

Summary: Sick days suck for everyone.

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Genres: Slash

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Challenges: None

Series: None

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Story Notes:

Written for outsideth3box. Sweetie, I don't know if you remember, but we had an email conversation a long time ago in which you admitted (hopefully for the world to know. EEP!) that you would be happy with anything to do with dragons or MPreg or hurt/comfort. Well, we kinda managed to get all three. Also? The title may change on this. I had the perfect one in the shower one morning, and promptly forgot it, so we're going with the original one for the time being.

## 1. [Chapter 1](#) by squidgie

Chapter 1 by squidgie

Rodney's half-listening to the meeting and idly poking at his data pad when John kicks him. "Ow! Jeez, Sheppard, are you trying to break my ankle?"

"A) I called you four times, b) I barely touched you, so knock off the drama, and c) what do you remember about PLX-45T?"

"PLX-45T? Nothing. Who says there's anything worth remembering?"

John heaves a put-upon sigh. Rodney snorts and points at him, "You are never again allowed to call *me* the dramatic one."

John's death glare clearly says *Enjoy sleeping on the couch tonight!* though Rodney knows he won't go there in a senior staff meeting. (Not after what happened the last time, anyway.)

"We harvested the space gate from PLX-45T," John explains to the room, giving Rodney a look that conveys his confidence that he rode the short bus to school. Grad school.

"Right, right - space gate. And why do we care?"

"*You* care. And I know that because you said, 'Sheppard, once we finish this intergalactic waterslide and are free of the Wraith for ten minutes in a row, remind me we need to come back. There's an odd energy signature on the planet that might be useful.'" John smirks at Rodney before continuing. "Midway Station is up and running and we haven't seen a Wraith in weeks. Is now a good time for you, Rodney?"

"*Gentlemen*," Elizabeth calls from the head of the table, knowing better than to let either get the other wound up. She glances down at John's proposal on her data pad. "What do you need?"

Rodney co-opts the discussion, ignoring John's kicks to his shins and the fact that he hasn't thought about that energy signal in months. "Well first off, without the space gate-

"Which *you* said we could take," John interrupts.

Rodney dispenses a swift kick of his own, though his shoes (comfortably broken in and unsuitable for anything more strenuous than schlubbing around Atlantis) are nowhere as effective as John's steel-toed boots. "*Anyway*, it's a three-day trip by jumper from the nearest gate. And there's a lot to cover, so I suggest two science teams."

"Overseen by a team of Marines," John adds.

Elizabeth considers their suggestions with a thoughtful expression. Atlantis has been peaceful of late, but Elizabeth, ever the strategist, knows there's no promise that will continue. After a moment, she turns to her right, where Radek is focused on his data pad. "Zelenka?"

"Da?"

"Any Wraith activity on the long range sensors?"

He shakes his head, making his hair seem even messier. "No. Is as if they've gone back into hibernation."

Rodney is studying Elizabeth, wondering what she's thinking, when she stands up and starts gathering her things. "You have a go. Take two teams," she says to John, before turning to Rodney. "Pick who you need, but I get right of refusal if we need them here on Atlantis." Her subtle glance at Radek would be missed by most, but Rodney isn't 'most'. The way she angles her body toward the Czech - along with his expression - confirms Rodney's theory.

So that *is* happening.

"Have the final list of personnel on my desk by tomorrow," she says, "and we'll shoot for a go in 52 hours."

With a knock on the table, the meeting is dismissed.

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With the last known Wraith attack in the local Pegasus cluster happening months before, Atlantis' personnel could breathe a little easier. Not being on the edge of disaster all the time allowed for days filled with more than terror and exhausted sleep. The lower stress levels and increased socialization had led to several couples pairing off, though Rodney hadn't noticed at first, too busy trying to figure out his thing with John Sheppard.

It had started as a middle finger to a seemingly inescapable situation, evolved into something of a convenience for two heads-of-department who couldn't be seen to fraternize with their underlings, but now seems to be something much more serious. John had even suggested a joint vacation back on Earth and hadn't so much as blinked when Rodney said they should go to Vancouver so John could get better acquainted with Jeannie and her family.

A spate of requests for joint quarters finally opened Rodney's eyes to how numerous the pairings-off are. Cadman took up with Carson, Ronon is courting a female Marine, and Evan Lorne, John's second-in-command, has already moved in with a pale, lanky fellow named Paris or Parrish, who's some sort of botanist.

While most of the expedition are open about their alliances, others are still coy, as evidenced by some Atlantis personnel walking through the hallways in the early morning in a manner that can only be called slinking. (If Rodney cared what his expedition members wore, he could tell when they'd *definitely* worn the same thing the day before. He flatly refused to speculate as to whether that mark on Kavanagh's neck was a birthmark or a hickey.)

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The trip to takes almost exactly three days, and by the time John lands Jumper Four next to where Lorne set Jumper Seven down moments earlier (while Rodney shakes his head at stupid flyboys who turn everything into a competition) and lowers the rear hatch, Rodney is ready for some fresh air. He doesn't even mind the bright sunshine, but frowns when his data pad reveals where the two jumpers landed. "Isn't the energy reading over there?"

"Less than two clicks," John says as he walks past Rodney.

"Well, then why are we-" The sudden splashing behind him makes him to spin around to find John barefoot in the muddy sand with water up to his ankles. "Seriously?" He shakes his head, no longer surprised at John's decision to land so far from their objective. Turning back, he stands on his toes and tries to spot the source of the energy readings through the thick green brush.

Rodney almost misses John flipping him off and ignores him as he questions Lorne, "You *sure* you didn't see any good waves?"

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It was plain after the first few hours on the planet that Sheppard is deeply bored. Rodney has his own issues, though. When they'd finally hacked through the thick brush and found the facility, they realized that none of them could read Ancient fluently. (Due to a glitch in the crew manifest, when Dr. Samuelson - engineer and linguist - developed a fever, she was replaced by Dr. French - engineer and expert in systems integration - without anyone noticing that they'd duplicated one specialty and lost another.) Rodney can piece some of it together, but from what he can tell at least half of the equipment is medical in some way. He can't be sure, but based on a symbol here and a diagram there, most of the technology is of no use to him. Over dinner, Rodney lets out a heavy sigh and tells them the trip may be a bust. "We might have to bring Carson to decipher all the medical mumbo-jumbo."

"Along with someone who reads fluent Ancient," John adds.

"Bitch, bitch, bitch," Rodney retorts.

"You sure the planet's not populated?" Ronon asks, sliding a hunk of meat off a skewer. Having Ronon on a mission almost always means there's some sort of tasty beast.

"Well, no *humanoid* population," Rodney replies. "Why?"

Ronon shrugs. "Just curious."

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John is nearly as good a negotiator as Elizabeth, as evidenced by getting her to agree to a single team of Marines, who are currently watching the scientists. John and Lorne are tracking down some strange noises heard by the overnight watch, Cadman is guarding the jumper, and Ronon is out hunting. The planet's wildlife is a mixture of cat-sized mammals (what Ronon has been bagging to supplement the MREs) along with a few small dinosaur-type creatures. One of the scientists theorized that Earth looked a lot like this during the Mesozoic.

John maintained radio contact, so Rodney wasn't too worried about him wandering away from base. He was currently in the Ancient outpost, hip-deep in shards of broken crystal that had undoubtedly served some noble purpose eons ago.

"Aha!" Rodney exults when the *not exactly a stasis pod* lights up.

"Rodney," came the tinny voice through the radio. "*Did you say there were - actual - dinosaurs on this planet?*"

He wipes his hands on his pants before tapping his earpiece. "What was that, Colonel?"

"*Dinosaurs, Rodney. Lorne? How big would you say those things were?*"

John doesn't answer immediately, and Rodney takes the opportunity to look over the other scientists. None of them are paying any attention to Sheppard's transmission.

"*Dinosaurs? What things, Sheppard?*" Rodney asks, trying not to get distracted by the intriguing device he's almost figured out.

Though he can't hear the Major's reply, he *does* hear John's whistle. "*Don't exaggerate, Lorne. It definitely wasn't as big as Great Dane. A bulldog, maybe, or a Lab.*"

His suspicion aroused, Rodney demands, "*What's not as big as a Great Dane, Colonel?*"

There's a pause before John responds. "*Some kind of oblong, shelled things. Sort of like eggs except they're not white - they're all different light colors.*"

"Eggs?" Rodney asks, scraps of a biologist's report from a long-ago recon of the planet jumping into his mind. "You know eggs aren't *always* white. Maybe-"

Rodney's transmission is interrupted by a grunt, and then the sound of gunfire explodes across everyone's radio. Instantly the Marines are on their feet and heading for Sheppard and Lorne's last known location. "John? *John!*"

The only answer is more gunfire, followed a frantic sounding, "*Lorne! Oh, shit.*"

Rodney's out of the building and overtaking the rearmost Marines even as he frantically consults the life signs detector. Corporal Everts grabs his arm to stop his headlong rush, when a sudden roar reverberates through the treetops. It sends hundreds of birds winging to safety as goutts of fire flash through the foliage.

Nearly everyone comes to a stop as the tallest branches light up like flares. But Rodney breaks Evert's hold and runs past, yelling John's name into his mouthpiece.

"What the-" Rodney says as he stumbles across a nest holding half a dozen eggs. Recalling the comparative growth chart from a high school biology class he'd audited at age nine, he realizes they could be dealing with an animal that's over twenty feet tall.

Shaking off the thought, he searches the area. "*There!*" he yells to the Marines also hunting for signs of their commanders. John and Lorne are splayed over a rocky outcropping, in the shadow of a...

"What the hell?"

"Is that a *dragon?*"

Everyone stands in stunned silence. Rodney knows the creature looming over Sheppard and Lorne is probably some sort of dinosaur-analog, but he can't help compare it to the common concept of a dragon. It has a sleek green and grey body with powerful-looking wings. Two knobby horns elongate its head and give it an evil look, which is intensified by its blood-red eyes. Each wing ends in talons that are currently dripping red on John and Evan.

Cadman instantly takes over, issuing orders to the rest of the Marines. "You three - we need a diversion. Circle and lure it away so we can retrieve the Colonel and Major. Suppressive fire only. On my mark-"

Before she can give the signal, Ronon appears and charges the beast. He moves like a parkour master, making quick time across the ground, boulders, and even one of the animal's wings before landing on its neck and locking his ankles under its chin. The creature bucks and flaps its wings furiously, spewing fire that ignites the trees at the edge of the clearing. Ronon hauls on its horns and manages to direct it into the trees, allowing them to reach Sheppard and Lorne.

"Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no, no," Rodney says as he takes in their wounds.

Lorne is breathing but out cold, which could be a blessing. He has cuts over much of his body, one sleeve looks melted to the skin underneath, and the leg awkwardly twisted underneath him is obviously badly broken.

Sheppard, despite his pallor, is awake. "Rodney," he croaks. He's holding his stomach with both hands, and Rodney can clearly see blood seeping through his fingertips.

Rodney freezes at the sight of his lover in a pool of blood even as his mind races. It's a three-day trip back to Atlantis, and the look on John's face says that he doesn't have *one* day, much less three. "Does anyone have medical training beyond first aid?"

Lorne begins to stir, and Rodney realizes he's worse off than he'd thought. There's blood coming from his ear, and that's never a good thing.

Rodney suddenly has an idea. (Based solely in desperation, but it's the best they have.) "Get them back to the outpost!" he orders as he dashes back towards the facility.

"They need a *doctor*, McKay!" he hears Cadman call.

Slowing down long enough to throw a glare over his shoulder, he demands, "*Now!*" and is under the canopy before she can protest again.

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They arrive in just under twenty minutes, but Rodney has managed to get both pods set up. He's cannibalized half a dozen systems in his attempt to convert the medical chambers into something like the stasis pods on Atlantis, completely from memory. Luckily, he had seen the schematics once in an underling's report - and his memory *is* exceptional - so he's somewhat confident in his modifications. These pods seem to have served a slightly different purpose, but with a few swapped crystals and an interface to the two laptops he'd been using in his investigation, he thinks he just might have pulled it off.

"In here, in here," he directs, still typing furiously. "Let's get them each into a pod."

"*Rodney*," Cadman replies, her voice strained.

Rodney is ready to argue with her, the tip of his tongue loaded with bullet-points of reasons.

"No, no." John's quiet voice stops him in his tracks.

Rodney turns to see a bare-chested Stackhouse with Lorne in a fireman's carry, and John limping between Cadman and Grodin with a shirt (Stackhouse's) cinched around his midsection, blood still seeping out at an alarming rate.

Grodin and Cadman ease John down so that he's leaning on the edge of a console. "Stasis, Rodney?" he asks, voice weak. "Good idea."

Rodney gives him the smallest of hopeful smiles. "It's... It's all I can think to do right now, John."

John watches as an unconscious Lorne is lowered into the near pod.

Rodney shares a worried look with John, who pulls him in until they're forehead to forehead. Rodney has to fight a shudder when he feels how cool and clammy John is. "Do you trust me?"

John leans in for the briefest of kisses, then whispers, "With my life." Rodney sees his pained expression and doesn't want to let him go, but knows he has to for John to have any chance of survival.

John tries to straighten up, but can't quite manage it. Grodin takes one side and Cadman the other, and they steady him enough to get to the pod. Then they help John lower himself down, while Rodney guides his head so it doesn't hit the metal edge.

"Okay, unlike the pods on Atlantis, these have manual lids," Rodney explains. "They're heavy, so it'll take two of us each." Rodney knows he should be double-checking his program, but instead grabs one end of the thick cover, as Grodin takes the other. He glances over and sees Stackhouse and Cadman manhandling the lid to Lorne's pod.

When the cover is mostly in place, Rodney reaches down and touches John's ankle. "I'll be here when you wake up, John. I promise." He can't see John's face, but the flexing of John's foot under his hand lets him know he's been heard.

"How do these things seal?" Cadman asks.

"Here," he says, moving his hand to the side of the pod, indicating the palm-shaped depression she needs to touch. "I think they're gene activated."

Rodney puts his hand on the spot and feels *something*, but his attention is all on John's pod. Cadman asks, "Should it be getting so hot?" Before Rodney can respond, she says, "Ow! Shit!"

As Rodney turns his head, the pod under his palm grows alarmingly hot, and he feels a prick at the tip of his index finger. He tries to pull away, but his hand is stuck. "What the-" but even as he says it, the pad cools down and his hand is released.

"What just happened?" Peter Grodin asks as metallic sounds start emanating from the pods.

Checking his laptop, Rodney sees that the program is running. Absently rubbing his palm, he says, "I don't know what *that* was, but the pods are working. They're both in stasis."

The scientists spend the next couple of hours arguing the best course of action. Half want to head back to Atlantis - if they can figure a way to power the stasis pods for the trip. The rest want to send a jumper to bring back Carson and a medical team. That's thrown out when they can't find anywhere to set up a sterile area for the operations that both men need. And while the jumpers can haul a lot of medical supplies, they're just not set up to perform surgery. Cadman, as the senior military member still mobile, tells Rodney she'll support whatever he decides.

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Rodney has the jumpers brought closer to the facility. He hears them land, but is focused on making the stasis pods portable until he hears, "I said I'm *fine*!" bellowed from just outside.

Rodney's head snaps up, and he feels like a jerk for forgetting all about Ronon in his worry for John. Ronon walks in with his arm in a makeshift sling. "What happened?"

"I think she caught them with her eggs," Ronon says, "and that's why she attacked." Shaking his head, he adds, "I haven't seen a keersan since I was a kid."

"Keersan?"

"Yeah. Sort of like the things in that destructo movie you made me watch with that.. What did you call them?"

"Dragons?"

"Yeah, except keersan are pretty docile. They're only violent if someone messes with their nest."

Violent seems like an understatement, but Rodney can't concentrate on that right now.

Ronon nods at the pods that are making mechanical, grating sounds. Rodney gestures towards the laptop. "We managed to get them into stasis before..." He doesn't finish the sentence because he can't think about losing John. Not like this. (Not ever, really.)

Ronon puts his hand on Rodney's shoulder, breaking him free of his morbid thoughts. "What can I do?"

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Eighteen hours later, Rodney and Grodin come up with a plan to tie the pods into the puddle jumper power circuits. They load Lorne's pod first, and Rodney checks, double-checks, and triple-checks the readings before they go back for John. Rodney knows it was logical to move Lorne's pod first since it was closer to the entrance, but he fights the thought that he used Lorne as a guinea pig before daring to move John. He feels just like when Ronon showed up - like he's failed a friend.

With the pods secured, and the rest of the scientists and Marines squashed around them, Cadman gives the order to move out. She pilots one jumper and Stackhouse takes the other. Rodney rides in back with a vigilant eye on John's pod, maintaining almost constant contact with Grodin, who is doing the same for Lorne.

Rodney loses track of time and only realizes the long trip back is near an end when he hears the gate being dialed. He turns around and sees the wormhole appear, while Cadman urgently radios, "Atlantis this is Jumper Four. We need two teams in the gate room to transfer Colonel Sheppard and Major Lorne to Medical."

"*What is the nature of their injuries?*" Elizabeth's calm but worried voice asks.

Touching his radio, Rodney reports, "They're in stasis, Elizabeth. We'll drop off John, and then Jumper Seven will land to offload Major Lorne."

"Stasis?"

"It's a long story. I'll tell you the rest-" Rodney starts, and then they hit the event horizon. He finishes as the jumper touches down in the gate room, "once they're getting treatment."

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Rodney's given Elizabeth a full report, been poked and prodded by Gillman, and paced at least ten miles when Carson emerges from the operating room, instantly commanding everyone's attention. Rodney is dismayed by the large amount of blood on Carson's scrubs, but rushes over so quickly he nearly collides with him. "How's John?"

The surgeon places a reassuring hand on Rodney's shoulder. "He's going to be fine, Rodney. Though it's a lucky thing that you came up with the stasis pods. Otherwise..." Carson shakes his head instead of finishing his sentence.

"And Evan?" comes a quiet voice from one corner. Rodney steps back so Lorne's botanist, eyes reddened from doubt and worry, can see Carson clearly.

"Biro's still operating," Carson says. "But when I checked in, she said she's optimistic. His leg will keep him out of the field for a while, and he's got some swelling in his brain. She's pinning his tibia, and administering drugs to deal with the swelling, but the rest of his injuries weren't terribly serious."

The mood in the crowded waiting room lifts, cautiously happy voices replacing the somber tones. Some of the relieved crowd starts drifting toward the exit.

"Rodney? Elizabeth? Can I see you both for a moment?"

Rodney and Elizabeth share a look, wondering what Carson needed. They follow him to his private office and sit down. Carson seems like he's at a loss for words for a moment, before finally finding his tongue. "Rodney, *exactly* what are those pods?"

"I'm not sure. We didn't have anyone who could read Ancient. I mean, that was obviously some kind of medical facility, right? And they worked. Because if they didn't..." He juts his chin towards the operating suites.

Elizabeth asks, "Carson, is something wrong?"

Carson studies Elizabeth briefly before shaking his head. "Not exactly, no. But the pods are mechanical, which we've not seen before. That isn't cause for concern, but they seem... Well, to be honest, they appear to be *healing* pods."

Rodney gapes at Carson, then blurts, "Healing pods?"

"Carson! That's fantastic news!" Elizabeth says with a relieved smile.

Carson says, "Isn't it? I'm optimistic that we might be able to salvage them. If Rodney can disable the stasis function, we should be able to use them when we're short-staffed. Or even for most of the minor injuries we see."

Rodney's stalled thoughts finally gain some traction. "So it *healed* John? And Lorne?"

"Lorne's superficial cuts were cleaned and treated, and his leg bones aligned, but the pod seemed to know not to tamper with a brain injury. John, on the other hand, well, it's bloody fantastic!"

"Why?" Elizabeth asks.

"His internal bleeding was mostly stopped. We even opened some of his injuries back up before we realized what had happened." He pauses, folding his hands on the desk. "Rodney, this could revolutionize medical treatment not just here but at the SGC as well, if we can duplicate the technology."

Rodney smiled. Not only had he saved John's life, but it looks like he's advanced the frontiers of science yet again.

John is released from the Infirmary four days later, one day after Lorne.

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Atlantis and her occupants gradually fall back into their usual routine, grateful that Wraith activity seems to be at an all-time low. At breakfast a few weeks after their Jurassic Adventure™, Rodney eyes John's tray (which is stacked almost as high as Ronon's) and asks if he's okay.

"Sure."

Ronon surveys John's selection, then swipes the top pancake and eats it in one huge bite.

"Bad Chewie!" John says, retaliating by stealing a slice of near-bacon. Crunching down on it, he says, "I'm just hungry is all."

"You *do* seem to have gained a few much-needed pounds," Teyla says.

John stops chewing and gives her a curious look before sticking his stomach out so it's grossly distended, eliciting a laugh from Rodney and an eye roll from Teyla. "Actually," she adds, "you're



looking quite healthy, John. Almost glowing."

Glowing is an odd choice of words, Rodney thinks, before he's startled by a sudden crash. John's halfway to his feet and Ronon has his blaster in hand as they whirl around to see Evan Lorne all but running from the Mess. David Parrish is hot on his heels and out the door before the utensils from the dropped tray skitter to a stop under Sergeant Kojita's table.

Ronon says, "Better hope you didn't get any of what he had, McKay."

Rodney scoffs, but tries to figure out what the mess on the floor used to be.

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When John detours into a bathroom two hours later, Rodney figures it's a prudent pit stop before Senior Staff, which sometimes turns into a marathon meeting. The retching coming from John's stall says otherwise. John assures Rodney that he's fine, and probably overdid it a bit in the gym after his big breakfast.

Not five minutes into the meeting, though, and John looks so bad that Elizabeth comments on it. "First Major Lorne, and now you, John?"

"Gotta be something we ate," John replies.

Rodney breaks out in a cold sweat, muttering, "Oh, God... And I ate off your plate."

"So'd I," Ronon grunts. "And I'm fine."

Elizabeth decides to adjourn for the moment and reconvene later that afternoon.

"Okay, but what about our trip back to-" John braces his hands against the table as all the color leaves his face. "Um, PL-"

John slaps his hand over his mouth and runs out. Rodney is concerned - but not really surprised - to find him retching in the nearest bathroom. When he staggers out of the stall, Rodney tries to convince him to go to the Infirmary, but John waves him off. "It's just a bug."

"You going back in, then?" Rodney asks, pointing towards the conference room.

John shakes his head. "I think I'll go lay down."

*That* freaked Rodney right the hell out. John Sheppard, tacitly admitting that he wasn't feeling well by going back to their quarters for a mid-morning nap? Rodney snags Carson as he leaves the meeting room and hectors him all the way back to his office about the many intergalactic bugs Sheppard might have picked up. Carson finally has to show Rodney the Colonel's utterly normal lab results to convince him that it's some form of food poisoning.

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As much as Rodney was concerned by John's nap, the next couple of weeks nearly send him around the bend. John's nausea mostly disappears, but he's moody, gets up in the middle of the night for the weirdest foods (*Jesus Christ, Rodney - it's just a snack!*), and whiplashes between horny, rubbing against Rodney at the most inopportune times (*In the transporter, John? Elizabeth was right there!*), and giving him looks that make Rodney tempted to check himself for frostbite.

After a long day that includes a wayward flatfish in the lab and John using their private radio channel to detail his explicit plans for the evening, Rodney sighs in relief as he turns down their hallway.

As soon as the door closes behind him, a naked John manhandles him across the living room, leaving a trail of clothes in their wake as he rolls them onto the couch and ruts against Rodney's thigh. Rodney lips and laps at John's nipple before giving it a gentle nip, something that never fails to drive them both crazy. But he's barely grazed the perky nub when John sits straight up and clamps his hands over his nipples. "Jesus *fuck*, Rodney! That hurt!"

John jumps up and jerks his shirt and pants on before Rodney can even formulate a theory as to what the fuck just happened. He knows if he asks what the hell is going on, he risks another outburst, so he just stands up. "John?"

"Rodney," John growls, hands still protecting his chest even though it's completely covered.

Rodney's still considering his next words when their radios go off. "Carson to Sheppard and McKay. Please report to the Infirmary at once."

They share a quizzical look, and John responds, "Be right there, Carson." He storms out without waiting for Rodney to join him, or even cover himself up. Rodney's really glad there's no one in the hallway to see his naked and wilting erection.

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"Pregnant?" Rodney hears John's bellow from the end of the hall. He quickens his pace, entering the treatment room to find a decidedly green-looking Evan Lorne sitting on a gurney, surrounded by John, Carson, and Parrish. "What do you mean, he's pregnant?"

"I said the same thing!" Parrish says. "I mean, how can Evan be pregnant? He's gay!"

Lorne scoffs. "I think a better question is, how the hell can I be pregnant? *I'm a dude!*"

Carson gestures to the next gurney. "Can you hop up here for me, lad?" Rodney's mind flips through the variables as John reluctantly complies.

"Pregnant." Rodney whispers. That makes *so much sense*.

Carson studies the life signs detector for a long while before giving John an encouraging smile. "Congratulations, Colonel. You're pregnant, too."

John locks eyes with Rodney. "*You did this to me!*"

Rodney blanches under John's venomous glare, but Carson inadvertently saves him by patting John on the shoulder and redirecting his ire. "Careful, son. It's not good for the wee bairn."

Rodney considers turning tail and running, but Carson's murmured, "Tut-tut," stops him in his tracks. (Anyway, Atlantis would never hide him from John.) Carson taps his radio. "Elizabeth? Can you please come to the Infirmary? We have some news to discuss, and I think Rodney needs to borrow your translation skills for the stasis chambers they found on PLX-45T."

~\*~\*~

It turns out that the pods *are* primarily for healing, but - when activated by an ATA carrier - can also impregnate the patient.

"Who the hell designs something that?" Rodney asks, rubbing John's back and worrying about his disconsolate expression.

"It makes a certain sense," Elizabeth says, "How many times have we wanted to use a piece of equipment but couldn't because no gene carriers were available? These pods can always be used for healing. And the instructions clearly tell how to prevent impregnation."

"If you read Ancient," Rodney grumbles.

Elizabeth ignores his outburst with the ease of long practice. "'Holders of the genetic gift must don protective gloves if the ensconced are not to bear fruit. Operator DNA will blend with occupant's in a blank ovum and be implanted in the uterus or temporary hepatic pouch.'"

"Special gloves? *Hepatic pouch*?" Rodney bellows.

John and Lorne exchange bleak looks across the table. John asks, "Who sealed us in?"

"I did yours," Rodney responds, "and Cadman sealed Lorne's."

There's a brief moment of serenity as John reaches for Rodney's hand, but then Parrish knocks his chair over in his haste to rush out. Carson holds Lorne back when he tries to follow, advising him to give David a chance to cool off.

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Parrish and Lorne's estrangement is short-lived. They had planned to marry and eventually adopt, and David was devastated to think that Evan and Cadman would share a closer bond than he and Evan ever could. Cadman solved the issue by tracking Parrish down and assuring him that she didn't want kids, and would sign whatever he wanted to prove it. She managed to convince him that she wanted nothing more than to fade into the background and be just another member of their extended family.

"So, it's all settled just like that?" Rodney asks a few days later.

"Well, they insisted on giving her *something*, so she gets to name the kid."

Rodney perks up, but John shoots him down before he can speak. "No dice, Rodney. I'm carrying the kid - *I* get to name it."

~\*~\*~

John and Lorne refused to stop going off-world, since it turned out that pregnant men aren't unknown in Pegasus. John seems like even more of a badass, and Rodney has to tamp down lustful thoughts every time he sees him negotiating with his P90 resting across his enormous baby belly. Not so much when Rodney has to help John on with his thigh holster, though. Starting at five months plus two days, John had insisted that Rodney act as his personal dresser (or would that be armorer) for that one item.

"Why do you even want this on?" Rodney asked, sinking to his knees to untwist the back strap.

"Because I *do*, that's why."

John's peremptory tone is something else Rodney finds hot, though it makes plenty of people avoid him in the hallways. Rodney leans forward to grab the other strap, muttering into John's thigh, "Like you can draw the gun, anyway."

John peers past his belly. "What did you just say?"

"Nothing, dear." Rodney snaps the last buckle and stands up. "There. Can we go now?"

~\*~\*~

Since the day Carson dropped the baby bomb on them, Rodney's been squashing his doubts into a tiny box in the back of his brain to be the guy John can lean on. At first he wasn't sure he had in him, but parenthood changes a person. (At least, that's what the parenting books Carson

kept dumping on him said.) He thought he'd be calm now on the final day, but it's like all his fears are bursting out with a vengeance. He's been pacing a rut in the living room floor for forty minutes when John calls for him to 'come and get me out of this mantrap of a mattress!'

"You ready for this?" Rodney asks as he helps lever John out of bed.

"Not like I have a choice, *Rodney*," John snaps.

Rodney gotten to know that *I'm uncomfortable and I'm taking you with me* tone all too well these last four weeks, and realizes that any response he gives has an equal choice of provoking rage or tears, so he says nothing.

With a fist braced at the small of his back, John waddles over to his slippers. He slides them on and grumbles, "Let's get this over with. *Your* kid spent all night kicking and I got *no* sleep."

Rodney puts an arm around John's waist, a hand under his elbow, and they slowly walk to the transporter. "Do you need anything? Is there anything I can do?"

John says, "I'm good," and concentrates on navigating the small step. Once in, he pins Rodney to the wall as the doors shut. "This'll probably be the most alone time we get for the next," glancing at his watch, "eighteen years, so I'm taking advantage." He kisses Rodney and feels him up a little for good measure before pressing their destination. When the doors re-open, they're greeted by a contingent of well-wishers.

There's a nurse waiting with a wheelchair, but John waves him off and makes his slow way to the pre-op suite. The staff gets him settled while Rodney does a poor job of not hovering. He's about to be wheeled back when Parrish comes running out of the operating room yelling at the top of his lungs.

"It's a girl! It's a *girl!* A GIRL!"

"Good for you, Paris," Rodney says as he streaks by.

"Thanks, **McCoy**," the botanist retorts on his way to the waiting room.

John's laughing too hard to tell Rodney what's so funny.

~\*~\*~

Rodney stands next to the head of the gurney and holds John's hand during the procedure. "John," he says with a wince, "it's not like you've have to push. Why are you squeezing so hard?"

"Remind me to stun you later," John replies, but does loosen his grip.

There's a flurry of activity down at John's belly, not that they can see anything past the surgical drape set up just past his nipples. (Rodney's never been so grateful to a piece of cloth in his life.)

"Here we go!" Carson says. On cue, the cries of a baby fill the air.

Rodney feels dizzy and decides to blame the smell of blood and other fluids.

"Just need to snip the cord," Carson announces. "Congratulations, Daddies. You have a healthy baby boy." He swaddles the newborn in a blanket and lays him on John's chest.

"It's a boy, Rodney!" John says, his voice full of wonder.

Rodney counts the baby's fingers and toes before kissing John, then repeats the action on their son's forehead. "Have you decided on his name?"

"Eragon," John says. "Eragon Matthew Sheppard-McKay."

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