

Summary: J/B H/R Other Pairings Earth lost their war for freedom and as a result, the survivors of the alien Prantell Empire find themselves changed.

Categories: [The Sentinel](#) Characters: Blair Sandburg, Daryl Banks, Daryl/Other, Ensemble, Henri (H) Brown, Henri/Rafe, Jim Ellison, Jim/Blair, Joel Taggart, Original Character(s), Rafe, Simon Banks, Simon/Other

Genres: Gen, PreSlash, Slash

Warnings: Previous Warnings Apply

Challenges: None

Series: Slaves of the Prantell

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Chapter 7 by Scorpio

~~~one month later~~~

Blair loftily ignored the expression on his lovers handsome face. It was an amusing combination of horrified fascination and tolerant disgust. At that moment, Blair didn't really care. He wanted, no... needed a peanut-butter, pickle and golnza sprout sandwich. And an ice cold glass of frunto juice. Yeah. That would hit the spot.

Finally finished creating his masterpiece, or the 'edible concoction' as Jim insisted on calling it, Blair lifted the sandwich to his mouth and took a large bite. The pickle went 'crunch' and Jim went "Ewww, Chief..." Raising one eyebrow, Blair considered his faintly green-around-the-gills mate.

The big man was leaning up against the large food-prep table looking wonderfully rumped and still half asleep. He wore only a pair of pale blue boxers and his thick, fluffy robe. The shallow cut he had gotten down his left arm while helping to repair a storm damaged com-link relay tower was almost completely healed. His short hair was sticking up in every direction at once and pink pillow marks ran in a crooked line across his cheek. All in all, he was beyond adorable.

"Sorry, but I told you I was hungry for pickles man."

Jim sighed the sigh of the long suffering while lightly shaking his head. "It's not your cravings for pickles in the middle of the night that gets to me. After the past three nights, I'm kind of used to being elbowed awake only to hear, 'Pickles Jim. I need pickles.' It's the other stuff you eat with the pickles that does me in."

Blair looked from his favorite blue eyes to the soggy half eaten sandwich in his hand. Sure, it was an... odd combination of foods, but it did taste good. Blair took a small bite and softly giggled at the face Jim made.

"Hey man. It's not my fault. It's this kid of yours that's demanding the middle of the night pickle feasts."

Blair watched as Jim's expression softened into a sappy smile of happiness at the very mention of the baby. Eyes shinning brightly and silly grin firmly in place, the big man reached out and gently wrapped his arms around Blair. Leaning back against Jim's muscled chest, he hummed in

pleasure as warm hands came up to gently stroke his furred stomach.

With the wonderful warmth of Jim's body pressing tightly along his back, Blair looked down at his lover's hands while his thoughts drifted.

The seasons on Farming Planet J2X83 were inexorably turning. The Autumn Equinox was upon them and the Harvest would begin soon. The days were gradually getting shorter and a slight chill was in the air. It was true that the Prantellian 'sleep gas' had altered Terran genetics so that they no longer suffered from changes in temperature, but after several years on the farming planet, they all knew the signs.

Blair wanted to do something special to mark the Harvest this year. He wasn't sure if it was due to his pregnancy or his official status as Shaman, but he wanted to celebrate the Equinox. He knew that almost every culture on Earth had celebrated the season in some way, no matter where they were or during what period of time throughout history. Blair was familiar with most of the traditions through his studies. Even the societies that were no longer based along agricultural lines celebrated the harvest. A prime example of that was Halloween.

With the season coming on, Blair thought it might be nice to have a sort of Harvest Festival with singing, dancing and story telling. Maybe a quick ritual to welcome the Spirits and thank them for a good Harvest. He figured it would be a good tradition to start and one that would appeal to young children. And in a few short years, there would, hopefully, be a lot of young children to enjoy it.

Blair figured that he should bounce a few ideas off of Jim and get his input. Over the years, he had found that there were amazing depths to his lover and that he had a startling gift for insight. Blair just had to get him thinking in the right direction first. Once that happened, it was a joy to watch Jim's mind work.

Smiling at the thoughts of his lover, Blair finally realized what he had been sightlessly staring at while lost in his thoughts. His stomach. His slightly rounded, no longer flat tummy. He had never noticed before, but his pregnancy was starting to show.

With a deep felt sense of awe and amazement, Blair slowly ran his own hand over the gentle slope. Yes, it was definitely beginning to round outwards. Blair felt his eyes get wide.

"Jim. I'm beginning to show, aren't I?"

Jim's arms tightened around him slightly and soft lips pressed a kiss to the back of his neck. "Yeah Babe, you are."

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Henri Brown lay on his back with a loopy grin on his face as he marveled at his lover once again. Just a month ago, Brian had been insistent that they wouldn't have oral sex because they were both 'guys' and guys just didn't do that. He had said the 'make-out sessions and hand-jobs' were different, because they both did have active libidos after all. Now, just a few weeks later, one Brian Rafe was trying to suck his lover's eyes out through his well-endowed cock. Henri didn't mind, in fact, he both enjoyed and encouraged that endeavor.

Henri had known that eventually Brian would give in on this point and he had been right. About a week ago, oral sex had become a part of their loving making repertoire. He had gone down on Rafe, male genitalia only at Brian's adamant insistence, and Brian had proven himself a world class cocksucker as well.

Right now, at this very moment, his beloved was doing wonderful things with his amazing tongue. The warm wet sensation gliding over the crown of his cock caused his balls to shiver in delight. A wordless moan of pleasure escaped his lips.

Using the last functioning part of his mind to not thrust too hard into the wonder that was his lover's mouth, Henri began to gently roll his hips. The soft licking changed to a sweet sucking sensation and Henri could feel his throbbing shaft slide in and out past those lusciously soft lips.

Suddenly, the hot wet mouth was gone and Henri couldn't help the cry of denial and loss that was torn from his throat. A wickedly throaty chuckle rose around him and he peeked open one eye to see a mischievous glint sparkling in Brian's big beautiful eyes. A lump caught in his throat and his heart skipped a beat. It had been so long since he had seen that look in his partner's eyes. Too long.

"Don't worry lover. I'm not stopping, I just want to try something,... different. Okay?"

Henri almost didn't believe his ears. Brian wanted to try something different? His lover was wonderful in so many ways, but the man had been almost destroyed by the forced gender alteration surgery and since then he has been very timid sexually. It was a dream come true to have Brian open up and be confident enough to suggest anything let alone something new... Henri's heart swelled with love.

"Anything you want Babe. Just name it and I'm there."

He was answered by a blinding smile and twinkling eyes. Then, without any warning or explanation, Brian twisted his body around completely on the bed and carefully straddled Henri's head. Henri gasped in delight. Looking up he was rewarded with an up close and beautiful view of Brian's throbbing hard cock, softly furred balls, and tucked behind that, his virgin female sex. It was all he could do not to come at the very sight of his lover splayed wide over him.

Once his knees were settled in place, Brian leaned over Henri, stretching his body over top of his own. Then those wonderfully soft lips were back to nibbling and sucking his cock. A wave of dizzy pleasure washed over him and he mindlessly opened his own mouth to capture the leaking cock in front of his nose.

The taste of his beloved exploded across his tongue and he whimpered at the exquisite pleasure. A tremor of urgency worked its way down his spine and everything else fell away. All that existed in the universe was him and Brian and it felt like a slice of Heaven. Henri sent a silent prayer of thanks to any God or Goddess who might be listening for having delivered him Brian Rafe as a best friend, partner and lover.

Brian soon picked up an erotic rhythm with his lips and tongue. Henri tried to mimic it as best as possible and almost immediately, they were moving in unison, matching each other's movements and answering each other's desire with desire of their own. It was magical.

Brian sucked down hard on the head of his cock and then lightly swirled his tongue around the swollen crown. It was too much for Henri. He felt his balls pull up tight as he started to shudder and shake in his lover's tender embrace. With passion and love flaring brightly in his heart, Henri shot his completion into his lover's suckling mouth only to feel those talented throat muscles milk him dry. His orgasm triggered his beloved's and pure unadulterated Brian Rafe poured into his mouth and down his throat. At that moment, Henri was certain, it wasn't just a slice of Heaven, it was the whole pie.

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As Jim walked over to the disposal unit with the remains of his lunch on the orange plastic tray he

could no longer suppress his smile. Even with Harvest time fast approaching and the number of jobs needing to be done steadily increasing, Simon had managed to finagle it so that he was able to take his lunch break at the same time that he and Henri did. That in itself was a pleasant thing, but it was the reason that Simon had wanted to speak to them that had caused his smile.

Somewhere along the way, the tall, strong, black man had picked up a secret admirer. It was sweet and charming the way he was being courted by some unknown and totally love-struck person.

The ex-Captain of Major Crimes had admitted that for several days now, he had been finding small gifts with his name on them. Some were left on his bed, some outside his door. One was even left with his work equipment for him to find at the beginning of his work shift. None of them had a name or any clue as to who might have left them and Simon was dying of curiosity.

The gifts were all small and easy to come by for a slave and none were considered to be 'contraband', so they wouldn't put Simon at risk from the guards. They were usually wildflowers or a polished stone woven into a bracelet or some such thing. The gifts were romantic and touching. The secret admirer had definitely perked the big man's interest.

The thing that was most intriguing, and to Jim's way of thinking, totally on target, was the secrecy. Obviously, this person knew Simon well enough to know that he, as an ex-detective, would enjoy the thrill of the hunt and solving the mystery.

That was also the crux of the 'lunch meeting' as well. Simon had once again, put his former detectives on a case. Simon knew how to use Jim, Blair, Henri and Brian to his best advantage. He had spent years doing just that in the Major Crimes Unit at the Cascade P.D. and now, he had another case to solve. The Case of the Secret Admirer. Tonight, after dinner, the five of them were to gather in Simon's room at Terran Barrack 3247-R to examine the evidence and put together a plan.

Jim was, however, honest enough with himself to admit that he was excited about this for two reasons. Yes, he was happy for Simon and the chance for his friend to find love and happiness. The big man had been alone since before the invasion. After his divorce with Daryl's mother Joan, he had dated a few times, but it had never turned to a serious relationship. Jim understood. He too had been frightened about a serious commitment after his own divorce from Carolyn. However, the x-Captain had not had a relationship with anyone since the invasion either. Not even a brief dalliance. His friend was lonely, even if he wouldn't admit it.

The other part of his excitement over this whole thing was a bit more selfish. Jim wanted to solve a mystery. He too had been a detective, and a damn good one at that. He had always enjoyed the thrill of the chase, the solving of crimes, the piecing together of clues. It was a nice twist that this time, at the end of the hunt he wouldn't find a criminal, but a romantic. What's more, he knew that this 'covert-operation' would appeal to his lover as well. Blair was a born sucker for 'courtship rituals'.

Lunch tray in the disposal unit, Jim turned and followed an also smiling Henri Brown out of the slave compound's answer to a 'mess hall'. When they were half-way to the Maintenance Center a sound that was totally out of place caught his attention and he automatically focused his acute Sentinel hearing on it.

Metal against metal. Many booted feet and the clinking of sharp claws. The electric hum and whirl of magnetic winches and the babble of voices speaking in a familiar, but foreign Prantellian dialect.

Reaching out to stop Henri from walking away, he motioned his friend to follow quietly. Jim could almost see Henri's fine-honed cop instincts flare on-line and the big man nodded once. Together

they headed off in the direction that the noises were coming from.

Peering around the side of the Med-Lab, Jim and Henri could finally see what the ruckus was about. A double handful of Stragillon Guards were overseeing the unloading of a bunch of building materials by a group of about twenty Mytillese. The two had no idea why the alien slaves or the materials were there for, but they both felt a sense of unease.

The Mytillese were a furred race of beings that sported retractable claws and sharp fangs. They resembled a strange mix of Terran and tiger, as their short thick fur was normally striped with a combination of deep blues, forest greens, and pale yellows. They were stunningly beautiful to look upon, but they were horribly bad tempered and seemed to dislike Terrans on sight. No one knew why, but they usually went out of their way to be rude and hostile to any Terran that got near them. That they were there was a good indication that trouble would eventually crop up between the two slave races.

It was obvious that a building of some sort was going to be built on the compound. Almost all construction in the Empire was built by the hands and sweat of the Mytillese because they were so very skilled at it and no one, Terran or otherwise, would ever claim differently. But what the two ex-detectives wanted to know was what they were going to build, and why?

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Chapter 8 by Scorpio

~~~two weeks later~~~

Daryl sat on the uncomfortable bio-bed in room ML4 of the Med-Lab, simultaneously fighting off a wave of nervousness and a slight bout of nausea. After what seemed to be an eternity to the young hermaphrodite, his ex-Barrack-mate and friend, Mike walked back in. The E.M.T. turned Doctors Assistant/Nurse was carrying a portable L.T.D. screen data pad and was grinning widely.

"Well Daryl, all of the results for your tests have come back in."

Looking up at his friend, Daryl figured that the news was good. Mike wouldn't be cheerful otherwise. But if the tests came back fine, why did he feel so bad?

"Okay man. What did they say? Why did I throw up breakfast three days in a row?"

Daryl watched Mike's smile grow even bigger.

"Don't worry Daryl, you're not sick. You're pregnant."

Daryl Banks-Lee just stared, slack jawed, at his friend. Panic and relief warred within him. The relief was because he had known for the last seven months or so that the Prantellian overlords expected him to conceive, and now the nervous wait and fear of forced mating was over. The panic, however, was due to the fact that down deep, Daryl wasn't sure he was ready to be a parent.

On the lighter side, his husband would be thrilled.

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Responding to the urgent summons, Blair walked into the office of the compounds Stragillon Commander. It took a few seconds for his eyes to adjust to the dim lights, but when the spots cleared, he saw the Commander's secretary waving him over. Trying not to appear too nervous, Blair made his way swiftly over to the large desk.

The insectoid creature simply held up a scanner and Blair stretched out his arm so that the data chip implanted under the skin on his hand could be accessed. The data display screen blinked to life and all of Blair's official records scrolled up for easy viewing. The secretary read over them with amazing speed.

Unlike the medical scanners at the Med-Lab that only pulled up his basic information, minor skills list and his complete medical records, this scanner pulled up everything. It was all there, in great detail, ready to read if you knew how to move through the systems. Glancing quickly at the records moving rapidly across the screen, Blair didn't know if he should be impressed with all the things that he had accomplished since his capture, or be repulsed that every move he made had been noted by the Prantellians.

Suddenly, the Stragillon guard looked up at him and flashed him that race's version of a 'smile'. It wasn't pleasant to look at, but Blair recognized it as a 'friendly' expression.

"Terran number 32245-L-51-X28, born Blair Jacob Sandburg of Earth, religious title: Shaman. I will make note in your records that you appeared for your appointment on your own, without force, threat, or punishment."

Blair nodded. That was expected. For every scheduled appointment, they recorded exactly how you made it there. Some slaves only went to appointments by being dragged there on a leash while the fought like demons to get free. Those slaves usually ended up on a mining planet. Life expectancy on the mining colonies was pitifully short. Usually around two seasons. Blair had no desire to die from digging radio-active rocks on an atmosphere deprived planetoid. Farming and raising vegetables was way better in his humble opinion. A noise from the guard pulled his attention back.

"Congratulations on your first youngling incubation, Shaman. I see that Terran number 89566-P-37-K62 is listed as the sire."

Blair's hand automatically strayed down to rub at his slowly expanding waistline. Even the Stragillon's odd expression for pregnancy couldn't stop the blinding smile from crossing his face.

"Yes. Thank you."

Blair was about to ask the guard where he was expected to go when a buzzer sounded on the desk and the clicking, whirling language that was native Stragillon came across loud and clear. Blair couldn't understand a single word of it.

The secretary listened and then answered with a short double click and a soft shrill whistle. More Stragillon sounded over the intercom briefly before it turned off.

The secretary stood up and motioned Blair to proceed him through an air-lock style door that led to a long carpeted hallway beyond. They followed the hallway to another air-lock door. Walking inside, Blair found himself in the Prantellian version of an elevator. While he'd never admit it to anyone but Jim, Blair hated those as much as Terran elevators even though it had been years since the 'Galileo Incident'.

Finally, after fighting off a minor bout of vertigo, the doors opened up once again and Blair stepped out into another hallway. The Stragillon guard pointed to the left and motioned for Blair to proceed. They stopped outside of the most highly ornate doors on the compound. It was the office of the Stragillon Commander itself. Blair found himself very nervous.

The secretary pushed a discreet button and a chime sounded somewhere. On cue, the air-lock doors whooshed open and Blair was quickly ushered inside.

Opulence faced him from every corner and for one brief second, he was reminded of the office of Dean at Rainier University,... or perhaps the offices of the Mayor of Cascade. Then, the illusion faded as his mind cataloged all of the Prantellian technology and the alien artifacts.

The effect all of this had on him was interesting and one small detached part of his mind made note of it. He seemed to want to be three different people and have three different reactions to all this at the same time. The anthropologist in him wanted to study everything in the room, the tough Major Crimes Detective in him wanted to play it cool and mean, and the hermaphrodite slave in him wanted to just get out of here without any danger to the unborn child he carried under his heart.

Undecided on how he should act, Blair just stood quietly and looked around, waiting for the Commander to notice him. It didn't take long.

"Terran number 32245-L-51-X28, you have been accorded the religious rank of Shaman and as such, you will have certain duties laid upon you. If, for any reason, you can not fulfill these duties, I need to be notified so that arrangements can be made.

As Shaman, you will be responsible for all mating ceremonies between your people. I know that there have been a few already and that more are scheduled. You will also perform any other rituals your people require to ensure the proper raising of the younglings that will soon be born here.

That leads me to the main part of your duties as Shaman. You have noticed the building being erected across the way? Well, that is to be the Terran Cultural Center and Education Building. It will be the location of your rituals and where the younglings shall be educated and cared for while the parents work the fields.

The building is scheduled to be completed within another month. Once it is finished, you will be responsible for making sure the main hall is ready for any and all ceremonies as well as making sure that the areas set aside for the expected influx of Terran younglings will be set up with everything needed.

The records regarding the care and education of younglings that was captured from the Terran homeworld of Earth will be forwarded here so that you can get better prepared. If there is any special equipment or rations that will be needed, just see the secretary who escorted you up here for the proper requisition form.

Oh, I will also need you to put in a request two local days before you perform any Terran religious rituals. Just type it into a L.T.D. data pad. All I will need to know is the nature of the ritual along with any explanations of what will happen as well as the reason for the ritual, the Terran numbers and birth names of all participants and the Prantellian Standard Date that you wish to hold it on."

Blair blinked and nodded rapidly along with the clipped striations of the orders he was being given. It was a lot to take in at once, especially when it was barked at him in the Stragillon version of the Prantellian language. The Commander gave him the insectoid equivalent of a raised eyebrow expression of questioning.

"Terran number 32245-L-51-X28, do you understand your duties and responsibilities?"

"Y,... yes. Yes, I do."

"Good. You will be notified as soon as the Terran Cultural Center and Education Building is ready for you. Dismissed."

Blair stood there stunned for a brief moment, before he turned and scurried out of the lushly appointed office. He didn't even have time to catch his breath before the Commanders secretary hurried him back down the hall towards the elevators. Blairs mind was whirling way too fast for him to care about the abrupt treatment however. He had lots of planning to do.

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Simon grinned at Henri Brown's retreating back. The man had not lost his touch as an ace Detective in all the years since the invasion, Simon had to give him that. Henri had just delivered him the final piece to the puzzle, the last clue to the mystery. Simon now knew who his suspect was in the Case of the Secret Admirer.

Todd Stevens.

Todd Stevens had been a highschool English teacher as well as a community Little League Baseball Coach. Here on the slave compound, he was a field hand like Blair had been before being made the official Shaman.

He was a friendly man who was renown for telling stories, both from his days as a teacher and from the many books he had read. He was also the man who usually organized the weekly softball games that many of the men, himself included, enjoyed playing. In fact, the games he organized had become so popular, that the guards would let you play them the one day a week that they were held as a sort of reward for good behavior and a job well done.

Yeah, Todd was a good man with a swift mind and a generous and fun loving spirit. Just the kind of guy would enjoy such an enticing game of cat and mouse. Well, now the cat new where the mouse lived and he was on the hunt.

Self-satisfied smirk firmly in place, Simon went off to hunt down his little mouse. Todd wasn't going to know what hit him...

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Jim had just left Henri Brown moments before. His long time friend and one time co-worker had filled him in on the juicy details of Simons mystery date. After a few minutes of good natured joking and elbowing each others ribs, the two men decided that the best course of action was to spy on their former Captain.

With that in mind, Henri had slipped off to find Brian first, so that he could also enjoy the show. Jim knew that his own lover was in some meeting with the Doctor about what type of special equipment the new Terran Cultural Center should have installed while waiting for all the infants that were going to be born soon. So that meant that Blair would not be able to help spy on Simon.

Scouting out the territory on his solitary covert mission, Jim made a strange 'static-hiss' sound with his hand cupped over his mouth and pretended to relay information to 'Base Command'. He was sure that anyone who overheard him would think he had finally snapped, but he was in too fine and playful a mood to care.

"static-hiss-beep Panther One to Base Command. Come in Base Command. Over."

Turning his head and speaking out of the corner of his mouth in a squeaky voice, Jim answered himself.

"Panther One, this is Base Command. What's your position? Over."



"static-hiss-hiss-beep Panther One here, Base Command. I'm outside of the grain storage facility. Over."

"Panther One, go into Stealth Mode and move into position by Terran Barrack 5224-H. Over."

"static-beep Copy that Base Command. Going to Stealth Mode. Panther One out."

Mightily suppressing a giggle, Jim made his way over to the Barrack where Todd Stevens lived. He went to great pains to make sure that no one, Terran or Stragillon saw or heard him. Jim had a blast. Many of his new friends here and all of his old friends from back home on Earth knew that he played this 'game' with himself a lot. They knew it was something he did to help him keep up his skills learned in the Rangers. Only Blair knew that he was so silly about it or that he got such a kick out of it.

After a while, lots of people had gotten in on it. They all told each other that it was to keep them sharp, just in case they ever got the opportunity to use those skills to escape. Somehow, it had devolved along the way into an elaborate game of Gotcha. Someone would be the target and someone would be the operative. The assignments were drawn at random. The operative would then have to hunt down and 'tag' the target. If the target saw the operative coming, the operative lost the round. Jim was the undisputed champion of Gotcha.

But now, he had bigger and better prey than some field worker who was designated as the 'target'. He was in essence, hunting a hunter and so his quarry was to be considered much more dangerous. That thought made Jim smirk. A thwarted Simon Banks was very dangerous indeed. Of that, Panther One had no doubt.

Sliding swiftly around a corner on his way across the compound grounds, Panther One came across a sight that changed the dynamic of the 'game' drastically. Suddenly, Jim Ellison pretending to be an operative with the code name Panther One morphed into an angry Sentinel known as Jim Ellison the Panther. The Sentinel's anger was a fire that burned ice cold and a growl rumbled from his throat.

There, right before him, four Mytillese builders were tormenting Chin Lee, Kevin Lee's uncle. The furred creatures had surrounded the elderly Terran and were shoving him back and forth between them. They were baring their teeth and calling out insults and taunts. Jim could smell the fear pouring off of the old man.

Sentinel instincts kicked him like a mule and his mind saw red. He heard someone shouting out a challenge in ancient Chopec and vaguely realized that it was him doing so. He experienced flash impressions of soft fur, solid flesh, cracking bones and high pitched shrieks before a blast of intense light washed over him in a pain filled crackle of energy.

Stunned by the overwhelming pain, Jim could only turn slightly to catch a glimpse of the Stragillon guard aiming a phase rifle at him before he collapsed into the dirt next to a broken Mytillese body.

The last thing Jim heard before the darkness claimed him was Chin Lee praising his bravery for saving him from the brutal attack of the four fallen Mytillese.

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Chapter 9 by Scorpio

~~~two weeks later~~~

Two weeks. Two endless, torturous, pain filled weeks. Two weeks of punishment and reeducation. Two weeks without Blair.

Ever since he had stopped those Mytillese slaves from tormenting Chin Lee he had been in lock-down. It probably wouldn't have been so bad, except he had killed two of them and permanently damaged another. Of the four alien slaves, only one would recover. So, prisoner style lock-down and reeducation was ordered. The only thing that kept his punishment from being carried out for two months instead of two weeks was Chin Lee. He swore up and down that the Mytillese had started the incident.

Two weeks may not sound like a long time, but they are. Jim's cell was five feet long and five feet wide with a cement floor with a drain in the middle and pitted metal walls. There was no furniture at all in the room. No sink, no toilet, no bedroll. He was given no clothing and no blankets.

Sleeping was next to impossible. He couldn't stretch out in the cramped space and the cement floor was harsh against his sensitive skin. It was also cold and damp as there was no heat in the detention center. At least, not in prisoner holding. Jim felt as if he was nothing but a mass of cold, tight, aching muscles.

While the Stragillon's didn't pipe in heat, they did pipe in music. Sometimes for hours on end and never in any noticeable pattern. It was completely random and it was the same three riffs played over and over and over again. It was enough to drive you mad. This insistent tune that wouldn't leave you alone.

What was more, Jim's Sentinel hearing could discern a softly spoken subliminal message underneath the discordant jangling music. "You shall obey the laws of the Empire. You shall honor and serve your masters. You shall not resist your station as a slave." Sometimes he was aware of the message consciously, sometimes he wasn't.

There was an element of his imprisonment that was completely predictable however. Every hour on the hour the light fixture on the ceiling of his cell would turn on. It was blindingly bright, like a halogen hooked up to a nuclear reactor. Every time that light came on, Jim was to stand up and state his Terran I.D. number and his birth name and planet.

He was fed two meals a day. They consisted of a bowl of tasteless mush and a cup of water. He was also bathed every night. It was accomplished with a hose spraying icy water. This however, had a dual purpose. It cleaned, not only him, but his cell as well.

During the day, he was taken from his cell for two hours. The first hour was for reeducation. He listened to lecture after lecture on his duty and station. The rules were stated to him over and over again. They covered Empirical law, local law, Chain of Command, procedure, and traditional punishments for various crimes.

The second hour was devoted to what his guards called punishment, but what he termed torture. In some ways, it was always the same. He was tied down and pain was applied to his body liberally. It was how the pain was given or to what he was tied that was different.

Mostly, it was a wall he was shackled to and then he was poked and prodded with a device called a Pain Amplifier. It looked like a Police Baton with a series of buttons on the one end and a blunt metal tip on the other. When activated, and then applied to Terran flesh, the metal tip would send pain impulses through the closest nerve endings. It had a range from a mild shock to exquisite agony that left you swimming in sweat, tears, and the echoes of your own screams.

Two weeks. He had suffered at the hands of his jailers for two weeks. But he was being released today. He was being sent back into the loving and gentle hands of his mate. All he was waiting on was the Prantillian version of paperwork to go through.

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Simon tipped his head back and laughed. A deep, loud, all out belly laugh. He howled with mirth until his body shook and his sides hurt. Gasping for breath and slapping at his thigh, a low throaty chuckle washed over him.

Manfully pulling himself together by sheer act of will, Simon carefully removed his glasses to wipe away the tears of joy before they had a chance to spill down his cheeks. Shaking his head slowly from side to side, he glanced over to see Todd smirking at him.

To Simon's great delight, Todd had proved to be a gentle and generous person with a truly wicked sense of humor. Todd had been telling him a story about his first year teaching highschool English, complete with editorial comments. Simon had no trouble visualizing a young and enthusiastic Todd trying to explain to a bunch of 16 year old kids why it was better to read the dusty old book instead of watching the star-studded block-buster, special effects packed movie version. He was sure that somewhere along the way, he himself had argued that very point with Daryl.

With a last few giggles escaping, Simon realized that it had been a very long time since he had laughed so hard. It felt good to let go and just enjoy being alive. Todd had given that back to him. Even if it was only for a few minutes at a time, Simon had been able to forget and be happy.

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Daryl stood next to his best friend and husband in the Frunto Tree Orchard. Four hours into their twelve hour shift, he found that he was already a bit nervous about tonight. It had been slowly building up since last night when they had made the decision to tell Kevin's uncle, Chin Lee about Daryl's pregnancy at dinner after shift. Daryl was certain that by tonight, he'd be a nervous wreck.

Daryl wasn't afraid that Chin would be upset. On the contrary, the elderly man would be very happy to know that his families line would continue. This was news to celebrate with friends and family.

No, Daryl wasn't worried about that. He was worried that the wizened man would be able to see into Daryl's soul. See his secret fears. He felt that Chin would be able to look into his eyes and learn the horrible truth.

The truth was, Daryl didn't think he was going to make a good mother.

Oh, he would love and cherish his child. Of that there was no doubt. But it took more than love to raise a child up right. It took strength, courage, discipline and a selfless devotion. Daryl didn't think he had what it took.

He hadn't been born to be a mother, and Prantillian surgery aside, he wasn't sure he could be. The very concept of being a mother was scary. A mother was a nurturer, a comforter, a soothing balm for the lumps that life threw at a child. Mothers were full of hugs and kisses and soft words of wisdom. Mothers were kind, gentle, wonderful creatures of love and mercy.

Daryl knew that Blair was going to be a great mother. As for himself, well, he figured he would be a total failure at it. Not that he wouldn't try to be a good mother, but he was certain that his best wouldn't be good enough. And while his failure would break his heart, the real tragedy was that the unborn child he carried deserved the very best of everything, including a mother.

Suddenly, a gentle hand rubbing across the small of his back pulled him out of his thoughts. Turning, Daryl looked into the worried eyes of his husband and smiled wanly.

"You okay, love?"

The tender concern and adoration Kevin felt for him rang through his voice loud and clear. Love and trust shone in his eyes like beacons in a storm. Ruthlessly shoving down his fears and feelings of inadequacy, Daryl tried to sound more cheerful than he felt.

"Yeah, sure. I'm fine, just... woolgathering."

Kevin looked as if he was going to say more, but just then one of the Stragillon guards came by and motioned them back to work. Guiltily grateful for the reprieve, Daryl focused his attention back on the control panel that operated his harvester.

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Blair rushed in through the front door of Terran Barrack 3247-R as soon as word of Jim's release came to him. He glanced around the main dining hall swiftly, looking for some clue as to where his mate was. A clatter of dropped silverware came from the kitchen.

"Jim?!"

Blair didn't wait for an answer, he dashed around the long table and threw open the kitchen door. There, standing at the food prep table with a half eaten sandwich dropped in front of him and then forgotten, was Jim. His wonderful, beautiful, horribly missed lover.

"blair..."

It was barely a whisper. It was a prayer of longing and thanksgiving all at once.

Suddenly, like a statue come miraculously to life, Jim closed the distance between them and swept Blair up into his thick strong arms. One hand was pressed against Blair's back, holding their bodies close together, chest to chest. The other hand had buried itself in Blair's long curls, cradling his head against Jim's neck.

Blair could feel Jim's cheek rubbing against the top of his head as he whispered his love over and over again. The Sentinel's large frame began a gentle quaking within Blair's arms and he knew that the big man was crying. Letting out all the pain and worry and loneliness that he had been forced to endure. Blair just held him tighter, whispering soft words of love and comfort.

They stayed locked in their embrace for an eternity that ended all too soon. It was beautiful and warm and it made the world seem to be bearable once again. Then Jim pulled back slightly, shifting Blair away from his neck. Blair clung to him and whimpered a denial.

"Shhh... Love. I,... I just want to look at you. Please. Let me... let me see you."

A watery half laugh escaped Blair. He could do this. He could let go and step back. Funny, but his arms didn't want to let go of Jim. It took quite an effort, but he finally gave one last squeeze and then took a small step back.

He watched as Jim opened up his Sentinel senses and filled them with himself. His sight, his hearing, his sense of smell. Jim reached out and gently wrapped a curl around one of his fingers.

"So beautiful. Oh Blair, you're so... Baby I missed you so badly. I love you Blair, gods how I love you"

"I love you too Jim. It was so hard with you gone. So very hard. I,... I don't know what I would do without you. I really don't."

"I'm here now Babe. I'm back where I belong. With you."

The Jim's hand slowly worked its way down to his cheek. A gentle caress and then they were kissing. Oh the joy of touching soft lips to soft lips. Tasting, caressing, loving. Then Blair opened his mouth and Jim was inside him, tongues mating together. All the fear and loneliness and pain turned inside out and blazed within him as passion and lust. It burned hot and bright and scorched him from the inside.

Jim moaned into his mouth. Need vibrated through him.

"Upstairs. Now. I want you. Need you. Love you. Now."

Grasping hold of his lover's hand, Blair turned and led the way through the dining hall and up the stairs. It was a matter of minutes before they were locked in their bedroom, undressed and in each other's arms.

Jim ran his hand down Blair's chest and over his child swollen belly. His blue eyes softened for just a moment and then hunger shone from them once more. Gently, Jim lowered him onto the bed so that he lay on his back in the middle of the mattress. Then, Jim crawled on hands and knees so that he was hovering over him, bodies separated by mere inches.

Jim leaned down and kissed him. It was a soul devouring kiss that alternated between sweetly gentle and demandingly possessive. It was pure love and savage need and Blair surrendered to it with wanton abandon. That kiss made him feel sexy and sensual and loved and needed and oh so wanted. He could feel his heart race and his blood surge.

With what sounded suspiciously like a cross between a rumbling purr and a triumphant growl, Jim broke off the kiss. Panting, with his face a mere inch from Blair's, he licked his lips, savoring the taste of his lover's mouth. Blair shivered from the surge of lust that act created in him.

Jim leaned down to him again, but instead of kissing him, he filled his senses with Blair's taste and scent. He nuzzled and licked and nipped and sniffed. Behind his ear, under his chin, along his neck. It was the most erotic thing that Blair had ever experienced in his life.

And it didn't stop there. Jim worked his way over Blair's collarbone, across his chest. He paid special attention to the swollen breasts and tender nipples. Bolts of tingling sensation spread across his skin as Jim's tongue flicked across one tight bud of flesh before claiming it in his hot wet mouth.

Blair arched into the delicious touch. His cock throbbed as blood filled it to a painful hardness and a starburst of juices exploded between his legs as his vagina opened up, ready to be filled with Jim's manhood. Without conscious thought, Blair spread his legs wide in silent invitation to be taken by his mate.

He writhed under Jim as his lover's tongue dragged sensuously across his skin, blazing a trail of passion to his other aching nipple. The Sentinel licked and suckled at the straining flesh and Blair cried out soft encouragement.

"Yes,... love you... yes... need you... Jim... Jim... love..."

And then he was moving down, down the rounded belly, bestowing kisses and gentle nibbles. Worshipping Blair with his lips and tongue and hands. He sniffed and then licked at the crease between his thigh and tummy and Blair moaned at the tender waves of passion that strummed through him. Love and lust and need vibrated his soul.

Without warning, Jim swooped down and swallowed Blair's cock to the root. Hot, wet, suction

overwhelmed him and he exploded into a swirling chaos of light and sound. Pleasure washed over him in dizzying waves and he heard himself shout Jim's name.

Panting heavily, Blair slowly came back to himself. He was still alive, still breathing, still naked on his back in bed with Jim. His lover was on his knees between Blair's wide spread legs. He wore a look of love and lust and adoration that burned behind his bright blue eyes. Strong gentle hands rubbed his thighs before positioning them around his muscled waist.

"Love you Blair."

Suddenly, Jim's thick cock was sliding inside his passion slick vagina, stretching him, filling him, possessing him. He trembled at the wonderful sensation. His body vibrating with the need to feel Jim pressing tightly into him. And then he was there. His balls firmly against his ass, pelvis rubbing against the underside of his own balls. Joined. One.

Spasms of exquisite pleasure rolled through his body. The low gasp that escaped Jim let him know that Jim could feel his muscles tightening and loosening around his cock. That thought made the pleasure even more intense for Blair.

"Love you too, Jim. Gods, I love you so much."

Then Jim started to move. Long, slow, smooth strokes that spoke of worship and trust and love. Blair could feel every inch of Jim's hot penis slide into him, stretching him. He could feel every inch slide back, leaving him empty, nerve endings screaming for more.

Each gentle stroke rubbed at a spot deep within him that made his blood sing. The slow steady rhythm built up the pressure increment by increment until Blair thought he would go mad from it. He arched into each tender thrust and sobbed at each withdrawal. He whispered broken, unintelligible words of love and devotion as Jim slowly melted his mind and captured his soul.

Suddenly, the tenderness and the gentle strokes filled him to overflowing and he was drowning in sensation as his body rippled and trembled through orgasm. His vaginal muscles clenched tightly around Jim and the Sentinel gasped and moaned before shuddering his completion.

Gasping and panting, Blair gazed in wonder and awe at his lover. He had never come so hard from such soft and gentle touches. Jim didn't take him, instead he gave himself to Blair. Gave himself with such beauty and love that it redefined Blair's understanding of the act.

Holding his arms open wide, he let Jim nestle his large body around Blair and then his stroked and petted and murmured softly until the big man fell into a soft sleep in his arms. Pressing one last tender kiss to his forehead, Blair swiftly followed him into the land of nod.

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Chapter 10 by Scorpio

~~~two days later~~~

Henri stood quietly and waited. He wasn't sure what was going on, but whatever it was, it was urgent. The Stragillon Guards were carrying out orders that were being given in their own alien and shrill clicking language, so he could only go by what he could see. His detective skills might be a little rusty from being used so infrequently, but they were still there, and what they told him was upsetting.

All of the 15 Terrans that had been gathered together so quickly and without warning, were all completely male. There was not a single hermaphrodite among them. And the selection of Terrans was pretty hard evidence that something important was happening. Almost all of the maintenance and repair crew were here, himself and Jim Ellison included. Mike, the Doctor's Medical Assistant was here as well. There were also some field workers and a young teenager

called Runner, who, because of his long legs and fast speed, had been assigned to literally run messages between the field workers and their overseers.

Yes, something major was happening and before long, Henri knew that he and his fellow Terrans were going to be neck deep in it. Whatever it was though, he just hoped that it would be over and done with quickly so he could get back to Brian. His love had been near hysteria when the Stragillon Guards had come to the Barracks and removed himself, Jim and Mike in the middle of the night. They had hustled the Terrans out so fast, that Henri barely had time to tell Brian to go stay with Blair and for them to take care of each other until he and Jim could return.

A few high pitched orders whistled in the Stragillon version of the Prantellian language pulled Henri from his thoughts. Quickly the Terrans shuffled around so that they were all in a line. Without even discussing it, Henri and Jim both pushed a few of their fellow Terrans aside, so that they could stand next to each other. Neither said it, but it was 'just in case'. It was for more than just a familiar face, it was for the comfort and security of being near someone you could trust to watch your back.

Once they were all lined up and waiting, a pair of the insectoid creatures worked their way down the line of Terrans with tracking collars. Henri could hear an odd sound and turned to find Jim glaring at the Guards, a low growl issuing from his throat. Henri didn't blame him.

Tracking collars were used whenever the Guards took any slaves off of the sealed compound. It was a way to insure that none of the slaves would try to escape, and if one did, they could find him fast and easy. The tracking collars were linked electronically to a main tracking unit that one of the Guards would then carry. One unit could coordinate up to 30 collars. A slave could only move so far from the unit before the collar would begin to emit electric pulses that caused severe pain, temporary nerve damage, and minor burns to the skin. It also served as a tracking beacon at all times with a planet wide range.

Henri and Jim had both suffered at the hands of tracking collars before while trying to escape several years ago. It was a distinctly unpleasant memory. That escapade very nearly had all of them sent to a mining planet. Henri shuddered at the thought.

Suddenly, the Stragillon Guard was in front of him, reaching out to snap the tracking collar in place. Instinctively, Henri leaned away from it. Only Jim's steady hand on his arm kept him from throwing a hard quick punch and then running for the hills.

Click. Snap.

The collar was on and activated. A gentle hum ran through the metal devise around his neck. He felt nauseous. Jim's grip on his arm tightened viciously. He glanced over to see the collar around his neck being turned on. Henri knew that Jim hated the collars worse then anything. He had once said that the hum vibrated his teeth and messed with his hearing. At the time it hadn't made much sense, but now Henri knew about Jim's Sentinel abilities. He knew his friend had to be watched for what Blair called a Zone-out. The electronic hum from the collar was a bigger threat to Jim than anyone else.

One of the Stragillon Guards started briefing them. A rescue mission to another one of the Terran slave compounds on the northern continent. An underground compound used to farm various types of fungus, lichens and to mine for phosphorus and a native crystal called Sim'loc. There had been a cave in and several Terrans were trapped. They needed some extra man-power to help dig the trapped mushroom farmers and Sim'loc miners out of the tunnels.

Briefing over, the guards quickly loaded the Terran's onto an atmospheric personnel transport. Once loaded in the hold and belted in for safety and easier control, the transport powered up and took off. It was only a matter of thirty minutes to cross half the planet to the northern hemisphere

and then to land in the transport hanger outside of the secured, underground slave compound.

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The hallway was very dark. The only illumination at all were pale bluish lights high up on the rock walls. The floor, fortunately, was polished smooth and the corridors were very wide. This made it easier for the Terrans to walk down the hallway without stumbling or tripping any more than was necessary. Jim knew that for the rest of his fellow captives, the underground compound seemed pitch black, but his Sentinel eyesight allowed him to see everything quite clearly. The pale bluish lights were more than adequate for him.

He knew that eventually, his fellow Terrans eyes would adjust to the minuscule light source, but until then, they all seemed to converge on him. It was as if they were drawing courage or strength from him. He found himself whispering descriptions of the place and trying to calm any fears about what was out there in the dark.

It was slightly unnerving though. Little by little, his abilities had made the rounds of rumors on the Farm Compound where he and Blair had spent the last two and a half years. After a while he owned up to them, but made it clear that the overseers and the Prantellian Overlords must never know about them. Jim was afraid he would be used to hunt down rogue and escaped slaves. He would rather die than do that, so the Terrans had been very good about keeping his secret, but there was always a chance that one of the guards would over hear something or just plain figure it out.

As a group, they were led out of the corridor and into a vast room with row upon row of mushroom beds. Each shallow four foot by two foot wooden mushroom bed was placed squarely on a rack that held a total of five beds, stacked one over the other. A few of the Terrans sneezed at the overwhelming mold spores floating in the air. Even the high-tech air circulators and filters couldn't prevent it with the sheer number of mushrooms in the cavernous room.

Once leaving the dark and musty room, they entered another corridor. The group was directed to turn left and follow the passageway. This hallway was more narrow, but just as dark. It also lead deeper into the complex. They passed a series of hydraulic doors that Jim assumed led into other storage and growing rooms for fungus and lichens. He could almost identify them by smell alone, but some of them were unknown to him.

At the end of the corridor, they were herded into a large cargo elevator. A series of codes were punched into the wall unit and the big machine began to move. Jim gritted his teeth and concentrated on his long time friend Henri Brown. He hated elevators of any kind. Not for the same reason that his beloved Guide did, but because he could hear the machinery and knew how flimsy it all sounded. He would never tell Blair that, because his lover still had nightmares about the Gallileo incident.

Finally, after what felt like gliding down for 50 stories, the elevator stopped. When it opened, Jim was treated to the sight of high technology being merged and married to rough hewn walls of rock and dirt. Admantium and steel alloy girders and buttresses supported the walls and ceiling. Neatly fitted flagstone lined the floor. Large machines and computers were fitted into niches carved into the very rock around them in the rather large area. Four corridors branched off of this main area near the cargo elevator.

Quickly, they were herded down the second corridor on the left. At first, the same dim bluish lights illuminated the area and it was quiet in an eerie and echoy sort of way. Then, his Sentinel senses picked up a brighter light and stronger sound from further down the corridor and he knew that they were getting close. Unconsciously, he picked up his speed and began to walk faster.

After a few twists and turns and passing up several smaller hand hewn corridors, and turning



down two others, they came upon a scene of carefully controlled chaos. The tunnel was swarming with rescue workers that were carefully trying to shore up the walls and at the same time remove the debris. It didn't take more than a sweeping glance to see that something had caused the tunnel to collapse. Large rocks and loose dirt filled the passageway. Jim could vaguely hear the people trapped beyond.

"Jim? Henri? Is that you?"

Jim's head snapped around at the familiar voice, his heart demanding that his eyes confirm what his ears were telling him. For a second, his heart skipped a beat and a Zone-out threatened him. Then he jolted out of it and a huge smile erupted across his face. Before he could stop himself, he grabbed the other man in a tight bear hug.

"Joel! Holy shit! Joel!"

All too soon, Jim found himself gently shoved out of the way and then Henri Brown was hugging Joel Taggart in a big, lung bursting squeeze.

"You're alive, Joel!"

With a big smile on his dirt streaked face, Joel slowly pulled away from Henri. The three friends took a few seconds to just drink in the sight of the others.

"Yeah guys, I'm alive. Been here at this complex for almost three years now. But you guys, when we were separated at the correction facility on Mongliph Prime, I honestly didn't think that I'd see you again. Where have you been?"

"On the Southern continent of this same planet. Can you believe that?"

Joel blinked at Henri in surprise.

"The same damn planet?"

Jim nodded at their long time friend and ex-co-conspirator.

"Yeah, Henri, Brian, Simon, Daryl, Blair and I are all together at a Farm Compound that's about a half-hour ride away on one of those atmospheric slave transports."

"Really? All of you are together and everyone is okay?"

"Yes, we're all together, although okay is a... relative term."

"What do you mean?"

When Henri hesitated, Joel turned to Jim.

"Jim? What does he mean?"

After sharing a glance with Henri, Jim filled Joel in on the medical experiments that the Prantellians had done on Blair, Brian and Daryl. Joel just nodded, unsurprised by the news.

"Yeah. That has happened to people here as well guys. Uh,... do you remember Sargent Cliff O'Donnell from booking and Detective Anthony Martinez from Vice?"

"yeah?..."

Jim sent up a quick prayer that the news about these two men that he had known for years at the Precinct was good. They were both good cops as well as friends.

Joel nodded and took a deep breath to gather his thoughts.

"Well, they did that same thing to Cliff. They did it to a whole lot of the guys here actually. They came back from the space station a little over three months ago."

Henri and Jim exchanged startled and confused glances.

"Joel, Blair and the others from our compound got back almost six months ago."

Joel's eyebrows rose up at that news. Jim could almost see the gears turning in the older man's head.

"Well, I'm not sure why they would do it piecemeal like that, but I am sure I can come up with some theories. At any rate, after the surgery, they gave them all a big speech about reproduction rates and then handed out a 12 month deadline."

Joel stopped speaking a moment when he saw Henri and Jim nodding in agreement.

"You guys too?"

"Yeah." Jim couldn't stop his grin. "I'm going to be a daddy Joel."

"Blair?"

Jim nodded again and earned himself another crushing hug from the big man.

"Congratulations! To both of you."

Joel stepped back, a wide grin softening his face.

"Yeah... me too."

"Really?! That's great Joel. Uhhh... who, ah, I mean..."

Joel chuckled.

"Cliff. The Med-Lab diagnosed his pregnancy two day before this happened." Joel gestured to the crew working around them. "They want to monitor him closely because of his age, but they feel that if he can carry through the first trimester than everything will be fine."

"What about Martinez? Was he surgically altered too?"

The smile crumpled off of Joel's face to be replaced by a look of sadness.

"No. He did hook up with someone who was changed though." A sad smile crossed his face for a moment. "One of Blair's ex-students as a matter of fact. He was a freshman in one of Blair's classes. He was going for his Master's degree when the invasion hit. That's what got them together in the first place, swapping stories about Blair."

Joel turned and looked at the clean up crew moving a large rock while the repair crew tried to shore up the space it left behind before more rock could fall.

"No, Tony Martinez didn't get changed, but he is going to be a father. Knocked up that ex-student

of Blair's. Nice guy, named Doug Coleman."

A sad smile flashed through his eyes for a quick moment as memories surfaced. Then an expression of loss mingled with desperate hope settled on his features.

"Jim, H,... Tony is one of the crew trapped by the cave in."

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Joel leaned back in his chair, his body screaming from exhaustion and over use. He quietly ate his diner rations and listened to the talk around the table. After 15 solid hours of working on the rescue crew, he didn't have the energy to do much else.

They had been ordered to go and eat a hot meal and then get some much needed sleep. A second crew had been brought down to the site and were now continuing the rescue efforts. In another 15 hours, his crew, along with the relief workers from Jim and Henri's compound, would be expected to go down and replace those workers.

He idly listened as his lover Cliff and their long lost friends Jim and Henri tried to cheer up Doug Coleman. The medical personnel were worried that the young man was going to miscarry if he didn't relax and release some of the stress caused by his lover Tony being trapped by the cave-in. Jim and Henri both were a great distraction with stories of Tony from his days in Vice and with stories of how Blair was doing now. Doug had made Jim promise three separate times to tell Blair how he was doing and that he was happy for him and his pregnancy.

A few minutes after they sat down to eat in the mess hall, the Guards announced that the workers had found a way to pump fresh air to the trapped miners. Doug had immediately broken down in tears. Henri had pulled the hysterical young man into a gentle hug and Jim softly told him about different breathing and meditation techniques that were guaranteed by Blair to help calm a person down and lower their blood pressure.

Joel was very glad to see his friends again, but was a little amazed at the subtle changes in both of them. They both seemed calmer and more gentle now. He was too tired to sort through it all though. He would do that later, and right now, Doug needed them more than he did. Instead, he just quietly ate his meal and thought back on all they had accomplished.

They had managed to clear out and then brace up 100 feet of the collapsed tunnel. There was still a lot more to do, but they had managed to uncover the broken air filter and pumping system. That had been a major worry for the rescue teams.

All of the mining caverns and tunnels had clean air pumped into them to keep the workers from becoming ill due to working in such tight and normally airless quarters. As a section was dug out, four pipes were always run in. They were about the size of a large male Terrans thigh. Two brought in clean out and two pulled out the used air. The pipes were connected together by large mechanical pumps and filters that were set at intervals.

While the round pipes had survived the cave-in, the pump for that section had not. Joel's crew had managed to uncover the broken device and dismantle it, but they had not had time to replace it with a working one. The crew that had replaced them when they were sent for food and rest must have been able to get it aligned and operational. Good, the trapped crew members would need fresh air badly by that point. Hopefully, none of them had suffocated.

They had discussed running fresh water through one of the pipes so that the trapped men could get a drink, but that decision had not been made by the Stragillon Guards before they had left. Henri thought it was a good idea, even if they only ran the water for ten minutes, it would allow

them to get some water to drink without risking a flood.

Henri looked around at his friends again. He didn't know how long it would take to free the trapped miners, but he was glad that Jim and Henri was here to help. They were great workers and a big moral support as well. Jim swore that he could hear the miners and that they were alive. Joel wasn't sure how Jim could hear them, or if he was just being hopeful, but it did help him and the others to not give up.

Looking over at the slowly calming hermaphrodite being soothed by Jim and Henri, Joel wished once again that he was back on earth.

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Brian huddled in the warm blankets firmly ensconced in Blair's arms. The younger man held onto him as tightly as he was clinging back. Brian was absolutely certain that his own eyes reflected the same confusion and fear that the Shaman's did.

Jim and Henri were both gone. Taken away without explanation. One of the last things Henri did was to tell him to look after Blair while they were gone. He planned to do just that. While he probably wouldn't admit it out loud, he knew that he needed Blair to look after him as well.

Brian snuggled down a little further and gently pressed up against Blair more. It was very comforting to have Blair's solid and understated strength to lean against. Taking the hint, Blair shifted around slightly and Brian felt the heavy weight of his friend's child swollen stomach rest against him. He started to reach towards it with his hand, curiosity rushing over him. At the last minute, he stopped, uncertain as to Blair's reception of being touched there.

"Uh,... May I?"

Blair smiled at him and nodded his head.

Careful to be gentle, Brian placed his hand on Blair's tummy. He was somewhere in the middle of his fifth month of pregnancy and the rounded ball of flesh preceded him wherever he went. Blair's stomach was warm and firm and touching it sent a wash of peaceful feelings through him. Slowly, he began to rub it with a little circular motion.

Blair grinned again and his eyes became soft and misty.

"Amazing, isn't it? No matter where I am or what I'm doing, I always have a part of Jim with me. His child. I can't explain how much that means to me, you know. It's such a wonderful and truly awe inspiring thing."

Suddenly, Blair gasped and grew still. Brian felt a gentle ripple of motion under his hand as Blair's child moved within it's womb. Alive! Oh, he had always been aware of it in an intellectual way and it was something he was forced to think about a lot, but the true reality had never hit him until just now. Inside of Blair's body, there was a living growing human being. And it was a beautiful thing.

A sense of melancholy sadness and loss swept over him so strongly that he could only call it an epiphany. A defining moment when he realized something so important and so intrinsic to his very being that he was stunned by the force of it.

He, Brian Rafe, loved Henri Brown.

He, Brian Rafe, wanted to have a child with Henri Brown.

All fear and macho bullshit aside, he loved Henri with all his heart and wanted to be with him always. That fact didn't change who he was, instead, it defined who he was.

He, Brain Rafe, was Henri Brown's best friend, partner, and lover.

And now, who knows when, or even if he'd ever get to see the big man again. They had no idea where the guys had been taken and had no idea what they would be doing. Brian just prayed that Henri would return soon. He missed his lover already.

It was then that a horrifying thought entered his mind, causing him to hold onto Blair even tighter. What if they never came back? Henri would be gone and Brian would be forced to mate with some stranger. The revulsion that swept over him at that thought left him feeling nauseous.

Brian swore to himself that if... NO when Henri came back from wherever the Guards had taken him, that Brian would give him the one thing that he hadn't so far. His virginity.

He loved and trusted the big man enough to know that Henri would be very gentle with him and that he would know how important it was to him. Then he would keep on making love to Henri until he became pregnant.

Most of the other hermaphrodites seemed to enjoy the act, so it couldn't be that bad. Besides, anything that ended in him being able to present Henri with a child of his own would be worth it.

Once that decision had been made, Brian found himself left with lots of fears and doubts about where his lover was and what he was doing. He knew he was going to work himself up until he was sick, so he concentrated on the pregnant man in his arms. Rubbing softly against Blair's swollen tummy, Brian curled up and slowly drifted off to sleep.

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Chapter 11 by Scorpio

~~~two weeks later~~~

Jim was the last of the Terrans to be belted into the atmospheric slave transport. They were heading back to the farming compound on the southern continent. Home, in a sense. Back to Blair. As far as Jim was concerned, Blair was 'home'. It didn't matter what planet or what city, as long as his lover was there, it was his home.

Looking around, he saw that many of the guys had fallen into a light slumber and the rest were just quietly staring at nothing in particular. They were all as tired and dirty as Jim felt. He wasn't the only one who wanted to get a hot shower and then curl up around a well-missed lover and sleep for three days.

Either way, they were bound to cause quite a stir when they finally reached the farm. Many of the guys had run into old friends or family members and everyone had made some new friends while helping free the trapped miners at the underground slave complex. Jim and Henri both had many stories and lots of good news to share with their friends on the farm. Two weeks worth of stories.

It had taken a little over three continuous 15 hour shifts of working to free the trapped miners, Jim's friend Tony Martinez being only one of them. After the workers had been freed, they had all received medical and nutritional attention. Out of the twenty-seven men trapped, only three had died. Two had been crushed by the original cave-in and one had died trying to dig the tunnel out. He had loosened a large stone that fell and cracked his skull.

The remaining time they had spent there was used to help shore and brace the corridor and to repair any damage the cave-in caused. They also figured out why it happened in the first place and took steps to insure it wouldn't happen again. The hours had been long and the work had been physically demanding. But it had been worth it.

While Jim had missed Blair terribly, especially at night when he tried to sleep, it *had* been very nice to see Joel and Tony again. He hadn't known Cliff very well, but Henri, apparently did. The two men had swapped stories as fast and furious as he did with Tony. And Doug Coleman, Jim grinned at the thought, sat there all wide eyed and delirious with joy that Tony was safe and whole.

And Joel. It was so good to see the older man again. To know that he was healthy and happy. He knew that Brian and Simon and Daryl would be thrilled to know that Joel was alive and well, but Blair. Blair would be ecstatic. In the absence of a father of his own, Blair had semi-adopted the ex-Bomb Squad Captain as his Dad. And as silly as it might seem to have a grown man wanting or needing a father figure, Joel had jumped right in with both feet and never looked back. He never failed to offer the younger man fatherly advice, a friendly ear, or encouragement. For that fact alone, Joel Taggart had elevated himself to Sainthood in Jim's mind. And truth be known, he was a far better father-in-law than Mr. Plumber had ever been.

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Brian could hardly contain his happiness. He practically vibrated with it. Henri was back. Safe and healthy and in his arms. Right where he belonged. It was time.

He had feed his love and then helped him to shower away the dirt and sweat from his long adventure. Brian had listened with fascination to the stories he told. He was thrilled to discover that their friends were safe and happy and he was glad that the ordeal was over. However, he had other, more personal things on his mind now.

"H, I missed you. So very much man."

Henri looked up from where he putting away his shower things. His dark eyes softened and a sweet smile crossed his handsome face.

"I missed you too Bri." Henri chuckled a little and looked bashful. "I kept turning around to tell you things and then had to remind myself that you were back here. It was... strange not having you with me. I didn't like being separated from you."

Brian smiled. He had felt the same way. Every night he had rolled over to reach for the big man and nearly cried when he wasn't there.

"Make love to me?"

Henri's smile bloomed. It was if the sun shone from his eyes.

"Yes."

Brian practically launched himself at the big man. He wrapped his arms around his shoulders and poured all of his love and passion into a breath stealing kiss. Henri opened his mouth under the sweet assault and returned the kiss with a tender need that made Brian's knees go weak.

Almost frantically, Brian began to remove the soft fluffy robes from their bodies, needing to feel his lovers warm skin pressed against him. Large dark hands roamed across his arms and chest, a startling and erotic contrast to his own pale flesh. He moaned in pleasure at the ripples of sensation those gentle hands caused.

Together they tumbled onto the bed, Henri's solid form pressing him into the mattress. His lovers soft lips nipped and nibbled at his throat and he could feel his cock thickening as his blood

began to pound in his veins. He brought his hands around to caress the broad expanse of Henri's back, thrilling to the feel of soft supple skin beneath his fingertips.

"Lover, I... I want you to take my virginity. I... I want to give it to you. I..."

Henri stopped lavishing erotic attention on his neck and looked him in the eyes.

"Bri, are you sure? I mean, we don't have to do that until you are ready. I don't want to push you if you're not."

"I'm sure H. I want this. I want you. I... I'm ready."

Henri smiled gently and then nodded. Then he kissed Brian gently and tenderly. It was a kiss of both love and passion. It melted Brian's heart and made him fall in love with Henri all over again.

Slowly, his lover began to move down his body leaving a trail of wet kisses and passionate licks. No part of him was left unworshipped. His neck and chest were nibbled gently. His breasts and nipples were suckled and fondled into hard points of arousal. The sensations shot like lightening straight down to his groin. His cock was rock hard and he could feel his juices beginning to drip out of his virgin vagina.

Lower and lower Henri went, laving his belly button with licks and kisses, down to his hips and thighs. Tenderly, the big man spread his legs and settled himself in between. Henri licked along the length of his cock and his whole body vibrated with pleasure from that hot wet tongue. When it swirled around the crown to catch the pearly drops of his excitement, he had to clutch at the sheets to keep from thrusting into his lover's mouth.

A trembling started in his thighs when his lover ran that amazing tongue over his swollen vagina up to his clitoris. Brian couldn't stop the moan of delight that escaped his mouth. When H sucked the hardened nub into his mouth, Brian thrashed his head from side to side and thrust his hips up, grinding his sex into his lover's face, wordlessly begging for more.

"Now. please H... now lover."

With one last gentle flick of the tongue, Henri got up to kneel between Brian's wide open thighs. With much gentle caressing and soft touches, H moved his legs into the position he wanted and lined his thick cock up to Brian's virgin opening.

"I'll try and be as gentle as I can, but it's going to hurt right at first."

"I know... just do it, please."

"Love you Bri."

"Love you too H."

With one quick shallow thrust, Henri pushed through, lovingly taking the gift of his virginity. He gasped at the spike of pain that rushed through him. He closed his eyes and panted, waiting as the sharp burn slowly ebbed away to a steady throb. Shakily, he nodded his head to signal that his lover could move again.

Henri rocked his hips in a gentle rhythm. A shallow thrust in and then a slight backwards motion. It was tender and gentle and before Brian knew it, he could feel his lover's balls pressed up against him. That sensation of connection that he had been missing washed over him and he moaned at the feeling of finally being one with his love.

"Ready Bri?"

He couldn't make his mouth form words, so he smiled and nodded.

H pulled back until only the crown of his thick cock was inside him and then just as slowly, he pushed back in all the way. Brian could feel every inch of H caress the walls of his sex. The heat, the hardness, the sensation of being filled sent a wave of erotic pleasure flooding the nerves across his whole body.

"oh H... again, more..."

Henri thrust into him again, and again, gradually picking up speed and force. Physical pleasure and emotional intimacy warred in his mind for dominance. He had feared that this act would be painful or ugly, but after that first initial pain, the sensations had only become more and more wonderful. And as for ugly, Brian was surprised to find the act a beautiful dance of giving and sharing, of loving and joining. He decided that it wouldn't be so bad to do this over and over until he became pregnant.

Suddenly, H shifted his angle slightly and thrust into Brian again. Henri hit a spot deep within Brian, a spot he didn't know he even had. A spot that sent a bolt of pure overwhelming pleasure throughout his whole body. A spot that made him clench around the thick shaft impaling him and thrust up onto it while shudders raced down his spine. His lust deepened eyes flew open and he clutched at his lovers strong arms.

"Yes! Right there! Oh Gods H, do it again!"

With a wide smile on his face, his lover pumped into him, filling him, hitting that spot over and over again. Mindless with pleasure and the need for completion, Brian arched his back and thrust onto Henri's thick cock. Wanting it, needing it. Harder. Faster. Now!

Suddenly, in an explosion of mind-numbing pleasure, Brian came. His body shuddered uncontrollably and his internal muscles clutched and clenched around his lover. He threw his head back and howled. A few more quick hard thrusts and then H followed him over the cliff, pumping his seed deep within Brian.

As the big man gently collapsed on top of him and then enfolded him in his strong arms, Brian hazily rearranged his thinking on the subject. He knew now that he would not shy away from this type of loving again, that instead, he would actively seek it out. It was wonderful.

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Simon was in a great mood. His friends had come back safe and sound and they had brought back news of other friends long since gone. Joel Taggart was on this very same planet, safe in the arms of his lover Cliff O'Donnell. His son was happily married and he would soon be a grandfather. With a smile softening his handsome face, Simon figured that there was only one thing needed to make the day a perfect one.

It was the pursuit of that one thing that had prompted Simon to ask Todd to accompany him on a brief walk to watch the sun set. Todd had quickly agreed with a shy little smile that brought out his dimples. Simon loved those dimples.

When they reached the big Crotis Tree with its wide hanging branches and its sweet smelling blue flowers, Simon stopped and pulled the smaller man into a gentle embrace. Back to chest, they watched the sun begin its nightly descent into the loving arms of the horizon. The normally pale sky became awash with vibrant colors. Bright golds and vivid pinks were layered alongside deep lavenders and dusky blues. It was stunningly beautiful and heartwarmingly romantic. It was

the perfect setting for what Simon wanted to do.

"I love you Todd."

The smaller man pressed more tightly against him for a second in response.

"Love you Simon. More than anything."

Simon smiled and gently stepped to the side to face Todd. With a slow tenderness, he hooked a finger under Todd's chin and lifted his face to look at him.

"Todd, I..." He took a deep breath and tried again. "I really enjoy being with you. A lot. And I... well, I think it's time that we take our relationship to the... the next level."

A look of confused curiosity flashed across the face of the gentle man before him.

"What do you mean Simon?"

"I... I want to be... exclusive. No others, just us. I... I want you to move in with me, be with me. I... don't want to share you."

Simon watched a shy smile tugging at the corners of Todd's soft lips and his eyes sparkle and dance.

"Simon? Are you asking me to marry you?"

Simon blinked for a second or two, turning the words over in his mind and comparing it to what he wanted. Then he smiled. A big toothy smile of happiness.

"Yeah. Yeah, I guess I am."

Feeling strangely silly and undeniably happy, Simon slid down on one knee and grasped one of Todd's hands. He watched enthralled, as a big smile spread across his love's face.

"Todd, unworthy though I may be, will you consent to marry me? To be my mate and the mother of my future children?"

"Yes! Yes! I'll marry you. All of it, whenever you want, just kiss me."

Quickly, Simon stood up, wrapped his arms around his soon to be husband and kissed him with all the passion in his soul. As he felt the smaller man melt into his embrace, he thought, 'yes, what a perfect day'.

Chapter Twelve

~one month later~

Bright pain flared in his right hand followed swiftly by the clash and clatter of tools falling through the belly of the ground- transport's main engine to the hard floor below. Henri swore softly and clutched his throbbing hand close to his chest. He clenched his teeth and tried to breathe through the sudden and sharp pain.

"Let me see it H."

Jim's voice hazily broke through his internal mantra of shitfuckshitfuckshitfuck and he peeled

open one watery eye to see his friend's concerned face.

Slowly, Henri extended his injured hand. Jim looked at it for a quick minute and then reached out and touch it. Henri flinched at the touch, but held his hand out anyway. A searching look into his friends face told him that Jim was using his Sentinel abilities to check for unseen damage. Henri didn't even pretend to understand those abilities, but he had seen them in use at the mining complex and he trusted Jim.

"Well?..."

"Nothing's broken, but you did stress and strain one of the tendons. You should probably let someone at the Med-Lab look at it and give you something for the pain."

Henri looked at his hand and carefully wiggled his fingers. It hurt, but not badly enough to end up spaced out on pain-killers. Tomorrow was a big day and Henri didn't want to attend Simon and Todd's wedding hung over and fuzzy headed. He wanted to be able to remember it for a long time to come.

"Naw... I'll be fine. I'm just going to have to be careful what I do with it, that's all."

Jim smirked at him.

"So, I guess this means that you won't be smashing it with anymore tools then?"

Henri flipped Jim the finger, then winced at the quick movement. Jim's face sobered up.

"Seriously man, what's up with you lately? You've been in some sort of fog for weeks now. First, you were on Cloud Nine and walked around as if you'd just won a life-times supply of free Nacho's and Beer. I figured that it was from finding Joel, Cliff and Tony alive and well. Now you're walking around in some kind of funk, dropping tools, smashing your fingers, and forgetting how to do simple tasks. Now give!"

Henri looked at Jim Ellison and saw a man who had been his friend, co-worker turned coconspirator, and ultimately, a man who had been like a brother to him for so long that it was hard to remember a time when Jim wasn't a part of his life. This was a man who would risk anything, with the exception of Blair, to help him. A man who would kill to avenge him. A man who had opened up enough to trust him with a secret so dangerous that if the Prantellians ever even suspected it, they would haul Jim's butt out of there so fast that a man's head would spin. This was Jim.

Henri sighed and bent slightly to pick up the tools he had dropped and waved Jim to follow him over to the toolbox. Taking a deep breath, Henri began to tell Jim about what was occupying his thoughts to the exclusion of all else.

"Cloud Nine?"

Henri grinned slightly as he glanced over to Jim.

"Yeah. That's what it felt like. Cloud Nine. You see,... Bri and I,...Well, let's just say that we finally consummated our relationship."

Henri smiled broadly at the memories of sweet passionate nights in his lovers arms. The exquisite beauty of Brian Rafe in the heat of desire, wantonly offering himself up to Henri, giving all of himself with generous love. The unparalleled gift of his virginity.

"It was beautiful Jim. Truly beautiful."

A slight frown played at the corners of Jim's mouth.

"And now?"

Henri looked at his friend. Bright blue eyes pinned him with an intensity that was startling in the depth of their concern. He felt his breath hitch in his throat.

"I think I'm going to lose him Jim."

He watched as Jim tensed. His friend suddenly sent out vibrations of protection and barely contained energy.

"Lose him? What exactly do you mean H?"

"No one's been threatening him and he hasn't been making any kinds of signs that he wants to leave me. That's not it."

Jim relaxed, but only slightly.

"Then what is it?"

Henri sighed. It was a sad and helpless sort of sound.

"He's sick Jim. I... I don't know what's wrong with him. He just tries to ignore it and says that it's nothing. I think that he's afraid of what it might be, so he hasn't gone to the Med-Lab yet. Jim,... he's getting worse. I'm worried."

"Sick? How?"

"Well,... He can barely eat. He says that the food just smells funny or tastes funny. When he does eat, it doesn't stay down for very long. He just rushes away to go be quietly sick somewhere. And hot flashes. He's been having these hot flashes. Every time I turn around he's either too hot or too cold."

A strange look crossed Jim's face.

"Uh,... has Brian been, um,... peeing a lot?"

"Wha?... Yeah, now that you mention it, he has been."

"Extra sensitive nose? Funny dreams? Mood swings?"

"Er,... sensitive nose, yes. Dreams? He hasn't said anything about dreaming, but he has had some mood swings lately. I just figured that he was nearing his moon-cycle again."

Henri flashed a sly grin at Jim.

"You know how Bri gets with PMS."

Jim grinned. He remembered one hell of a good right-cross, that's what he remembered about Brian Rafe in conjunction with Pre-Menstrual Syndrome. During his moon-days, Brian even surpassed Blair on the weirdness scale.

"Actually,... I was just thinking that these symptoms reminded me of Blair."

"Blair?!"

Henri turned a confused gaze towards his slightly smug friend.

"Yeah, Blair. It reminds me of how Blair was during the first month of his pregnancy. That's probably what it is, you know. You went and knocked him up."

Henri felt as if a ton of weight lifted up off of his shoulders at the same time as someone sucker punched him in the guts. Pregnant!?! He leaned back against a wall that wasn't there and fell on his ass with a 'whoosh' of air.

Jim crouched down next to him instantly and began to check his pulse.

"H? H, you okay?"

Henri turned and looked up into his friends big blue eyes, and beamed.

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The drying yellow face paint was itching slightly and his ankles were starting to swell from standing for so long. As enjoyable as Simon and Todd's wedding reception was turning out to be, the heat and the noise were starting to get to him. He felt as if he needed a few moments of peace and quiet to process everything the was happening.

Turning towards the side of the room, Blair waddled slowly through the cheerful and celebrating crowd, his seven months pregnant belly leading the way. So intent was he on his destination, that he didn't see the large man quietly shadowing him.

Reaching the far wall of the Terran Cultural Center and Education Building, Blair traveled towards the back until he reached the hydraulic door. Pressing the scanning pad so that it would read the data chip implanted in his hand, the door whooshed open. Turning to the left in the corridor beyond, Blair headed towards the elevator like lift.

Once at the second floor, the door opened and Blair stepped out into the still peacefulness of the room beyond. This was the main greeting room of the soon to be completed Nursery & Daycare Center that was one of the main functions of the Cultural Center. It was Blair's current pet project.

The soft colors and muted sounds from bellow soothed his jangled nerves. He wasn't often overcome by his feelings and emotions, but this wedding had pulled so many things he thought buried deep inside him up to the surface. He wasn't sure why. It might be the people or the ceremony itself, or his own responsibility as Shaman. It might even be because he was seven months pregnant. In any case, it felt good to be here, in the soft light and quiet.

Moving slowly and with as much grace as his protruding tummy would allow, Blair turned to go into the large room set aside for the many cribs needed for nap-time and sleep cycles. The infant and newborn center had a play area, a kitchen and the sleep area. It was set up to make it easier to manage the large number of children expected all at once.

Once in the other room, Blair looked around. They were making progress. Soft blue carpeting had been installed and the walls were a clean white. Several pieces of furniture were already together, but most of it was still in parts and wrapped in plastic. A stack of small, crib sized mattresses were piled in one corner and a storage unit containing sheets and blankets rested near them.

Moving carefully around the organized clutter, Blair made his way over to the single rocker-glider that was put together. Blair grinned at it. It was a rocker that sat on a solid base and glided

forwards and backwards. It couldn't be tipped over. It was one of the things that Blair liked enough to request a personal one for his and Jim's room. He gently lowered himself into the large padded chair.

Leaning back, Blair began to rub his hands in slow, loving circles on his swollen stomach as he rocked back and forth. Crooning low in his throat, he soon established a gentle rhythm. Glide back - rub a circle, glide forward - rub a circle. He felt a tiny foot press against his hand through his taut skin and smiled.

His child. Jim's child. Their unborn child. Centered and calm, Blair could feel the life growing within him. It moved, it grew, it was alive and it was a miracle. A wave of love so strong that it forced tears to his eyes washed over him and he knew, right then and there, that he would gladly kill or die for his child. Jim's child.

Softly, Blair began to sing to his baby in the ancient Chopec tongue. It was a lullaby he had heard a tribal woman singing to her infant son. It was about the brightly colored birds that soared and lived beneath the canopy of the Peruvian Rain-Forest and how one little bird wanted to fly beyond it and into the heart of the sun.

Suddenly, one soft and gentle voice became two. With a dreamy smile on his expressive face, Blair looked up and into the blue eyes of his mate. His Sentinel. The father of his unborn child. Jim.

With a slow movement, he reached out a hand towards the big man standing back in the shadows. With a tender grin, Jim stepped towards his family.

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Grumpily, Daryl looked over at his husband. Kevin was passed out from drinking too much Skl'tar at his father's wedding. He had warned Kevin that he shouldn't drink so much of the homemade hooch the guys from processing brought as a gift, but did he listen? No, not Kevin. Why would he listen to Daryl? He was only the mother to his soon to be born child, what did he know?

Caught up in a viscous cycle of jealousy that he was no longer the only light in his father's life, the joy of knowing that he'd soon have a sibling, the frustration at not being able to get drunk with his best friend and husband, and the fear of being a bad mother, Daryl knew that he was being petty, but couldn't stop himself. The swirling roller-coaster ride which was his emotions had been shifted into high gear this past week while preparing for his father's wedding.

Grumbling under his breath, Daryl got himself ready for bed and then gently removed Kevin's boot's and his rumpled blue jump-suit. His lover snored softly through the whole process. After going into the bathroom to pee for the zillionth time that day, Daryl came back into the bedroom and climbed under the blankets next to his drunken husband. He shifted around slightly until he was as comfortable as a two and a half month pregnant hermaphrodite could be. The trick was to find a position that kept the maximum amount of pressure off of his bladder as possible.

Once he was settled, Daryl grudgingly admitted that part of his problem lately was the physical changes that his pregnancy was forcing on him. It was getting so that he could no longer pretend to himself that he wasn't going to give birth to a wonderful child that deserved better than him. He pouted in the dark.

He constantly felt bloated and full. His bladder was working overtime and he felt as if he had to pee at all times, even after he just went. If that wasn't bad enough, his breasts were swollen and his nipples were sore. Even the softest material left him feeling chafed. As much as he hated wearing a bra, it had gotten to the point where he needed one. Just like Blair. Well, Brian Rafe had

needed one as soon as they got back from the gender reassignment, but he and Blair didn't need one until their respective pregnancies demanded it.

The only nice thing about this situation was his dreams. Lately he had been dreaming about being some exotic creature that lived in the ocean and there were all these lush green flowering plants that swayed in the gentle currents. For some reason, this dream always seemed to soothe him, no matter how tough his day had been. Cuddling up against his alcohol fume venting husband, Daryl drifted off thinking about a gentle creature floating in warm life-giving water.

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