other 100 Days**

by Leviathan

The mission did not start auspiciously. As we waited for the 7th chevron to lock into place, I noticed Colonel O'Neill eyeing Daniel Jackson. Our young friend would not meet his gaze. He pretended to be busy rechecking his gear, but he fooled none of us. Something was amiss and the Colonel knew what it was. However, I had seen that look on his face before - he would tell us nothing unless it had a bearing on the mission. Major Carter had noticed the expressions as well; however, from her lack of curiosity, I assumed she knew what had occurred.

It was not an unusual occurrence for me to be "out of the loop", as they called it. Unlike the rest of my team, I lived at the SGC compound. For security reasons, I never left the base unless in the company of one of the team and usually, to places with which they were very familiar. Though I have lived on this world for 3 years now, it still contains dangers and troubles of which I have no concept. I watch the news whenever I can, but it leaves me confused. Its images seem to be of nothing other than conniving people who seek to gain power by unscrupulous means or violence, the like of which I had never seen outside a battlefield. My friends tell me that the whole world isn't like this, but it is difficult to ignore these messages.

We passed through the Chappa'ai into a sunlit field. The day was warm, heavy with summer's end. I smelled smoke in the distance and that was the way we travelled. After a few miles, a small village appeared. The Colonel's eyes lit up with some kind of recognition.

"Looks a lot like old Ireland," Major Carter said, when we reached the outskirts of the village.

"That it does," the Colonel said in a strange voice. I judged by Major Carter's wince that he was attempting something humorous that was not working.

At the sound of our voices, a young child's head popped out of a window. She stared at us for a few seconds then yelled for her mother. With a sharp rebuke of "Cammie, keep your voice down!", a matronly woman came from the back of the house to see what her daughter was

upset about. She faced us with a great deal of surprise, but no fear. She also did not appear to understand the sign of Apophis I wore on my forehead. After frankly staring at us for a few minutes, she cried, "Forgive my manners, travelers. I have not seen any new faces in so long! Come, I'll bring you to Laira."

As we proceeded into the hamlet, more people stopped their chores and looked at us. Like the woman leading us, they were not fearful, only surprised. I could only believe that they had never met the Goa'uld and that they had been left alone in this place. Their clothes spoke of a practical, hard-working people. No bright colors, except as small details on their earth-colored vests and shirts. All were shod, so there was some kind of leather craft here as well as textiles. They were lean from a life of labor, but definitely not starving. There were many children around and elders as well which indicated a long-established community. We were led to a house near the middle of the establishment and asked to wait.

A very pleasant-looking woman stepped out of the house. She walked straight up to Colonel O'Neill and held out a hand. "Fair day and be well. I'm Laira. You're the leader of this group?"

O'Neill grinned very widely and said, "Yes, ma'am."

She looked at our clothes and frowned. "I have never seen the like. Did you come through the stone ring?"

"That we did." I found it rather confusing that Colonel O'Neill took over the conversation. Usually, he left it to Daniel Jackson to speak to the various inhabitants of other worlds. However, I could see that O'Neill was rather taken with this woman. "My name is Jack. We come from a planet called Earth."

"You named your home after the ground?" she smiled. "And your people are 'clods'?"

The Colonel laughed loudly. "Just some of us." He glanced towards Daniel Jackson, who refused to meet his gaze. The young archeologist seemed extremely uncomfortable now. O'Neill introduced us, but it was quite obvious that both he and the young woman were interested only in each other.

"You came at a wonderful time. Our yearly fire rain will start soon. It promises to be spectacular this year. Please stay and watch. We have plenty of food - it's been a very bountiful summer - and entertainment."

In these cases, O'Neill usually will apologize, saying we cannot stay and Daniel Jackson will plead that we need to stay to get a "true feel for the culture" as he often says. This time, O'Neill accepted without hesitation. Daniel Jackson said nothing.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in pleasant conversation. We were introduced to the village. Although some of the people were wary of strangers, only one person, Paynan, was hostile. However, he accepted Laira's role as village leader, so he only grumbled. He made no trouble. Daniel Jackson spent much of his time in the company of the older men and women, discussing their history, their culture. Major Carter began her various scientific tests and collections, being followed by a crowd of very curious girls. They constantly asked her questions. She happily answered all of them. It was unusual for Major Carter to have an audience that was so eager to learn. Most of her scientific knowledge she shares sparingly at briefings and with great enthusiasm to Daniel Jackson. He does not completely understand her field, but, as a fellow scientist, he understands her zeal for knowledge. Science is not a field that Jaffa are expected to understand. We fight, we die, we serve the god and that is all we know. Major Carter is an enigma to me. She is a skillful warrior, and, yet, she carries a great deal of knowledge that would automatically place her as a scientist in my culture.

I spent most of my afternoon keeping watch over Daniel Jackson and Major Carter. O'Neill was nowhere to be seen as was Laira. When they appeared just before the evening meal, both of them were smiling and laughing. It was good to see O'Neill in such good spirits. However, Daniel Jackson did not appear happy with their relaxed appearance. He excused himself from Laira's company by stating that another couple had offered him their house and food and that it would be rude to refuse. O'Neill waved him goodbye and we did not see him again that night.

In the morning, Daniel Jackson was up early and attempting to apologize for some aspect of his behavior that I did not understand. However, the Colonel let him only get out "About last night, Jack..." before he said that he didn't need to hear anymore. Once again, he and Laira left the village to go for a long walk. Daniel Jackson turned to Major Carter who shrugged. Both of them continued Major Carter's work. Now that we were no longer new, the villagers left us alone for the day, concentrating on their own tasks. My own occupation was much as it had been the day before; however, made much easier by the fact that they were working together.

At first they worked silently and some distance apart. However, as I have noticed that most humans do, they drifted together. She turned to him quietly and said, "You told him, didn't you?"

"What are you talking about?" he said. He jammed his thumb against the trowel, cursing around the digit as he sucked on it. Major Carter pulled on the hand and looked at the digit.

"It's not broken, not even bleeding. Daniel, you know what I'm talking about. It's not like we haven't discussed it before."

He sat down heavily in the dirt. "Yeah, I told him. The whole thing with Urgo...he knew something was fishy about the way I was reacting to our being so 'in tune'" - he made a gesture with his fingers that I have seen often - "with each other. He called me on the carpet for it. I couldn't lie to him, though now I'm wishing I had. I feel like he's throwing Laira at me to make sure I get the hint."

"What did he say after you told him?"

"The only thing he *said* was, 'I don't swing that way, Jackson', but he was pretty pissed. Like he felt I'd betrayed him or something. I'm not worried that he'll throw me off the team or anything, but I think he really doesn't trust me not to do something."

She lay an arm around his shoulders, trying to comfort him. "Give him time, Daniel. He's just surprised. I'm sure once he sees that you aren't being any wierder than usual, he'll calm down again."

"What do you mean 'wierder than usual'?" The rest of the conversation degenerated into one of the vocal squabbles that I have learned to ignore. The Tau'ri are a strange race...

When O'Neill returned later, Daniel Jackson was much more relaxed and much more like himself. O'Neill didn't seem to notice, he still had all of his attention focused on Laira. Normally he is a taciturn man, but he must have found something in Laira that he felt completely at ease with her. From the brief moments I spent in her company, I found her to be very friendly. In many ways, though, she reminded me of O'Neill. She cares very deeply for her people and has had to carry the burden of leadership on top of her loss of her husband. They have much in common.

That evening, Daniel Jackson ate dinner with us, discussing the phenomena we were here to witness. He spoke much of portents and curses that people saw in astronomical displays. Neither Laira nor O'Neill heard him. But this was not unusual. I have felt many times that only Major Carter and I ever listen to him.

The next few days were pleasantly spent. Major Carter had discovered that the soil contained substantial amounts of naquada, the material the Gou'ald had kidnapped humans from Earth to mine. With this much naquada, the absence of the Gou'ald became even more puzzling. However, I was glad for these people that they had not had to suffer from the Goa'uld. Their inherent gentleness was a refreshing change from the hostility of others who had had to deal with the false gods.

The current plan of action O'Neill outlined involved our creating a treaty with these people. Earth technology for their naquada. All of the people seemed genuinely puzzled that we would want a mineral in their soil in exchange for technology they easily saw was superior to theirs. The fact that we had come peacefully and respectfully eased some of their concerns. Paynan continued to be untrusting, swaying a few opinions to his viewpoint, but they were by far the minority.

Every day, O'Neill and Laira disappeared early in the morning. I never heard any of their discussions, but the happiness on both of their faces when they returned in the late afternoon

pleased me. I felt that O'Neill had been too long without a companion. Laura seemed to feel the same loneliness he did. Daniel Jackson had closed off his own pain at seeing them together and actively joined with Major Carter in trying to encourage a relationship. He would cheerfully wave them off in the morning and take her son, Garan, with him on his own expeditions. It was during one of these expeditions that he found the caves that would become so important later.

On our 4th night after dinner, Laura pulled a few woolen blankets for us to sit on. She took us to a high ridge overlooking the lake near the village. The stars and moons sparkled in the sky and the still water, tranquil and comfortable. I have spent many hours in places such as this in my lifetime - places like this create a perfect spot for Kel-no-reem. I felt myself automatically slipping into that state.

"So, Laura, when's the big show start?" O'Neill's voice drew me out of my contemplation. They gave each other fond glances before looking back up at the sky.

"Soon. Be patient."

"Oh, I'm patient," he said. "I'm nothing if not patient. When's it start?"

Laura shook her head and looked at the rest of us who sat to her right. "Is he *always* like this?"

"Quite frequently," I informed her.

"Thank you, Teal'c," he said sarcastically, his gaze turning from her to the lake before us.

"Laura, we haven't seen anything you could call 'fire rain' these past few nights. How come you're sure it's going to fall tonight?" Daniel asked her.

"It begins this night each year." Now I understood why she had brought us up here this night. The other nights we have waited, we stood on the bridge near the village. Perhaps she believed that it would start earlier this year if it was going to be so spectacular.

Major Carter frowned. "Whoa. The same night every year? That doesn't make sense. I mean, unless the planet's orbit travels through a debris field like an asteroid belt, in which case..."

O'Neill glared at her, interrupting her. "*Please*. Don't suck the fun out of this."

"Sorry, sir."

"When I was a child," Laura murmured wistfully, "my father told me that the fire rain was the tears of our ancestors, longing to be reunited." O'Neill's gaze returned to her, a smile softening his expression.

Our gazes were drawn to the sky as an arc of fire finally made its appearance.

"A falling star," Daniel Jackson said. "That's...uh...that's what we call 'fire rain' where we come from. In our culture you're supposed to make a wish."

"On Chulak, we call it 'Tal pat ryn'."

"Which means...uh...'falling star'." Major Carter smiled at Daniel Jackson's stammer.

"What do you think, Jack?" Laira smiled at him. "Was it worth the effort?"

"Oh yeah," he sighed. "I'm a huge fan of fireworks."

The sky suddenly lit with many more falling stars, truly a wonderous sight. Suddenly a very large piece of debris passed overhead. O'Neill exclaimed "Whoa!" as Daniel Jackson leapt to his feet in alarm. Major Carter eyed the spectacular night sky with concern.

"Carter, how close was that?"

"Close, sir."

"How big?" Daniel Jackson's fear began to manifest on his face.

"Big."

"Thought so," he muttered, watching the display.

"I was...rather concerned for minute there, sir," Major Carter directed at O'Neil. His face still reflected distress. Laira, watched all of our faces, unable to ignore the fear in Daniel Jackson's eyes or the worry manifested in the rest of our expressions. All of us were far more familiar with celestial phenomena than her people.

"I don't understand," she admitted.

"Laira, that's what we call a 'near miss'." Major Carter had taken the same type of lecturing tone that she had used with the curious girls a few days ago. "If that meteor had struck the ground, instead of bouncing off of the atmosphere, then..."

"*This* is an annual event?" O'Neill asked Laira.

"Yes, though it grows more spectacular every year. By tomorrow evening, the entire sky..." Her eyes were drawn to Daniel's fear, then Major Carter's concern. "What's wrong?"

"I'll make some more observations tonight, sir," Major Carter said quietly.

"I'm going to check the...uh...geological record in the morning," Daniel Jackson said.

"I'll...make a wish," O'Neill attempted to be flippant, even though his body language spoke of his nervousness.

We all watched the meteor shower increase in activity. Then with great alacrity, Daniel Jackson and Major Carter fled our vantage point. Both of them checked instruments, checked the planet itself, called SGC and obtained even more data. Everything they researched led them to believe that we were all in great danger. Fortunately, we were able to convince a number of the villagers to take refuge on Earth until the danger passed. As Daniel Jackson arranged for their temporary quartering on Earth, Major Carter and I moved the refugees through the Chappa'ai as quickly as we could. The ones who refused to leave, we attempted to convince to do the same, but they would not be swayed.

During the exodus, Laira noticed her son missing. Taking O'Neill with her, they ran for the caves Daniel Jackson and I had been in only hours before. Major Carter and I waited at the Chappa'ai for him, but a meteor bore down on our position. We leapt through the event horizon just before it struck.

Then we waited.

The day after our return from Edora, we realized there was a problem with the other Chappa'ai. Although we could engage the last chevron of the address, nothing could be sent. Major Carter deduced that the gate had been buried with molten naquada serving as an iris to prevent our traveling through it. To unearth it, she would need a particle beam generator similar to that used by Sokar to attempt to destroy the iris the humans placed over their Chappa'ai. Since one was not available to the Tau'ri, Major Carter would first need to build it. This entailed that she spend many hours in the laboratory surrounded with other physicists. Neither Daniel Jackson nor I would be of any help to her.

After he spoke to our allies to arrange for transport for O'Neill, Daniel Jackson began to "bury himself in work" as O'Neill called it. For the next 10 days I did not see him. No one saw him. I finally went directly to his office, to find him exactly as I had thought he would be. He was at the table, translating some work that he had been given. I noticed that the box he had labelled as "Out" had many files in it. Since he was shaven and clean, he obviously had taken some time to at least maintain his outer self, but I knew from past experience that he would have eaten and slept little. He did not even look up from the text before him.

Usually O'Neill would be the one to take him away from his work. But O'Neill was not here and I knew that Daniel Jackson needed rest. I realized that until the Colonel returned, I would have to be the one to make sure that Daniel Jackson took care of himself.

Knowing that it would be useless to argue with him, I went to the General. The General has an "open door policy" for me. I understood this to mean that if he was not in the middle of a crisis or something important, that I could speak to him. I knocked on his door as per Tau'ri custom and entered when he gave me permission.

"General Hammond, I request that I be allowed leave to take Daniel Jackson home."

He shook his head. "I take it that Dr. Jackson has been nose to the grindstone all this time?"

"I know of no grinding stone that Dr. Jackson's nose has been resting upon, but he has been working for the last 10 days," I told him.

"Well, Major Carter's been pretty much the same, since you came back from Edora."

"Major Carter is sensible. She understands the need for rest and nourishment. Daniel Jackson does not."

"Well, son, I think you have something there. Yes, you can take Dr. Jackson home and, yes, you can tell him that I told you to."

That ability to predict how his people will react is one of the many things that makes General Hammond a great leader. "Thank you, General." I bowed slightly to him, as is the custom of my people when acknowledging an order.

Daniel Jackson, at first, refused to go. I made him call the General, who would not hear any of his excuses. The corridors of the SGC are lit with very strong artificial light, so it was not until we had reached the surface and I saw the true light of the sun on his face that I realized how pale he appeared. Although I was certain that he still wanted to argue the merits of going home, seeing his face convinced me that I had done the right thing. I drove.

When SG1 has time off we usually meet at O'Neill's house. Both Major Carter and Daniel Jackson have apartments which are much smaller than the group of us are comfortable with. I have lived in the very cramped quarters of a ship, but I have noticed that I have grown very accustomed to the amount of personal space we afford each other. Daniel Jackson told me once that Americans insist on more personal space than most other cultures on Earth. Daniel Jackson's apartment looked very much like it did the last time I was here. It was always chaotic - books, papers, computer disks, artifacts, magazines all over every surface that can hold them, including the floor. He understands it. If I were to ask him for any particular document or article,

he would immediately know from where to retrieve it. He cleared off a chair for me, setting the contents on top of another pile. He offered me refreshment. I requested tea.

When he returned with the cup, I asked him one of the questions that had been burning in my mind since we returned from Edora, "Do you think we will be able to retrieve O'Neill before the Tok'ra arrive at Edora?"

"Yeah, I think Sam'll save the day. She's bound and determined to." I could sense, though, that something else was on his mind as well and gestured for him to finish his thought thread (I do not see these threads, but O'Neill refers to them). "The question is whether or not he'll *want* to come back."

"Because he was upset with you?"

His expression became a little guarded, but he always answers any question I pose unless O'Neill stops him. "In part, maybe, but a very small part. Actually, I understand what's going on with him there. Remember, I was on Abydos for a year myself. I mean, he's got everything there. A beautiful woman he's interested in, a kid he could be father to and a simple life. The 20th century may have seen a lot of progress, but we've paid for it. Jack's life has been too complicated until now. He's already tried to retire twice. He's gotta be aching to just live, rather than have to put up with all the shit that's going on in his life."

"But he is honor-bound to do his duty."

"Yeah, but he can't do his duty while he's there. All he has to do is live."

"You understand this about him, then why do you not tell Major Carter to stop her work?"

He sighed and slumped further into his couch. "Because he has the right to make a choice. It's not fair to him as a person to just strand him there if we can make the means available to get home. I mean, maybe he'll go crazy in a couple of days because he's not running into life and death situations. Personally, that's not what I see, but I could be wrong. It's only right that we should let him make his choice."

"But you do not think he will return."

"To tell you the truth, Teal'c, I don't know." He became silent, staring at the floor littered with books.

Major Carter is an enigma to me, but Daniel Jackson is a mystery. He has the urges of any man, but he refuses them to pursue knowledge. He wants the uncomplicated life of Abydos, but he can't leave the excitement of discovery. He is, in many ways, a child who wants too much

and hurts himself reaching for everything, including the things he cannot have. His pursuit of knowledge leaves him always hungry for more, always reaching further into danger. I do not understand him. Unlike the priests and scribes of Apophis's court, he pursues knowledge just to obtain more knowledge. He doesn't need to use it or gain position from it to be satisfied. I wondered now if Sha're understood that he held her 2nd in his heart. His first love is knowledge and no one will change that.

Not even Sha're, if she were still alive.

I came to this group with contempt for those engaged in the pursuit of knowledge. I saw them only as instruments to be used to gain vital information - all weak-willed and unable to stand up to any Jaffa. He is not like any other man I've met. Wise and foolish, weak and strong. Though O'Neill has taken more physical punishment than any of us, Daniel Jackson has had to deal with far more pain than any one person should ever bear. Yet, he continues. His will is far more enduring than the naquada of the Chappa'ai and yet he yields that will when it will help others. Only the hardest of hearts here does not have a special place for him. I have seen him gentle savages who know no law except survival and have seen him unflinchingly defend us from our mutual enemies.

I was not surprised that I was attracted to him.

I was surprised that O'Neill was not. He, of all of us, had been given a heart that ached to be held in gentle trust. Now, however, I understood that he had rejected it in no uncertain terms, but Daniel Jackson did not castigate him for his rejection. As was his wont, he had turned all of his anger onto himself. I ached to hold him, but I was unsure of how he would react. Knowing now as I did that he would welcome the approach of another man, I could not be certain that he would ever want me. I had taken his wife from him twice. He had forgiven me of these trespasses, but I could not forgive myself.

"I'm sorry, Teal'c," he suddenly said. "I'm being such a poor host. Do you want anything else? We could order some dinner or go to the grocery store." He knew I liked the grocery store. I decided it would probably do both of us better to be out in public. We could push aside our thoughts and enjoy a little activity.

The grocery store, like Daniel's apartment, was chaotic. People and smells crowded my senses until I acclimated to them. Immediately I went to the produce section. The vegetables and fruits always interested me. So many! Chulak, though it, too, is a large planet, does not contain a very large population. All produce that is obtained is procured from nearby. Diversity is not encouraged. Here, just the peppers have many colors. All of my friends have encouraged me to try new things and, so far, I have not been disappointed. However, tonight I did not feel comfortable with anything new, so I went directly to the broccoli - there is a similar vegetable on Chulak.

I found him at the meat department, choosing 2 steaks for us. He smiled when he saw me. "Broccoli, Teal'c?" I placed the vegetable in the basket he held, then took the basket from him. "This is kinda wierd," he said, as he looked at another steak and put it back into the meat case, "usually I have to worry about feeding 4." I realized then that for the first time since I arrived on Earth, I was completely alone with Daniel Jackson. The only other times we had been alone, we had always been on the base. Any time we were in public, we would be going somewhere or meeting the rest of SG1 somewhere. He turned around and looked at me and I could see that the same thought had come to him.

We bought enough food for tomorrow's breakfast, then left the grocery. Dusk fell as we walked back to his apartment building. Upon our return, we started dinner. I cut the broccoli as the cook in the cafeteria showed me while Dr. Jackson prepared the steaks and rolls, all in companionable silence.

After dinner we fell into work-related conversation. Colonel O'Neill called this "talking shop" and forbade it every time we were over at his house. However, it wasn't until Daniel Jackson said the word "DHD" I realized that we had both slipped into Chular - another thing O'Neill did not like. He was correct in his belief that I should be as comfortable with the native language as possible, but I missed speaking without having to carefully choose my words. English is such a strange language. There are too many words that mean the same thing and yet do not. I do not know if I will ever be completely comfortable speaking it. In the middle of our discussion, the phone rang. Daniel Jackson picked it up. Whoever was on the other end must have been a surprise to him. It showed on his face.

"Yes, sir. Yes, I'll tell him. Thank you."

"General Hammond wishes us to return?" I queried. General Hammond is the only person that Daniel Jackson calls "sir". All others he calls by their names or ranks if he must.

"No, the opposite. He said we're off the next 3 days."

"He is aware of the fact that you need rest. I should depart so that you may sleep."

He frowned at me. "Please stay, Teal'c. I..." He stared at his hands, suddenly embarrassed. "I would like to talk to you. Tomorrow, if it's ok, I guess I'm more tired than I thought."

I could not refuse him. "You take the bed, Teal'c. This couch'll never be comfortable for you." I started to protest that I could not throw him out of his own bed, but he would not hear it. "I've only got 1 room and I've slept on this couch a *lot*, believe me. I won't have any problems sleeping out here."

He gave me all he could to make me comfortable. However, the best comfort was his bed,

which smelled of him. For the first time in so very long, I allowed myself a fantasy that did not include Drey'Auc. My relationship with my wife had become extremely complicated. I knew that she had our son's best interests at heart, but I was not entirely sure that I agreed with the methods she had employed to see to those interests. She had enslaved him to the old ways by insuring that he would receive the prim'ta in my absence, even though she knew how much I wanted him to live a free being. Then she annulled our marriage in favor of one that would bring her a better position. Again, she said she did it for our son's sake, but my heart would not completely forgive her for that transgression.

I did not, however, place the blame for our problems solely on her shoulders. I, too, have been less than faithful in my duties as a husband and father. As was customary with one in my position, Apophis chose our union. I had not even met her until the day we married. She came from a family well-valued on Chulak. Only my position as First Prime to Apophis made our union possible. With her came a valuable piece of property, slaves and all inheritance rights to her father's properties upon his death. For many years, she prided herself on being the wife of the First Prime. However, I do not think that she was prepared for all the years I would be absent from her and my child when we finally had enough time to see to his conception. Most others my age have many more children than I. But the needs of the "god" were more important than my home life. I did not blame her for seeking another to warm her bed. It was not as if I had never had other lovers even while I was married to her.

In the service to the god, we are expected to live a very harsh existence. However, it is understood that in times of extreme stress and emotion, sex can be a very satisfying release. To lay with one's battle companion is not considered shameful. I do not understand why the warriors of Earth in the modern world do not comprehend this. Drey'Auc understood this as any wife to a Jaffa would. The times that I have visited them in the Land of Light, she has wondered where I have found release and been appalled that I am not allowed it. Of course, I have pointed out to her that there are many more women on Earth than Chulak ever had. The gods do not smile upon the issuance of female children except to add to the population. All women are taken to the healers when they conceive. If the sex of the child is female and a need for Jaffa has been calculated, the gender will be changed. It is only in times of relative peace or great victories that female children are allowed to maintain their gender. Chulak has had little of either.

The heat of my body warmed the sheets, releasing more of his scent. I let myself indulge in the fantasy further, rubbing my member against the mattress, revelling in the heightened sense of his musk and mine mingling. I stopped. How could I be truly satisfied with this hollow illusion when he lay on the other side of the bedroom door? The trip to Edora had answered my first question concerning him. He *could* be interested in a man. However, how much of his soul had he tied to O'Neill? That question I was not certain that I wanted an answer to. If he was solely in love with O'Neill, then I would not even be able to indulge in the fantasy. The knowledge would always intrude on anything I felt in the future. I stopped what I was doing and went into Kel-no-reem.

Daniel Jackson never sleeps enough. His rest was always disturbed by nightmares. Many times we have camped on other worlds I have noticed that he tosses and turns, cries out in the night. O'Neill was always the one to check on him. This would be my duty from this point forward until O'Neill's return.

He had thrown off all of his blankets with his restless movements. His face was twisted with distress as his nightmare unfolded. He spoke in many languages, most of them unknown to me. However, the words I did understand left me uneasy. He was dreaming of his abduction by the Touched in the Land of Light. It seems I will always have much to atone for with Daniel Jackson. He has always forgiven me, but I can not forgive myself. What happened on that world I considered to be my 2nd betrayal of him - the 1st always being choosing his wife to be Apophis's mate. What he had endured alone among the savaged souls of the Touched none of us knew, for he never spoke of it, but we all saw the outcome of that treatment, not to mention the cost of the cure itself in the pain of his body as it realigned itself to its proper proportions. He suddenly cried out and sat up abruptly.

When he regained his equilibrium, he apologized for waking me up. I almost told him that I was already up, but I didn't want to explain that the smell of him in his bedroom had driven me from it. He sighed at my reassurance that I didn't mind being awake. He rubbed his eyes as if to banish what had happened behind his closed eyelids. Frowning, he picked up the alarm clock he kept on the coffee table.

"It's 2am!" he cried. He apologized profusely for waking me up and said I should return to the bedroom. I stared at the bed for a long time before deciding that I would eschew it for the floor.

A few hours later, I heard Daniel Jackson in his kitchen. I had heard enough of this kind of activity to know that he was making coffee. I do not like this drink. It is bitter and needs too many other ingredients added to make it palatable. I would rather have the sugar and milk seperately than drink this coffee. However, I found the routine a comfort when I was in unfamiliar surroundings. When I understood what was going on around me, I was more at ease. This was part of the reason why I did not leave the SGC often and why I have not attempted to procure other housing, although I am still unsure as to whether or not they would allow me do so. The machine makes a very distinct sound when it nears the completion of its project. At that point I decided to leave Daniel Jackson's bedroom.

He sat in a chair pulled up beside one of his windows, gazing out, though I was certain that he was not really seeing the vista beyond. He was a silhouette in the morning sun, features pensive with unknown thoughts. I obtained water from the sink and watched him for several minutes.

"People fascinate me," he finally said. "As an anthropologist, I wonder what came before that cause people to act and think the way they do. As an archeologist, I dig up physical remnants of

the past and try to recreate the people who used those instruments. As a linguist, I study what people say and how they convey meaning. And yet, I really feel like I don't understand people at all. Why is it that day-to-day transactions are so difficult for me? Why do I feel more at home talking to aliens than to people I see in the grocery store?"

"Because for all your knowledge of how people think, you do not think like them, Daniel Jackson."

He sighed gently and turned to face me. "Probably true, but it just makes me wonder who and what I am."

It was fortunate that O'Neill was not here. He forbade these kind of discussions unless the mission had been a particularly disastrous one. Then he forbade nothing. We would talk until all the feelings had been brought to light. Most of the time I appreciated the reticence that O'Neill forced on our 2 younger members. Both of them liked to talk a great deal. Although Major Carter would only give free rein to this habit when approached for scientific information, Daniel Jackson had no compunction against talking until he was hoarse. He told me once that this was the legacy of his many years in academia - all Earth professors were like this.

Strangely, now I did not mind his speaking. He was opening to me in a way I had never seen before. With the absence of the team members who understood him best, he was turning to me as a confidante.

"You are Daniel Jackson - my friend."

"I am honored to be your friend." His smile was bright, but there was a trace of sadness in his eyes. He stood up to get more coffee when I took the cup from his hand. I began to move back to the machine when he finally understood what I was doing. "You're my guest, Teal'c. I'll get that. Guests don't do any work here."

"It is not work. I am closer to the machine than you."

He thanked me when he took the full cup from my hand. He then asked me what I wanted to do. Do? I did not know enough of this world, despite my time here, to make a decision. When O'Neill was here we did what he wanted. Usually this entailed either sitting in front of the television and watching many hours of athletic competition or participating in these competitions either by playing ourselves (much to Daniel Jackson's chagrin) or going to the "arena" and watching these events from very high seats that did not give us as good a view as the television. In 3 years, I had yet to see much more than what O'Neill thought I should see. I asked him what he thought we should do.

Daniel Jackson's idea was to visit an art gallery - an exhibition he had wanted to see and had

not had the time to do so. Most of this art confused me. I had only been exposed to the art approved by the Goa'uld. Their art always represented them and always in noble and exacting detail. This chaos of color and style would never have been approved by the Goa'uld.

Daniel Jackson stood in front of one piece, so absorbed in the study of it, that he did not hear me come up behind him. Gently, I lay a hand on his shoulder, attempting to duplicate a touch I had seen O'Neill use with him many times. My fingers were drawn to his skin, warm and silky to my senses. As he turned to me, the blue eyes widened, realizing that the touch was not the one to which he was accustomed. Before the red appeared, I felt the flush of heat and he turned back to the picture, stiff and nervous. However, he did not move away from me or ask me to remove the hand. I felt his shoulders drop with a sigh and his gaze returned to mine, filled with questions. Although I could see the questions in his eyes, my unfamiliarity with human emotional expression left me unable to answer him. The eyes averted again. I let his shoulder go.

For the remainder of our time in the gallery, he took the role of teacher - one with which he was most comfortable. After the gallery, we went to dinner at an Indian restaurant. Restaurants, unlike grocery stores, made me uncomfortable because you are 'served' by another. In a land which prizes freedom over all else, it disturbed me that people would have to 'serve' individuals. Service to your country, your ideals, these concepts high and noble I understood. 'Service' to another to make them comfortable or because they are unwilling to do their own work I did not. It reminded me too much of my past.

"It's not the same," he argued. "These people get compensation for their work. The Gou'ald don't give their people anything."

"Untrue. The Goa'uld give those who serve them well status and power - limited as it is. My house on Chulak and my marriage to Drey'Auc were two such compensations for my service as the First Prime to Apophis."

His fork dropped with a clatter to his plate. "Drey'Auc was given to you by Apophis?"

"As was his right as my god."

Daniel Jackson glanced around. Fortunately, we spoke in Chular, so, though eyes had moved over our way with his exclamation, no one understood what we had said. He blushed furiously and picked up his utensil. "I guess I shouldn't be so shocked. After all, Sha're was given to me, too. There are still places in this world where marriages are not ruled by love or desire. I keep forgetting that you weren't born here, especially when we're out in public like all the other people here. You're such an extraordinary person, Teal'c, and sometimes I guess I take it for granted."

"How so?"

"Well, when we're off-world, it's easy for me to remember you're a Jaffa and I always expect you to act a certain way, but when we're here I sometimes forget just how wierd all of this must seem to you. After all, you're even older than General Hammond. You've only been here 3 years and yet, despite the fact that you don't know all the idioms and nuances of English, no one could fault your basic command of the language. You're dealing with technology far below the levels you're used to. You've also been a leader of armies and yet you defer gracefully to Jack and General Hammond. That *can't* feel normal to you. Before all this, the only person you answered to was Apophis."

"I would rather serve General Hammond as the lowliest airman than command the armies of Apophis again."

"That's not the point, Teal'c. I'm just saying that you're one of the most flexible people I've ever met. I don't know if I could adjust as well as you have to such an alien environment. At least, not on a long-term basis."

"Abydos was not alien to you?"

He stopped eating as he thought. "No, it wasn't. I mean, the just surviving was, but the people didn't feel strange to me and the language wasn't completely unfamiliar. I didn't have to adjust my thinking that much to accommodate the lifestyle. It kinda felt like I was a TA - uh, Teaching Assistant - again. Only the classroom was in the field and I was getting paid in food, rather than a pitiful allowance. The 36 hour days didn't bug me. You know how I get when I'm working. Day, night makes no difference to me."

"You are acclimated to such strange hours. My life has been completely regimented. I cannot imagine living in the same kind of chaos that you enjoy."

He smiled warmly. "Well, you're living in it right now. Earth isn't an orderly world, unlike others we've been to."

"Perhaps that is why, as a species, you dare to dream more," I observed. The smile grew broader and we finished our meal in silence.

Daniel let me drive us back to the apartment, feeling that I should have more practice behind the wheel of the car. By the time we arrived, he had fallen asleep. I was loathe to wake him from what seemed to be the most peaceful sleep he had had in a while. I would have picked him up and carried him, but I knew that he would only have become embarassed if any of his neighbors saw us. I gently shook his shoulder. Blinking rapidly at me, he awoke, rubbed his eyes. "Here already?" We went up the stairs to his apartment.

His short sleep had actually returned some of his energy. He proceeded to make himself even

more coffee, tea for myself. Our discussion as we drank was far more trivial than the others we had had during the day. However, I could see that though he continued quite convincingly in this conversation, his mind was not dwelling on what was being said. He watched me very closely, though he attempted to veil his perusal with lowered eyes.

"Have I done something to offend you, Daniel Jackson?"

"Never, Teal'c. Why?"

"You have been staring strangely at me."

"Oh." He turned his face from me. Hid his eyes from me. Both humans and Jaffa have a saying that the eyes hold the heart's secrets. Daniel Jackson's eyes did not only hold his secrets, but laid them bare to the world. I could not help myself. Reaching gently to cup his jaw, I tilted his face up to me. His eyes told me that his emotions ran high at this moment. I had noticed that his and Major Carter's blue eyes changed colors with the passage of their emotions. The grey-blue they were now told me of passion. I ran my thumb over his bottom lip, an intimate gesture he could not mistake.

"Teal'c," he barely breathed my name. Fear joined the passion in his eyes Gently he kissed my thumb, another question. I answered by covering his lips with mine. With a small moan, he melted against me, the length of his body pressed up against me. His arms wrapped around my neck as he sought to deepen the kiss, his tongue caressing my lips before I parted them and let it in. The moan was deeper as he taught himself the landscape of my mouth, then drew back, allowing me to do the same to him. The need for breath drew us apart, but he didn't stop, taking small bites on my neck and shoulders. His tongue then traced the same route, cooling the heat of the nips.

"Bed," he whispered, taking my hand.

In the bedroom, he slowly unbuttoned my shirt, kissing my skin as he exposed it to his gaze. Before he reached my prim'ta, he paused, unsure of whether or not he wanted to expose that area to his gentle foreplay.

"Does Junior usually play when you have sex?"

I nearly laughed at the strange expression on his face, unsure if he really wanted to know or if he was merely being polite. "With other Jaffa, yes. With others, it depends on the tastes of the partner."

Fascination and revulsion warred on his face. I started to draw him away from my abdomen, when he reached for those buttons and let them unfasten. Gently, he ran his tongue over the

entrance. I could not hold my moan back. It had been too long since anyone had touched me intimately there; Drey'Auc could not stand it. The symbiote felt my pleasure. It breached its womb, rubbing Daniel's face. He froze. Several different emotions charged across his face, leaving him uncertain as to what to do next. The symbiote retreated.

Though I am certain that he did mean to, the teasing he had given the symbiote made my own member hard. I growled low in my throat. His eyes, nearly black now with desire, peered at my face, gauging that my reaction was not aggression he needed to fear. A feral grin lit his face as he reached for the belt, quickly pulling it from the loops, then unzipping my trousers. Drawing my member from the underwear I had grown accustomed to wearing, he moaned as he fondled me, clearly impressed with my size. He gently tongued my foreskin, then, with a playful growl, took the revealed head in careful teeth. For a second, I held my breath. The teeth released me to be replaced by his lips and tongue.

With a large breath, he swallowed me as far as he could, covering the rest of me with a hand. His lips sealed and he began to suck in earnest, gently squeezing me with one hand while the other manipulated my balls. His eyes squeezed shut, gauging all of my reactions with his other senses. He moaned throatily, the vibration making me even harder. My fingers clutched his short hair. My cock slid farther down his throat as he relaxed even more. I began to push in farther as he swallowed. There was the slightest tensing in his body, but he swallowed again, pulling me in nearly to my balls. My grip in his hair became hard. The suction became more intense as he sought to bring me to completion, his tongue stroking as his lips closed tighter. I could not hold back as I emptied into his throat, pushing myself completely in as I came, bellowing at the top of my lungs. For a second he fought me, then took everything I offered him.

He sat up, panting heavily and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Wow! That was..." He could not finish his thought, launching himself up to my mouth and letting me taste myself. Intoxicated by the mingled flavor, I threw him down onto the bed and proceeded to rip every garment off of him. He offered no resistance to my advances, in a few cases aiding me without my having to ask him. His hands clutched my biceps, knuckles white with the strength with which he held on to me.

I stroked his chest, enraptured by the contrast of his creamy skin and my darkness. Had he been a slave, he would have been a pampered favorite in some System Lord's harem. An exotic plaything. His hair, though not as golden as Major Carter's, would be considered an unusual enough color to bring attention. But his eyes, the crystal blue, would have fetched quite a high price for him, as well as the silky skin my fingers caressed. On his shoulder was the scar from the staff blast of my counterpart in another reality. His forehead held another pale scar from his head-long plunge from a disastrous trip through the Stargate. Such things, seen as imperfections, endeared him more to me. Though he had never been formally trained as a warrior, he had become one. His shoulders and chest were broader than when we had first met, the legacy of our lifestyle. His allergies did not plague him as much as they had in the past. All of these imperfections that would have lessened his value as a Goa'uld slave made me

appreciate him more. Mentally, I grew angry at myself for comparing him to a slave. He had been born free, unlike myself. And he, even more than I or any other person freed from the Goa'uld, knew the gift for what it was. As fiercely as I did, did he want to help my people be liberated from the Goa'uld. For all the gentleness of his spirit, he did know how to hate deeply, but he reserved it all for the Goa'uld.

His hands gently stroked my shoulders, drawing me back to the present, to his presence. The blue eyes, as blue as the skies of the world I was a part of now, saw me thinking, saw me losing myself "Teal'c." My name was a breath, a sigh. I explored his face with my fingers, my palms, tracing his high cheekbones, pale lips. My hands slid into his hair, regretting the fact that they had not known this silk when it was still long. Shorn as it was, it was still soft. I bent down to him and snatched kisses from him.

His penis poked me in the belly. I stared at his lust-glazed eyes for a moment, wondering if he understood what was going to happen. With a small nod, he whispered, "Do it." I drew him up, then lay in his place, watching the fear skitter across his face to be replaced by a strange fascination. With his fingers, he traced the prim'ta, as if asking the symbiote for permission. It reached out for his fingers, pulling on the first one it could find with its mouth. As it was still young, the teeth it would use later to hook into its host's brain were undeveloped. It sucked on the digit. Daniel's eyes widened as he began to understand just what kind of fun Jaffa had that involved "Junior".

"Does it? Does it actually...?"

"With 2 Jaffa, they pleasure themselves as we pleasure each other. With one who is not a Jaffa, the symbiote becomes part of the lovemaking if the partner is amenable."

"I...I want to understand, but it's a Goa'uld..."

"If you do not wish it, we will refrain..."

The symbiote must have sucked especially hard on his finger. He pulled in a harsh breath, color rising in his cheeks even as his member grew harder. "My God, Teal'c, what does that feel like to you?"

"The symbiote projects very strongly when it is pleased. Whatever you do I feel as if it is being done to me. I feel your fingers as if they were stroking me, touching me intimately."

He fed another finger to the "snake". "And this? You feel this?"

I nodded vigorously. "It is a part of my nervous system, part of my circulatory system. I can't help but feel its pleasure, just as much as I feel its hate."

"Hate?"

"They are angry that they depend on us. Anything different from it is an enemy, something to be destroyed. They allow us our pleasure with them because they feel it binds us to them more."

Daniel pulled his fingers from the symbiote, which squeaked upon being deprived. "Does it?"

I felt my lips turn up, charmed by the his solicitious nature. "No, no more than it does already - a further conceit of the Goa'uld." The symbiote grabbed his finger back.

"That feel good?" he asked, unsure. At my nod, he let his hand slide completely in. A gentle stroke sent shivers through my nerves, making me gasp. "I hate them," he said. "That something so pleasurable would be perverted by them. However, for you, I won't be a tease. After all," he continued with a little shrug and a lopsided smile, "I'm an anthropologist. I'm supposed to study all the mores of different cultures."

Then he did something that I have only ever had one other lover do in all of my sexually active years. Moving a little more forward onto my stomach, he sunk his member into the pouch. For a moment his expression did not change. Then he trembled, his head snapped back, a groan starting low in his throat and rising into a wail.

"Oh...my...God!!" he screamed. His shaking did not stop, growing more intense as the symbiote sucked and mouthed him. My nerves sang with our pleasure as if our systems had been melded through the thing we both hated, both used, despite Daniel's misgivings. Surely he appreciated the irony. Bonelessly, he fell full onto me, still trembling and moaning. My name became a chant whispered to my ear, his breath puffing so warm. His heart hammered harder and harder, blood pressure raising his temperature and his scent. Then his lips moved over my neck, nipping, licking, kissing. My fingers moved over his back, down his spine to the cleft of his buttocks. I skimmed past the puckered opening and his breath hitched. With a soft "Mmmm," he lifted his face to mine, sealing his lips to mine, our tongues dancing sinuously around each other.

My finger brushed across his anus, while his hands stroked up my side, caressing my ribs and finally settling upon my nipples. Using his fingernails, he pinched them, his lips curving into a blazing smile as I gasped. He continued his sweet torture, getting rougher as the symbiote began to move faster and more strongly. His panting became harsher. "Teal'c, Teal'c, so good. Please..." he whimpered. "Please, take me."

"Not yet, beloved."

He moaned his frustration against my neck. I cradled his ass with my other hand, stroking him gently as his scent rose - desert sands, coffee and spices. His eyes squeezed shut. Daniel

began to brutalize my nipples as he bit hard into my shoulder, swallowing a scream. Then I could feel his cock twitch inside the prim'ta. He screamed my name as his semen emptied into it, crushing my nipples in spasming fingers. When his orgasm finished, he shuddered and withdrew.

"And that's what goes on with Jaffa?"

"No," I told him honestly, "usually they use just their hands."

His eyes saucered. "Wha..what?! You mean I could have just...? *Teal'c!! You could have told me!!*"

"And take the mystery out of our relationship before it starts?"

He began to laugh. There are very few times that I have heard him truly laugh. I now loved this sound that he shared with me. So bright. "Teal'c, I think you're the most amazing person I've ever met!"

He fell back onto the bed, still smiling, and moved into my arms. His head settled onto my chest, his ear over my heart. His hand gently traced my chest muscles, my nipples, his strokes feather light. His heartrate slowed and I believed he would have fallen asleep, except that he would not allow himself to do so. After a while, his petting became urgent. He wedged a leg between mine, trapping my member against his thigh, as he proceeded to kiss me deeply. I cupped his jaw.

"Are you ready for me now?" he whispered.

For an answer, I kissed him again. His tongue swirled around mine then departed from it to travel down my neck, my shoulders. He buried his nose into my armpit, taking a very strong whiff of me which must have won his approval for his tongue dipped into the area, tasting my sweat. The tongue continued down, crossing my ribs before he dragged it back up to my chest. He traced my pectorals, then began to bite my already abused nipples, sending tendrils of lusty pain singing into my nerves. When he had finished firing my nerves there, he moved over my sternum to trace my pouch again.

"What? No 'thanks you's'?" he giggled when Junior failed to appear.

"The protein of your seed will sate it for a little while." He looked up from my belly, giving me a look that told me he did *not* want to know what I meant. His mouth moved onward.

Avoiding my member which was stirring lazily due to his ministrations, he continued to my thighs, where his licks became bites. He then sucked viciously first one thigh then the other. I thrilled at the thought of his marking me in this manner, leaving such a sign on me. I ran my

fingers in his hair until he travelled to my knees. His tongue stroked behind each of them. Never before had I considered this an erotic zone.

When we are young, Jaffa are taught sex by older men and women, specifically procured to instruct us in how to pleasure and be pleased in the event that the Gods would find us comely and grant us the grace of their beds. Daniel was revealing more to me than any of my previous lovers had. His mouth never tired in its pursuit of stimulating me to the best of his ability. Even in the best days of my marriage to Drey'Auc did she ever suck my toes or lick and bite my instep. My member swelled to near full hardness.

His eyes were dilated, lust-glazed, dreamy. With a breathless "wait", he headed into his bathroom. He returned shortly with a tube of something I could not see, that he squeezed impatiently and threw onto the bedside table. He hurriedly smeared his own member, which surprised me, then slowly penetrated me with one finger full of the substance, loosening me. His breath warmed my member, though he did not touch it. When 3 fingers had me prepared enough to handle him, he jerked hurriedly on his penis, returning it to its fulsome state.

"Gentle? Or rough?" he growled.

I licked my lips, wanting him so badly, I did not care. However, I knew he would be unable to support much of my weight, so I went to my knees, presenting myself to him. He gasped softly. Then he began biting my ass, marking me there as he had my thighs. He then moved behind me, letting his member caress up and down my crack, adding his weeping seed to the lubricant.

Fingers sunk back into me and I relaxed completely, letting him know I was ready for him. He positioned the head of his penis against my opening. With one hard thrust he completely ensheathed himself in me, gasping at the sensation of my muscles clamping down on him. With a gentle hum that indicated his approval, he began to rock slowly into me. He draped himself across my back, his hands reaching for my member eagerly. Perhaps a bit more than he had intended, his hands grabbed hard. Though it surprised me, I rode through the initial discomfort to the pleasure that his touch brought when he realized he was being a little more enthusiastic than he should. He kissed my shoulder in apology.

One hand moved below to my balls, my perineum, rubbing with his fingers, then scratching softly. I shivered with the unusual sensation. His member grew harder inside me, his breath heating my neck. The hand stroking me moved to the tip, his thumb rubbing the crown, especially the slit, now wet with precum. As I watched over my shoulder, he brought the digit up to his own mouth, tasting me. His thumb, now slick with his saliva, returned to its former position and slipped under the cap.

Daniel's pumping became harder. Despite the fact that Daniel is shorter than O'Neill, he obviously did not suffer any lack in size as far as his member was concerned. I relished his

strokes, their variance, the changes of angle, especially when he found my prostate and began hammering it in an effort to bring me to completion. Growling accompanied his frenzy. His thighs slapped into mine as he drove even faster into me, one hand squeezing me harder, the other kneading my balls relentlessly.

My balls tightened just as Daniel slammed hard into my prostate. I yelled as come shot over my chest, his bed and his hand. Daniel wailed as soon as my spasms hit him and sunk his teeth into my shoulder as his own orgasm shook him. His boneless weight fell full on my back. Apologizing for burdening me with a weight I did not feel, he slid out of me and fell to the bed under me.

I lay my head on his chest, listening to the rhythm of his heart. When he drifted into sleep, it slowed, pulling me into a meditative state not quite on the level of Kel-no-reem, but still pleasant and restful. We lay thus for a long time. When his heart began to beat faster under my ear, I knew that he was waking from a sleep that had been untroubled with nightmares. I found myself in awe of his trust in me. Gently he kissed the top of my head and I could feel his lips turning into a smile.

"Morning," he said quietly, the smile growing larger when I looked up at him.

"I am pleased that you slept well," I told him.

He stretched under me. "I haven't slept this well in...geez, a long time." My hands and mouth moved down his abdomen to his member which had risen with him this morning. Gently I kissed the hooded head, eliciting a groan from him. I took him into my mouth, but he was already so close that I had just achieved my own rhythm when he came, groaning loudly. Even as I was letting his member slip from my mouth, he was sliding out from under me, flipping me over and moving to straddle my hips. Pinning my shoulders with his hands, he claimed my lips, kissing and nipping, until I softly growled. His mouth moved down as his fingers stroked my nipples, making me gasp. Teeth teased them to hardness.

He had barely started his attack, when he reached back to my member, stroking me until I was more than ready to flip him over and take him. However, before I could even muster enough intelligence to make a move, with a shout, he let my member sink into him with one thrust. He took complete control then, riding me until I was frantic to take over. He would not let me. He would not let me touch him, even when his penis hardened again. His fingers skimmed over the entrance to the symbiote's pouch, further stimulating my overwhelmed nerves. The symbiote responded in me, seeking the hand petting me. It drew his fingers into the pouch. Daniel groaned.

"God, that is so kinky."

The one hand thus occupied, he used the other to pinch my nipples while he continued to pleasure all 3 of us. A sharp gasp told me that he had managed to angle himself to rub the head of my member over his prostate. I grew harder, watching his face as he panted, eyes closed, tongue stroking dry lips. The symbiote pushed upwards, demanding more stimulation from him, sucking on his fingers, wanting even more. Daniel's hand gently caressed the creature.

He continued to stimulate Junior as he rode me to his orgasm. He groaned loudly and his spasms squeezed my member, sending me over the edge. The symbiote's pleasure peaked with mine as Daniel sprayed both of us. "Whoa," he said, "that's the best way to wake up." The symbiote retreated.

He carefully unseated himself from my groin, wincing a little. He lay himself down beside me, his head cradled on my shoulder. He fell back asleep.

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We did not go anywhere the entire day. We talked, we ordered pizza, we played Jackals and Hounds. Mostly, we talked. For the most part, he spoke, but he would not let me remain completely quiet, questioning incessantly, wanting to understand. Though we had spoken much before about my peoples' beliefs and customs, he had never before asked me how I felt about them, especially now that I had been separated from them for over 3 years.

I watched him as he spoke. His energy never seemed to flag. His eyes, his hands, every part of him seemed to be unable to still for any length of time. He was completely oblivious to this. His glasses always seemed to want to leave his face. With a practiced hand, he pushed them up constantly. I figured I was completely besotted now. Watching all of his little mannerisms and memorizing them certainly did not count as objective behavior. It had been a long time since I had felt that kind of emotional attachment to anyone. As Apophis's First Prime, it did not behoove me to seek others out as anything other than temporary companionship if even that. My past taught me that life was worthless.

The Tau'ri taught me that life was precious, no matter whose life it was.

This one life, especially now, had become important to me. He had given unstintingly to me, even as his heart had been crushed by one with whom he had fallen in love. It left me unsure as to his feelings for me. Schooled as I was in not displaying my emotions, he still saw something, because his voice faltered and silence fell between us.

"Teal'c?"

I looked into the blue eyes. "I am unaccustomed to speaking my mind, Daniel Jackson, but I feel I must before we continue." His eyebrows shot up in puzzled amazement as he gestured for me

to speak further. "I must know how you feel. I am quite willing to be exclusive with you, consider you more than just a friend. However, I am also aware that you are attracted to O'Neill. I am not willing to share. I understand if you view this as sympathy intercourse, but if you wish to become involved with me, I must be certain that no other holds your heart as closely as I do."

He smiled strangely. "It's called a 'pity fuck', Teal'c. And if anyone deserves to be considered for one, it's me." I hated when he was like this. Once O'Neill had thought he did this to elicit compliments, but Daniel did not take compliments well, either. "I can't tell you how I feel because I'm not sure how I feel. I care for you. That's not going to change, no matter what happens. I know part of me is angry at you for what happened to Sha're. I won't lie. But...but I can't hate you for it. You...you've been a real rock, Teal'c. You and Jack have kept me from going nuts, even when I thought I was. I...thought I was in love with Jack. To tell the truth, I never considered anyone else. Isn't that stupid?"

I couldn't answer him. I never realized how much he hurt and how much this rejection had damaged him. But, he had not answered my question completely. I waited for him to do so. He did not disappoint me.

"I can't tell you what you want to hear, Teal'c. At the very least, I love you as a friend and you're the most magnificent lover I've ever had. I'm also not very casual about sex. Even if it never happens again between us, I...I cherish what you've given me because I do care very much for you." His eyes were earnest even though his nervousness kept them flicking in any direction except mine. Finally he could not evade my gaze any longer. "Give me time, Teal'c."

"We have much of it now, Daniel."

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When we returned to the SGC, little had changed, though much had changed for us. Daniel had not made love to me since our conversation though we had still remained at his apartment. However, he had not deprived me physically. Gentle touches, embraces and silences told me that he would not let me face his indecision alone. Told me that he understood that 2 hearts would be affected by his decision.

However, at the base, we wore masks that gave nothing of our thoughts away to the others. The only person who knew us well enough to penetrate our illusions was busy in her lab, cutting herself off from us. Daniel took it upon himself to reciprocate her many solicitous offerings of food and coffee when he was as ensconced in his own work. When Dr. Frazier was too busy to make sure Major Carter was taking care of herself, Daniel always stepped in.

Two weeks after our time off, General Hammond called Daniel and myself to his office.

"I realize that with Colonel O'Neill gone and Major Carter indisposed in her lab, that you two haven't been utilized to the best of your abilities. SG3 is leaving tomorrow for P4M 332. According to the MALP, it's going to be a major archeological find, Dr. Jackson. Colonel Makepeace asked for you specifically."

Daniel's head tilted. "He did?"

"Briefing is at 0900 tomorrow," the General informed us, ignoring Daniel's question. "Teal'c, I'm assigning you to the team, as well. I know this is short notice for both of you, but I think I can trust you both to be ready. Dismissed."

"I guess I'd better tell Sam we're going," Daniel said, heading towards her office. I was left to wonder if she would truly notice our absence.

Daniel and I met later in the cafeteria with Colonel Makepeace. The Colonel told Daniel that he preferred having someone who knew how to handle himself in a firefight than an untested civilian.

"Thank you, I think," was Daniel's puzzled reply. As the Colonel took his leave, Daniel leaned closer to me. "Can I come to your room tonight? We haven't been together in a while and I miss it."

I inclined my head in the affirmative and watched as his face lit up. Suddenly, self-consciously, he looked around, checking to see if anyone had noticed his change. I disliked having to keep this secret. I disliked the necessity of doing so. I felt it cheapened our feelings for each other, made them furtive and disgraceful. I tried to be fair to the society that had created these rules to attempt to maintain order in the midst of such chaos, but I could not see how one's choice of a lover would make a difference here. However, it was not my place to question the beliefs of these people when they had been so kind to me.

Before a mission, it was not unusual for members of a team to gather together, especially as close-knit a team as ours. No one would question Daniel's presence in my quarters. I lit candles as if I was preparing for Kel-no-reem, hoping that I would be seeing him naked in their light. He arrived soon after I reached the last of them. He smiled at the deliberate attempt to create an atmosphere conducive to seduction and moved into my arms after he had locked the door behind him. He leaned into my body. His forever-moving hands roamed my body restlessly, then he pulled my shirt from under the belt. He stepped back, unbuttoning the buttons carefully, slowly, each release of fabric a question of whether or not he was welcome. I did not stop him.

"I can't stop thinking about you," he said gently. "I see you in my dreams. Daydreams, even. I've tried to keep extra busy, but I can't stop seeing you. I want you so badly. I..." He faltered, unsure. I understood that his feelings were still confused. He did not want to hurt me, but

obviously I had opened a door to his physical desires and he was unable to close it to ascertain what emotions lay beyond the immediate needs.

"Daniel." I took his chin in my hand, drew his gaze to mine. The candles softened his features, but gave his eyes an eerie ageless quality that made him look strangely older. His tongue flicked over dry lips. I leaned down to touch them gently several times with my own before I gathered him to me and deepened our embrace. He moaned gently, the vibrations tickling my tongue.

I wanted to possess him. I wanted to throw him onto the bed and drive us to the heights of passion. But my honor would not allow it. His eyes, though, told me he felt the same. He wanted me to bury myself into him, take him to as far a place as we could reach. When my t-shirt came off, he stared at me for a long time as if memorizing me. Then his fingers began tracing the contours of my chest, my back, my arms. I cupped his chin again.

"What do you want, Daniel?"

"You," he breathed. Then he grabbed me hard, kissed me passionately, then began laying kisses across every square inch of skin he could reach, falling to his knees before me. Before I could protest, he had the belt undone, the pants unzipped and was drawing my member from confinement. His mouth proceeded to drive all thought from me. His nimble tongue, that spoke so many languages so prettily, taught itself a new dance, a new music as I tutored him in what I liked best. He abandoned my penis for a few moments, to nuzzle and lick at my balls, gently nipping, then sucking each into his mouth. I grabbed his hair hard.

"Like that?" he smiled.

With a growl, I pushed him back to my member. He sucked it in eagerly. His tongue ravaged me, pulling my come from me as he took all of it down. Aware of my surroundings, I made no sound. I set him onto his feet, then proceeded to strip him with more care than I had the first night. Once laid bare to my sight, he proceeded to the bed, laying on the olive blanket that heightened the gold glow of his skin. He held his arms out to me.

Loving him the third time was unhurried and luscious. I took the time to examine him in great detail, memorizing him until I could be sure that I would never see anything other than the reality in my dreams. He bore my scrutiny silently, a highly amused smile gracing his face. If I never had him again, I needed this night to remember him as my lover, not just my teammate. With no word from me, he followed me trustingly, knowing I would never hurt him, knowing that I loved him without conditions.

After a climax that left him gasping for breath, he curled up against me and fell asleep instantly. I slipped into Kel-no-reem, still watchful for any nightmares that might ruin his sleep. Both of us

awoke extremely refreshed.

With a gentle kiss, Daniel opened my door, only to find himself face-to-face with Major Carter, her hand raised to knock.

"They let you out?" he joked. She smiled a little at him.

"Well, I was coming to wish you luck with the Jarheads, but you weren't in your room."

"I fell asleep on Teal'c's bed while I was waiting for him to finish Kel-no-reem. I guess he took mercy on me and didn't wake me up when he finished."

I understood instantly that this was "our story" as Colonel O'Neill puts it. "You needed the rest, Daniel Jackson. I would have been remiss had I woken you. Colonel O'Neill says that you do not sleep enough."

At the mention of Colonel O'Neill's name, Major Carter frowned slightly. "I really wish we were all going out. I hate being separated like this."

Daniel squeezed her shoulder. "We'll get him back, Sam. I know you'll do it."

"I'm glad someone does," she smiled weakly.

"Hey, why don't we all have breakfast together? Um...after I hit the shower. Really need to change clothes here." Daniel hurried off to his quarters, leaving Major Carter and myself watching him fondly. Like family.

"He needs a keeper," she said, amusement evident in her voice. "I'm so glad you've been hanging around with him. He really does need someone to watch him. With the Colonel gone..." She changed the subject suddenly. "Why don't we save a table while we're waiting for him? With 2 missions about to start today, I'm sure it'll get crowded fast."

"Who else is leaving?"

"SG-7. They're going back to P2R 862, to check on the mineral deposits SG-4 found. Really routine stuff."

We moved through the line, Major Carter supplying all of the conversation. It occurred to me that she probably felt lonely in her lab, even though she would not let go of her project. The rest of us were continuing our lives while hers had been suspended until she completed her reactor. If Colonel O'Neill chose not to return, I did not think she would take it well. She led us to a table, occupied solely by Dr. Frazier. The 2 women chose to face each other, leaving me to sit beside

the physician.

"You ready, Teal'c?" she asked me unnecessarily. I have never not been ready for a mission.

"Yes, Dr. Frazier," I answered dutifully and began to eat my scrambled eggs. I ate slowly, waiting. The women began discussing why Daniel would be so exhausted to fall asleep in my room which tested my stoic limits not to laugh aloud with all the reasons that were anything but the truth. My poor Daniel was going to receive a lecture from the doctor for something he hadn't done. She was already lecturing Major Carter on that very subject.

Daniel walked through the doors, his eyes immediately meeting mine. I almost dropped my utensil. The truth shone in his eyes. Not knowing what to thank for his sudden enlightenment, I wanted to push everything that stood between him and me at that moment and take him into my arms, never let him go. Whatever had happened, I knew in that moment, each of us was laid bare to the other.

Colonel Makepeace walked up to Daniel, breaking our contact. I could not hear their conversation over the noise of the commissary, but with the Colonel directing Daniel's attention to the clock on the wall, I assumed it was a reminder of the time our briefing started. Daniel hurried through the line after the Colonel left. His main objective was, of course, the coffee urn.

"Sorry about that," he apologized when he arrived. "I would have been here sooner, but Makepeace just *had* to let me know when the briefing started." He began to eat rapidly, listening patiently as Dr. Frazier complained about his sleeping habits.

"It's bad enough that you don't schedule your sleep, Daniel," she said sternly, "but you shouldn't be kicking Teal'c out of bed. Granted he doesn't sleep the same way you and I do, but the bed's got to be more comfortable than the floor for meditation."

"It was not a problem, Dr. Frazier," I informed her. "I understand that Dr. Jackson must be allowed a full sleep period if he is able to obtain it. I was not inconvenienced."

She ate the last of her toast, daintily brushing the crumbs off of her hands. "Even so, Daniel, you have your own bed. You don't need to be hopping into everyone else's."

That was it. Daniel burst out laughing even as he blushed while I had to hide my face from the Doctor's to maintain her ignorance. "What's wrong?"

"Do you have any idea what that sounds like?" Daniel snickered. "Just what kind of a rep do I have around here?"

"Took you long enough to ask," Major Carter said snidely. "They think that you're either a monk

or the biggest libertine on several worlds. A woman on every planet."

Daniel shook his head. "Where the hell do they come up with this stuff?"

"Well, it gets between missions and, unlike us scientists who *never* have enough time, they get bored. Then I think they get drunk and start swapping shaggy dog stories. You wouldn't believe some of the distorted versions I've heard of some of our missions..." Thankfully the conversation drifted to these fabrications and no one expected me to contribute.

I was confused, but happy. Something had happened between the time that Daniel had left my quarters and the moment he appeared at the commissary doors. Something had changed. I looked him, laughing at something Major Carter told him and again our eyes met. Yes, I had seen it. Somehow after waking up this morning, Daniel had fallen in love with me.

Now I was ready to curse our mission.

After we had finished eating, we headed for our briefing. Makepeace looked at Daniel, then the clock, then smiled smugly as if it was only due to his intervention that Daniel had arrived on time. I did not give into temptation. I did not rise to his baiting.

I think that Colonel Makepeace is an excellent warrior. He is loyal to the SGC, to his team. In many ways he reminds me of O'Neill, but he is inflexible, unlike O'Neill. He does not have the same imagination as O'Neill. He reminds me more of the kind of leader I used to be under Apophis's command. You did what you were told with no deviation.

The world that would be our home for the next 3 days was in the middle of a rainstorm when we arrived. We sprinted from the flat land immediately around the Stargate for the thicket of trees a few yards off. Colonel Makepeace waited until the rain had cleared before he marched us to the ruins Daniel was here to study. I had moved unconsciously to the scouting position when Lieutenant DeAngelo moved beside me. He bristled a little at my assumption of his position. I began to move towards the rest of the party when Colonel Makepeace waved DeAngelo back. As he passed me, he gave me a very ugly expression that I felt I did not merit. I had not removed him from his position.

Daniel watched the incident with a little trepidation. After all, we were the intruders on this team and he was sensitive to being an outsider in this situation. However, now that Makepeace had made it clear what my assignment was to be, I applied myself diligently and moved ahead of the party. I soon lost sight of them, though my other senses kept me informed at all times of where they were.

Nothing impeded our trek to the ruins. I had looked around the area to find small indigenous rodents and fowl the only inhabitants. I reported back to the party. Daniel had obviously not

relaxed since I departed. His eyes constantly flicked between the still-angry LT DeAngelo and Colonel Makepeace.

When we reached our destination, Daniel immediately moved to the ruins, forgetting all about the problems of the 2 men. He walked up to the crumbling pillars at the front of the structure and pulled out his video camera, speaking all the while as he noted every feature he filmed. Makepeace ordered the other 2 men to start setting up camp, told me to stand guard and drew DeAngelo aside.

Both men had forgotten that my hearing is superior to their own. DeAngelo received the Colonel's permission to speak then proceeded to growl angrily about "letting the alien" perform his function. Coldly, Makepeace informed him of my superior abilities, wanting to take advantage of them while I was assigned to their team. DeAngelo told him that it wasn't necessary since the world was supposedly uninhabited.

"I'd rather not find out the hard way that it isn't, DeAngelo," Makepeace retorted. "Think of it as a break, LT. Don't get your nose bent outta joint."

LT DeAngelo excused himself and went to aid the others in setting up the camp. Colonel Makepeace walked up to me.

"Don't mind him, Teal'c. He was a Texas Ranger. Thinks he's the universe's answer to scouts." I was surprised that he actually realized that I had overheard the conversation. The Colonel strode past me, to speak to Daniel. I continued guarding as I had been ordered.

For the next few hours, Daniel proceeded to set up his station, pulling out implements as he needed them, dropping them to the ground when they had served their purpose. As it was at his apartment, he always knew where to find them. I could not imagine how he did this. The members of SG3 proceeded then to perform the same kinds of experiments that Major Carter would have executed, had it been SG1 on this world. However, it was obvious they did not have her expertise in these matters. The testtubes and vials were filled mechanically and placed in their kits with only enough care to be certain that they were not broken.

Makepeace assigned DeAngelo and Zhao the task of finding water and ascertaining its potability. The 2 two men headed to the west of our position. Lance Corporal Martinez proceeded to break out the supplies we would need for the night. Makepeace watched Daniel.

When Daniel is at work, nothing else intrudes. He becomes the most intensely focused being I have ever met. Then I marvelled at the fact that he made love with the same intensity. Something that might have been frightening if I had not already been aware of this capacity and already in love with him. He stares at me. He watches every move I make. It is strange to have someone so fervent as a lover. I have never had one that passionate. Even when we were first

married, Drey'Auc did not try to catalog every reaction or physical attribute I possessed. It was as if he needed to make me as much a study as he would his artifacts to be completely comfortable.

I wondered if this would change now that he realized he loved me.

The evening was more pleasant than I anticipated. Obviously, after being entrusted with an important duty, LT DeAngelo returned in a much better mood, especially since he had good news. A nearby river with pure water prevented us from having to ration our supply. It would also keep us clean and provide food in the event something unforeseen should happen. Daniel actually ate dinner with us, though he kept quiet throughout the meal. No one tried to draw him out of his silent counsel. I contemplated doing so, but I could tell he was still uncomfortable working with these men he did not know well. He sat close to me the entire time.

They divided the watches, telling Daniel he did not need to keep one. When he protested, Makepeace made certain that he realized that it was not that he could not be trusted, but that the Colonel did not want to return his guest in less than perfect condition. I knew by the hard line his mouth became that he did not like that answer, but he made no other protest.

As the outsiders, Daniel and I had been assigned the same tent. Since I had been given the last watch, I crawled inside and found that Daniel was already asleep. Knowing that the members of SG3 had to remain ignorant of our relationship, I purposefully moved my sleeping bag farther from him, settling easily into Kel-no-reem. I was quite refreshed when Zhao called me to relieve him.

The second day found Daniel even more engaged in studying the ruins. He had rulers, brushes, spades and his tape recorder in and out of his hands all day as he catalogued all of the objects he unearthed. At first I attempted to aid him, but some of the spaces he was intently scrutinizing were so small that even he did not completely fit in them. I assumed the watch while the other 4 men quietly played card games, waiting for Daniel to finish. I was impressed with their cohesiveness. Even though one would have assumed, watching them, that they were squabbling and inattentive, I could see their eyes scanning, even as they played, and their arguing was good-natured.

They made me think of what SG1 might be like had it been an all-military unit.

I carried Daniel's meals to him, even though he ignored them, allowing the local insects and animals to scurry off with whatever they could carry quickly. Daniel made notes and drawings in his journal of what appeared to me as only pictures; however, I knew from experience that such things were probably the local language. Later in the afternoon for a few hours, I busied myself, with Colonel Makepeace's permission, with a reconnoitering of the area. I found little of any interest.

I had not realized the distance I had travelled. On the way back to our encampment the sound of gunfire erupted, then abruptly ceased. I had remained stationary for enough time that the local fauna should have begun making noise again. It had not. The wind carried sounds that would not have been made by SG3. We were far enough from the Gate that we would not have heard it engage. Carefully, I headed back for our encampment.

When I returned to the clearing SG3 were on their knees. They had not been taken by surprise, not with the amount of blood on their faces and soaking into their clothes. Two of the Jaffa tended bullet wounds and 1 lay dead or dying in the grass being ignored by his fellows. The callous disregard I knew so well from my days as First Prime. He had failed, he had died and no one would care or mourn for him. His family would be left in ignorance of his fate unless one of the ones involved happened to be a friend or, possibly, a commander who felt it his duty to let the family know their man's fate.

Daniel was not with them. Obviously he had heard the fight and had hidden himself until such time as he could help them. I began to move silently towards the ruins. Having not found anyone else, the Jaffa were questioning the Marines. And having little success. None of Colonel Makepeace's party knew more than rudimentary Goa'uld and could not answer them, even if they had wanted to. The humans remained silent while the Jaffa became angrier and more abusive.

Looking at the numbers and their supplies, I could safely assume that this was a scouting party. There would be no Goa'uld present, which made the situation far easier with which to contend. As long as we prevented any of them from reaching the Chappa'ai we would be able to escape with little problem. If any of them made it back to the Gate to report, we would have even more Jaffa and possibly a minor Goa'uld arriving in the near future.

To my left, I heard a tiny scrape. I headed for the noise and found Daniel, as I had hoped. Pale and nervous, he held his weapon ready. Colonel O'Neill had trained all of us extensively on hand signals used by U.S. forces in the field. I told Daniel quickly how many Jaffa held the rest of our party and the fact that they were scouts. We didn't have much time to free our people before they reported to their superiors. Daniel was all-too aware of the fact that he could not move as stealthily as myself or the Jaffa. He signalled to me that he would remain out of sight where he was while I formulated an attack plan.

I checked the entire perimeter, determining that no more Jaffa waited in ambush for us. The 2 wounded ones sat apart from each other and the others, alone in their shame. I watched all of their demeanors. Sloppy, overconfident. The humans' weapons were not too far from them. I returned to Daniel. Helping keep him silent, I led him to a position where he had a good overview of the area. Silently I moved 120 degrees from his position.

The Jaffa stopped hitting SG3, moving a little away from them to confer about their fate. I aimed

carefully. The staff charge burned a hole into one and scattered the rest long enough for Colonel Makepeace and his men to scramble for their weapons. Daniel fired at the group of wounded Jaffa, to distract them from joining their fellows. Gracefully, Colonel Makepeace rolled to his knees, weapon in hand.

Unable to bring their staffs into line in such close quarters, the Jaffa charged the Marines, engaging in hand-to-hand fighting. The wounded Jaffa grabbed their staff weapons, firing into the trees, attempting to flush out Daniel and myself. Another Jaffa fell from my shot, but the secondary group knew my position. Two shots scorched the ground to either side of me.

Daniel's pistol rang out again, a deadly shot into the eye. The other Jaffa fired at Daniel's position, forcing him into the open. Makepeace managed to hit one of the Jaffa directly in his Prim'ta with the butt of his MP5. One of the others disarmed him with a sweep of his staff, sending the weapon flying far out his reach. Without thinking, the Colonel reached into the stash of weapons, coming up with a K-Bar. The Jaffa wrestled it out of his hand, preparing to use it on him, when Zhao managed to swing his rifle around to hit the Jaffa full in the jaw. The knife went flying.

The last wounded Jaffa aimed at Daniel. Two shots sounded simultaneously. The Jaffa staggered back, then fell over, while Daniel, who had dodged to one side, remained unscathed. My next shot killed the only Jaffa who remained free of antagonists. I could not fire at the 2 who were still alive since the members of SG3 were too close. The Jaffa were stronger than the Tau'ri, but they were unable to keep the humans from eventually dispatching them.

Daniel walked towards the ones he had killed. Daniel's gun lowered a little as he checked the first kill, staring at the man as if unable to believe he could be driven to this. As he stepped past the first Jaffa, the second, still alive, lurched quickly to his feet, charging Daniel with the K-Bar Colonel Makepeace had lost. He drove it hard into Daniel's stomach, twisting and pulling it down as he did so. With a small cry, Daniel fell away from him, folding over.

I did not fail. I killed him before he could take another action. My heart screamed, watching Daniel gasp in pain. I raced over to him, calling for Zhao, who had some medical training. He looked up from where he was binding the Lance Corporal's leg, patted him roughly and ran for us. He pulled Daniel's hand from the wound. Grabbing a number of pressure pads, he shoved them onto the hole. Blood soaked the pads too quickly.

"Teal'c!" Colonel Makepeace called. "Do you think they've left anyone at the Gate?"

"More than likely, Colonel. It would be standard procedure to leave guards at the Gate."

Makepeace ground his teeth together angrily. "How many?"

"Two would be the standard number, Colonel Makepeace."

He turned to LT Zhao. "Can he travel?" he asked, looking pointedly at Daniel.

The young man nodded. "But he's not goin' real fast, sir. Neither's Martinez."

The Colonel swore for a moment, then turned to me and LT DeAngelo. "I'm gonna need you two to make sure we can get through. We've gotta move fast before they realize these bozos are overdue. If you can take 'em, take 'em. We'll be moving as fast as we can. Don't be heroes, guys. If there're too many of them, hightail it back to us and we'll figure out what we'll do then."

Both LT DeAngelo and I moved as quickly and silently as possible to the Stargate. Obviously these Texas Rangers that he had worked for had taught him well. He managed to keep up with me easily and nearly as quietly. The original trip had taken us nearly 8 hours. We completed it in 4.

As I had thought, 2 Jaffa stood guard at the Stargate. They were alert, but not concerned. Obviously we had reached them before their companions were due to contact them. I signalled to LT DeAngelo that he should aim at the Jaffa to the left while I moved to position myself better to aim at the Jaffa to the right of the gate. I counted down. Both of us fired simultaneously. My staff weapon took out my opponent immediately while it took several shots before LT DeAngelo's target fell. We sprinted to our victims, to ascertain if we had indeed killed them. Neither would rise again.

"Colonel Makepeace, we have secured the Stargate," LT DeAngelo informed him.

"Teal'c," the Colonel's voice sounded strained, almost angry. "How likely is it that the Goa'uld'll send another party through?"

"Not likely, Colonel Makepeace. If these fail to report, the Goa'uld will assume that something is on this world that is a threat to them. They would have no reason to return in greater numbers. Are you in need of assistance, Colonel?"

"Yeah, but I want DeAngelo. You're the best one to cover our six, so we'll need you there. Makepeace out."

The LT nodded to me, then disappeared the way we had come. I concealed myself from the Chappa'ai, maintaining visual contact with it, in the event that the Goa'uld who had sent the Jaffa should prove more persistent than others. Night had nearly fallen when the rest of my party arrived, Colonel Makepeace and LT DeAngelo dragging Daniel behind them on a travois crafted of branches and tents. They were obviously exhausted, Daniel completely white with pain. The bandages had filled with blood yet again. Lance Corporal Martinez heavily leaned on

LT Zhao, who kept staring at Daniel with grave concern.

Colonel Makepeace fell heavily to one knee. "DeAngelo, get us outta here."

I swept Daniel into my arms, leaving the Lance Corporal to the others. The Stargate opened, DeAngelo sent the signal and we raced as quickly as possible to it. As soon as I was through, I called for a medical team, laying Daniel onto the gurney that met me on the way to the infirmary.

"What's wrong, Teal'c?"

"Daniel Jackson has been stabbed. A K-Bar." Her head came up sharply with that information. "A Jaffa picked it up and stabbed him in the stomach," I explained. "Lance Corporal Martinez will be arriving shortly with a leg wound he received."

"Thanks, Teal'c, I'll take care of Daniel. You should report to General Hammond and let him know what's going on."

Reluctantly, I complied. As I headed towards the General's office, a gurney bearing the Lance Corporal rushed past me. I met the General and Colonel Makepeace on the way to the General's office. There was a tension in Colonel Makepeace's carriage that I had not seen while I had been more concerned for Daniel's safety. He looked almost apologetic and I did not understand why.

"How's Dr. Jackson, Teal'c?" the General asked me.

"Dr. Frazier did not share any information with me at this time, General Hammond. She told me that I should report to you."

Colonel Makepeace looked alarmed. He and the General continued in the direction I had come. I turned and followed them, remaining behind and to the left of General Hammond. We entered the infirmary to find Dr. Warner working on the burn on Lance Corporal Martinez's leg. The burn covered a large area, but was, for the most part, superficial. Makepeace gently slapped him on the back.

"Hey, your first battle scar, Martinez. Guess we oughta go out and celebrate when you can hobble outta here." The young man smiled tightly, trying desperately to keep pain from twisting his features. Makepeace's hand rested on his shoulder. "But not before the Doc lets you go, huh?"

Martinez nodded.

"Get well, son," General Hammond said quietly.

"Thank you, sir."

We walked into the observation booth, an area all of us knew too well. Dr. Frazier and her team pored over Daniel, suctioning away blood and other bodily fluids while exploring the area. General Hammond returned to his office, unable to relinquish his duties for long. For a time that seemed so long, yet was probably no more than a few hours, I watched them repair Daniel.

They wheeled him into the infirmary proper, taking him to the recovery area. I waited patiently for the Colonel to ask for the doctor's report. She told them that Daniel would be fine, but that he had lost a great deal of blood. She further stated she was concerned about possible infection and that she would be keeping him in the infirmary for at least 72 hours. I sat down in one of the plastic chairs and watched as Colonel Makepeace approached the bed. He stared at Daniel for a long time.

"The first time I met him, I thought he was such a waste," the Colonel said. "I'm still not thrilled to have to worry about civilians, but he's not half bad. This is my fault."

"Your fault, Colonel Makepeace?"

He sighed. "First, I let those fucking Jaffa get the better of us. If he hadn't thought fast, they would've had him, too. Must have stuffed himself into one of those tiny spaces, cause they never saw him. Then my K-Bar..." Ah, now I understood his guilt. His knife, his responsibility.

At that moment, Major Carter ran into the room. "Daniel?"

"Will be fine, Major. I'm sure that Doc Frazier doesn't want too many people in here. Why don't you go talk to her? She can tell you everything you need to know." Major Carter hesitated for a moment, then left us alone.

Daniel stirred, eyes fluttering open. He stared at Colonel Makepeace, a small frown on his face. "Jack?"

"No, Daniel Jackson, it is Colonel Makepeace."

His eyes turned to me upon hearing my voice. They were so wide with the drugs he'd been given to combat the pain. He smiled at me gently. "Hiya, Teal'c."

"Dr. Frazier will want to be informed that he has awakened," I told the Colonel. "I will bring her." Following word with deed, I walked into the doctor's office to find Major Carter and the doctor in close conference. "Daniel Jackson has just awakened." Both women followed me out to find Colonel Makepeace was leaning close to him. I could not hear what he said, but Daniel looked

confused. Dr. Frazier told all of us to wait outside while she examined him.

A while later, she came out to us. "Daniel's fine. He definitely needs to stay here for another 48 to 72 hours at the very least. I want to make sure that he doesn't get infected. Right now he's asleep."

I asked her permission to stay with him. She granted it to me with the condition that I wait outside while Major Carter visited him. I let her pass, standing at the door to await her return. I heard her voice as she spoke to Daniel, but I heard no response. When she came out a moment later, her eyes seemed haunted, her carriage defeated. I gently lay a hand on her shoulder.

"He will be fine, Major Carter. I will not let him get ill from this."

Her smile was both amused and happy. "I know you won't, Teal'c."

"You should not return to your lab. You are tired and you are worried for Daniel Jackson. Such a combination may lead to mistakes. You should sleep and come see Daniel Jackson tomorrow. He will undoubtedly be awake by then."

For a moment she hesitated, then she understood that I was concerned for her, but unskillful in choosing the words to relay my concerns to her. Her smile did not dim. "You're a good friend, Teal'c. Thanks for being here." She bid me goodnight and went to her quarters.

Daniel slept peacefully through the night, allowing me much time for Kel-no-reem. In the morning, he woke, his eyes wandering as he ascertained his status and his location. His eyes met mine. A small smile curved his lips. Gently, making sure that no one observed us, I kissed him. "You will be fine, Daniel. Dr. Frazier wishes you to stay for the next 72 hours to be certain you do not complicate your status." His eyes asked a question. "She is concerned you may develop an infection from this injury. Wounds of this nature infect easily, Daniel. I have seen warriors incapacitated in the field from wounds such as yours. It is fortunate indeed that we were able to return to the SGC before any form of infection could set in."

"I'm tired," he whispered. "I guess I'm not great company right now."

"Sleep, beloved. You will feel much better soon."

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After 48 hours of Daniel's confinement, I was beginning to understand why O'Neill would become taciturn and curt while engaged in this same duty. My love complained, he wheedled, he whined about wanting food Dr. Frazier would not let him eat, wanting books she would not let

him read, wanting to do *something* other than recuperate. He was older than my son, but, unlike my son, he would not take a single "no" for an answer. I had to give him many "no"s before he realized that, unlike O'Neill or anyone else who worked here, his badgering and pestering would not sway me from making sure that he cooperated fully with Dr. Frazier. The only thing he did not try to sway me with was sex. He knew he did not have the energy for that particular activity.

Now he was sulking.

I had tried to talk to him, but now he just stared at me like I had done something nefarious. Eyes narrowed. Calculating. Still trying to find some way to move me to his will. I stared serenely at him. He gave up again for another 1/2 hour. The cycle seemed to repeat endlessly. The only change came when the nurses came in to change his intravenous fluids or to offer him the bland liquid diet that was the only nutrition Dr. Frazier would offer.

When Dr. Frazier released him at the end of the third day, I drove him to the apartment. He apologized for his behavior when we arrived, as if he was afraid that I would leave him alone. As if I would walk away from him. Knowing this was a great concern of his, I assured him that I was not upset with him, even when he was being so childish and that I certainly would not leave him while he needed me.

The climb up his stairs tired him. He changed his clothes slowly, his arms obviously heavy with weariness. I helped him into his pajamas, then climbed with him into the bed, holding him close. Soon he fell asleep, his head nestled on my shoulder.

During his recovery, he hardly let me out of his sight. He slept a great deal, but it only seemed that my presence would assure him of a proper rest. If I left him, he fell into night terrors that left him shivering. It concerned me, but he recovered quickly. It amazed me how easily he healed, especially when he had someone to care for him.

We stayed at his apartment for the duration. After we returned to the base, our routines continued as if nothing had changed. We took care of Major Carter to be certain that she ate and slept rather than debilitate herself completely. Our weekends were spent off-base where I learned more about the world I had chosen as home. We went to many cultural exhibits, a ballet, an opera and a gay bar. The latter experience taught me that Tau'ri and human ideas of beauty were just as varied and that beauty was in the individual's taste. Both of us had to turn down many suitors. It was one of the few times that I did not have to wear a hat. Some of the clothes were so bizarre that my tattoo seemed rather tame in comparison. A number of men asked what it symbolized. After the 17th such question, I ignored them, as Daniel suggested.

Approximately 3 months after O'Neill's stranding, Major Carter told us the device was completed. That night, Daniel and I took her out to dinner and took her to his apartment. He knew that she was physically and emotionally exhausted and wanted her to be nearby if she

had any nightmares or if she had the desire to merely speak. She fell into his bed without a word. I held Daniel as we sat on the couch, both of us too concerned to do more that Major Carter might observe.

"Poor Sam," he said quietly. "If this thing doesn't work, she'll be devastated."

"You do not believe it will work?"

"Oh, if anyone can pull it off, it's Sam. It's just that I'm worried that something'll go wrong. That means another 8 and half months before Jack even gets some closure one way or other. I don't think Sam can take it."

I nodded. "Because she is in love with O'Neill."

"Yeah," he breathed. "I hate these regs. I hate having to live with 'em just because I work with them. I..."

I wished to hear no more, so I covered his lips with my finger. I knew that this life upset him, but he would not let it go any more than I would return to Apophis of my own free will. There was no reason to belabor this point. I felt his lips curl into a smile under my finger.

"Broken record, huh?"

He must have assumed this would confuse me, because he then explained what kind of "record" could be broken that would have any bearing on our conversation. He turned back to me thoughtfully.

"Teal'c, could you tell me that joke you told us about Setesh's guards in Chular?" At my puzzlement, he continued, "I just want to understand why it's so funny."

I did as he requested. For a moment he was silent, then he smiled, then he laughed out loud, though he smothered it quickly in a pillow to let Major Carter sleep. His shoulders shook for several minutes. He continued to snicker for quite a while, which made conversing with him rather strange, as he would start laughing again when what we spoke of was not particularly humorous. He fell asleep early in the morning.

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The device was moved slowly into the Embarkation room, the technicians handling it with the great respect it deserved. Major Carter, who looked much better for the night's sleep, watched every move, every monitor to be certain that everything was in its proper place for the experiment. All personnel were silent, each wishing her the best of luck.

When the MALP was destroyed, I could see the devastation on the collected faces, except Major Carter's. Immediately she had the transmissions from the MALP analyzed and hope was born again. Carefully, she explained the situation. We all knew who had to complete this mission. I felt Daniel tense behind me, but he said nothing. Even as we drew up the list of what items I would need to achieve my goal, Daniel said nothing. He would not meet my eyes.

I drew him aside when I was able. His eyes pleaded with me not to go, even though his mouth would not utter the words. He knew the risk. He knew I was the only one capable of the strain this mission would entail. And though his eyes begged me not to go because he could not bear to lose both of us, he respected my desire to help O'Neill.

"Come home to me," he said in Chular, just in case anyone overheard us.

"I will," I promised him.

After looking around to see that we were not under observation, he kissed me hard on the lips. "I love you," he told me. My heart pounded to hear those words.

"I love you as well, my Daniel."

I left him in the control room. Laden with the equipment necessary for my mission, I fired the speargun into the event horizon. When the Trinium point buried into the wall beyond, I pulled hard on the line to make certain of its secureness, then I triggered the retracting device, running to the Stargate.

Once I had reached the other side, the device took over and pulled me to the ceiling of the chamber the reactor had created. Quickly I set up the additional securing rings and the harness, the lights and the oxygen tank. The Stargate added an eerie blue light to the chamber, but I knew it would only last until the Gate closed. With a drill, I began to break into the melted metal above me.

Major Carter began a countdown to let me know when I could expect to be completely alone. No matter what happened, they knew they could not open the Stargate again. If I was not dead, it would kill me. Within moments, I was left in near darkness. The flashlight I had taken with me did not penetrate the gloom as the Stargate had.

I worked. The naquada that had formed the makeshift iris for the E Moran Stargate made the work very slow. However, at three hours and 45 minutes of my 4 hours, the metal gave and I found myself dealing only with rock. I drilled into the rock, knowing now that it was a race against time that I could win.

Suddenly, I heard O'Neill's voice coming across my radio. I told him my situation and his RDF signal led him to me. I knew when he had arrived when I heard the sound of instruments pounding into the ground above me. Within moments, the ground opened to the surface and O'Neill's face appeared at the opening.

"Teal'c! You are one stubborn son of a bitch!" he cried. He and Garan continued to widen the hole until I could pull myself out. O'Neill patted me roughly on the shoulder. Garan's expression was unreadable - I do not think that even he knew how he felt about my sudden appearance. Laura stood close by. Her expression was cold.

It took us 3 days to completely dig out the Stargate. It took another for it to recharge in the sun, so that we could manually dial Earth's address. All the while, O'Neill looked torn. Now, I understood why Daniel thought he might not return and why Daniel was probably the only one who knew that he might not. O'Neill looked rested, happy. Every night while I slept by the Gate in a tent, unwilling to be far from my link to Daniel, he stayed at Laura's house. His emotions swung wildly from wanting to distance himself from his feelings for Laura to being unable to let her go. On the 3rd day, he had made up his mind to return to Earth and worked with vigor.

Daniel and Major Carter stepped out of the event horizon simultaneously. Her eyes immediately sought O'Neill while Daniel looked for me. Soon after their arrival, the refugees from Edora began to emerge from the Stargate. Excited to be reunited with their relatives and overwhelmed with the generosity of the Tau'ri who had supplied them with enough food and medicine to last them for weeks, they flew into the arms of their loved ones, talking all the while.

O'Neill gave a brief greeting to Daniel and Major Carter. Relieved to see him at last, she hid her emotions behind the facade of giving him a report, from which he walked away before she had completed 2 sentences. I could see her face fall as she turned to Daniel.

"Is he all right?" she asked.

"He's fine," Daniel assured her. "I just don't think he was expecting to go home again."

She turned back to where the Colonel had met up with Laura. Her eyes were full of sadness. "You must be very happy to be going home."

"No, I'm not," he told her.

Major Carter wanted to hear no more. She stalked away a few steps when Daniel caught up, gently laying his hand on her shoulder. "How *could* he?" she hissed. "I worked my ass off and..."

Daniel smiled sadly. "Wait till he gets his feet back under him, Sam. It looks like he finally accepted he wasn't going to go home and suddenly, here we are. Give him some time to get

back into the swing of things."

Daniel continued to reassure her while O'Neill spoke quietly with Laira. They both knew it was goodbye, though O'Neill promised to return soon. He hugged her tight, then moved to join us. Strangely somber, he voiced none of his usual idioms to urge us home. No one spoke as we returned to Earth.

A party had been set up in our absence. I believed that most of the SGC was awaiting our arrival. Amidst the welcoming party that crowded the Embarkation Room, Daniel slipped away from O'Neill's side and disappeared. I tried to follow him, but O'Neill walked up to me just then, an insincere smile on his face that he maintained only to please everyone else. "Carter tells me you had some problem with Jaffa. Why didn't you tell me?"

"It was nothing with which you needed to be concerned, Colonel O'Neill. It happened while you were unable to return."

"Daniel got hurt?"

I kept my face impassive. "Daniel Jackson has made a complete recovery, O'Neill. He has been deemed fit by Dr. Frazier."

He looked like he wished to say something, but only thanked me for taking care of him. I bowed my head, accepting his thanks. I watched him return to Major Carter and General Hammond's sides, feeling strangely triumphant. In 100 days we had both found love, but I was allowed to keep mine.

The End

To be continued in "A Single Star - Grey"