

Warnings: Sex and an attempt at humor. The usual warning that if you don't like slash, go take a hike

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Feedback: Please, please, please

Archiving: Penemuel's Nest, anyone else just ask first.

Summary: The title is pretty much the story.

Skaara's Wedding

by Leviathan

"He got a *what* into the gate room?!"

Jack winced a little at the vehemence in his superior's voice as he questioned the unfortunate at the other end of the phone. "He got it through the gate how?! No, no, you did the right thing. He's not planning on bringing it back through, is he? Good. Thank you for informing me, LT."

Colonel Marilyn Weathers gave Jack a side-long glance, letting him know she wanted all the bloody details when their briefing finished. General Hammond turned back to his Colonels, an exasperated look sketched on his face.

"Has Dr. Jackson lost his mind, Colonel?"

"That's always up for debate, Sir, but I don't think this has anything to do with an insanity plea."

General Hammond gave him a rather skeptical look. "When Dr. Jackson asked me if he could bring a pet for Kasuf, I thought he meant a cat or a dog, maybe a chicken..."

"Well, actually, the chickens are coming with us, General."

Weathers's expression set itself in concrete, afraid she would start laughing. The General's expression spoke of hope that O'Neill was joking. "Well, Kasuf's getting on in years and Daniel felt that he needed..."

"A camel?!"

O'Neill shrugged while Weather's face set itself in titanium. "A very tame camel. Well, the point is sorta moot now, sir. The camel's on Abydos. Speaking of which, the rest of us should be going."

Hammond shook his head in disbelief. "I will be joining you the actual day, Colonel. Remember to let me know as soon as you do. Colonel Weathers will be taking command here when I leave for Abydos. If there are no more questions, dismissed."

The pair saluted smartly and turned on their heels, marching out of the office. "How the hell did Jackson manage it, Jack?!" Weathers gasped when they had put some distance between themselves and the General's office.

"Actually, you gotta see the whole dog and pony show, so wait till we get back from Abydos when we can embarrass Danny but good."

"You'd make me suffer in ignorance till then?"

"Trust me, Marilyn. Danny tells a really good story and it gets better when I point out the things he glosses over. And you'll probably want to hear the *whole* thing when we get back..."

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Three jeeps slowly drove out of the pyramid where the Abydos Stargate was ensconced into the morning light. There they found the first group that had departed which had consisted of Daniel Jackson, the camel and Skaara. The youngsters who had dug up the gate stared at the creature in amazement, completely silent in awe. The camel for its part had obviously decided to forget what had just happened to it and stood, chewing its cud and ignoring the youngsters below. Daniel held the reins loosely in one hand, strangely comfortable with the beast, while he and Skaara talked, waiting for them.

"'bout time you got here," he said when they pulled up.

"Lt. Cooper squealed on you."

Daniel's mouth twisted up. "What did General Hammond say?"

Jack stared at the camel, feeling a little uncomfortable to be in the presence of such a large animal. *Give me a dog any day.* "What could he say? Just don't be telling me that you're bringing it back. Of course, you had him wondering if our nasty filcher on base had made off with your sanity along with all the other supplies he's been lifting."

"It's a present. Kasuf won't refuse it. Besides, once I teach him how to ride, he'll wonder how he lived without one."

"You can ride this thing?"

"Jack, I lived in the Middle East for many years. A lot of places I went to it was either a camel or donkey you got there on. Cars aren't much use in that much sand."

At the skeptical look Jack gave him, Daniel gently flicked the whip behind the camel's knees, commanding it to kneel. He mounted onto the blanket he had already placed on the camel's back, held out his hand to Skaara. The young man stared, unsure of which adventure he wanted more, the jeep or the strange animal, then took his brother-in-law's hand.

"Hang on tight, Skaara!" Daniel yelled something Jack didn't understand and the camel, with a loud grunt, got to its feet. At Daniel's next command, the camel began to plod towards their destination. The small group of Abydonians, after much whispering and trepidation, got into the jeeps. They were soon beside the camel.

"It's gonna take all day for us to get there at this rate!" O'Neill called up to them over the noise of the jeep and the chickens squawking.

A wicked grin lit Daniel's face. "I'll see you when you get there!" He gave a yell in some Middle Eastern dialect and the camel started to run. Strange how such a seemingly placid animal could move *that* fast.

"Well, don't make us look like idiots, Ferretti, give him a run for his money!"

Whooping and hollering, the riders in the jeeps encouraged the race. However, the camel was in its own turf. Much as jeeps had been made to deal with rough terrain, the camel had very little problem keeping ahead of the rest of the Earth group. Skaara waved wildly at them with one hand, the other knotted into Daniel's robes to keep himself balanced. In much less time than it would have normally taken them, the party was pulling in front of Nagada. Stunned silence greeted them as the jeeps and camel slowed and drew close. Neither jeeps nor camels had ever been seen on this world and both drew much awe. The jeeps the people did not get anywhere near, but the camel fascinated them more since they recognized it as an animal. Of course, the fact that both Daniel and Skaara were on the camel probably made them a little less nervous.

Daniel spoke again, flicking the whip and the camel knelt, sending the people scurrying away in fear. He helped Skaara off, then clambered down himself. The camel, for its part, sat where Daniel had ordered, ignoring the chattering that suddenly started when Skaara told the gawkers about his ride. With great trepidation, a young girl drew up to the beast, gently touching it on the neck. The camel ignored her. A little bolder, she stroked its neck, marveling at its coat.

"Camel," Daniel said, then did a lot of explaining in Abydonian. People slowly drifted up to it, copying the young girl's touches. The camel ignored all of them.

Suddenly the group parted, clearing the way for Kasuf. Unlike the others, his eyes were not on the wonder brought to him from another world, but the son he had thought he would never see again. The old man cried out Skaara's name, holding his arms open for the young man who ran to meet him. They hugged hard, both talking at once. Kasuf looked up towards his son-in-law, holding an arm out to him. Daniel dropped the reins and joined them, though he remained silent. The 3 men stayed that way for several moments. There were not a few sniffles coming from the witnesses.

Kasuf gruffly patted both of them and let his arms drop. He spoke to Daniel, then followed the linguist's gesture towards the camel. The hand laying across his chest and the interrogative he spoke to his son-in-law, clearly said, "For me?" to O'Neill. He walked up to the camel, while Daniel explained the creature to him, inspecting it from all angles before he touched it. The camel ignored him.

Daniel hopped onto the camel's back and took Kasuf's hand, much as he had with Skaara. The whip flicked again and the camel stood. Kasuf grabbed Daniel hard, his eyes widening as he realized just how far off the ground they now rode. Slowly they walked into the town, attracting an even larger crowd. The kids who had ridden in the jeeps now helped the humans unload them, pausing to stare at the chickens clucking madly in the small coops Dougherty had made them. Only a couple of them had not survived the trip. O'Neill pointed them out to the farm boy now airman who had done most of the work to bring them here.

Everything was carried into the gates, the jeeps driven in slowly and left just inside. The humans secured them under tarps to keep the ferocious sands of the local storms from clogging hoses and engine parts, then joined the party already starting in the middle of town. At the well that served as the main gathering place, Kasuf and his 2 sons held court, the 2

younger men red with some kind of embarrassment. O'Neill was struck with how much more like an adult Skaara held himself. Not the arrogance of Klorel, the Goa'uld who had held his body captive for 3 years, but with experience and a sense of knowing who he was. The young boy O'Neill had met the first time he had come to Abydos had grown into a man O'Neill was glad to count as a friend.

This was the first time Skaara had been home since his kidnaping by Apophis. Since the Abydonians only uncovered their gate once every one of *their* years, the timing had not facilitated his return. However, since his arrival on Earth 3 days prior to returning home, he had stuck very close to Daniel. O'Neill guessed it was the whole older-brother-married-to-my-sister bit, but he felt rather neglected in the whole affair. The first night after Skaara came back, he showed up in a get-up that had come from Daniel's wardrobe and told O'Neill that he was going home to get married. No, he didn't know to whom, but that was the way of things on Abydos. Daniel's love-match to Sha're was not the norm there. Jack had tried to talk him out of it, but both of them had pointed out that Kasuf was getting on in years and would need someone to help him in his old age, preferably a daughter-in-law with grandchildren for him to spoil.

"Why don't you stay with him?" O'Neill asked Skaara.

"I cannot. I have pledged to work with the Tok'ra until I *have* to return home."

"So, you're going to get married and then abandon her?"

Daniel looked ashamed, but Skaara said, "It would not be the first time in my family that the family had been run by the mother. My father's father was taken by the Goa'uld when my father was but 2 years of age. My own mother..." He couldn't finish.

"Your mother, too?" Skaara nodded. "I'm sorry, Skaara, I didn't know. She wasn't hosted, was she?"

"No, I think they said she became one of the Goa'uld's handmaidens. I never saw her again. Klorel did not know anything about her." He had sunk down next to Daniel on the floor, misery written all over him. Daniel had put an arm around him, gently speaking to him Abydonian.

Of course, they had introduced Skaara to as much of Earth as they could in 2 days. A zoo, which had fascinated him; a movie, which he didn't understand and a playground, where he nearly split his head open flying off the swings. They had also gone to a bar, which Skaara hadn't liked. It reminded him of too many places Klorel had liked to frequent though he had assured him that the bar they had visited on Earth was far tamer than any place Klorel had patronized. O'Neill didn't know if he should be worried or relieved. The rest of the time, Daniel and Skaara had been in closed quarters, planning for the big event. They had disappeared for several hours on the last day, to procure the camel a veterinarian friend of Daniel's had rescued a couple of years ago. Well, he wasn't about to speculate on the nature of serendipity.

Kasuf waved Jack over to his side. Jack obliged him, sitting down next to Daniel. He kept a little space between them, much as he would have preferred otherwise. Kasuf clapped his hands to silence the chatter.

"I welcome all of our friends, both old and new, back home. Today is a joyous day indeed with

the return of my son. However this miracle occurred, I know that our friends of the First World have brought us happiness again. I, personally, will never be able to thank you enough." As Daniel blushed furiously at his words, Kasuf said, "You are much too modest, my good son."

Skaara laughed, "Father is right, Dan-yel. If not for your words to the Triad, I would still belong to Klorei. I, too, am forever in your debt. Yours and O'Neill's."

"Hey, my ears are burning here," Jack said, looking over at Skaara. Skaara looked at the older man's ears, trying to find flames, shrugging when he found none.

"I also wish to thank my good son for bringing me such a wondrous gift, a living reminder of the first world. I am honored to accept this gift. However, I now have an announcement to make. Skaara has returned home to choose a bride." Suddenly there was much whispering among the women, who were seated as a group behind the men. Only Carter was allowed in the front because of her status as a citizen of the First World. She leaned over to Teal'c and spoke in his ear. The large man nodded solemnly to whatever she said which surprised her, if her face was any clue.

"The wedding will be 3 days from now, if my son can make up his mind by then." Laughter broke out and now Skaara was as red as Daniel.

"The suns are getting higher, my friends, and we have many arrangements to make. May the gods bless your day." With that, Kasuf and his sons bowed to their audience and made their way to Kasuf's housing. Jack felt a little bereft, but he moved over to his remaining team members.

"Well, kids, looks like we have the rest of the day to ourselves. Any ideas?"

Ferretti said, "It looks like time for siesta right now. It'll be too hot soon to do anything other than laze around. We should probably find somewhere to rest."

The women surrounded Sam. One of the ones who spoke English whispered something in her ear and Sam nodded. "I'll see all of you later." They disappeared into one of the nearby homes. The boys who had met the humans at the gate led them to one of their homes and made them as comfortable as possible in the stifling heat. None of them were exhausted enough to sleep, yet the heat sapped them completely. Jack admired Daniel's ability to adapt to the heat, though that same ability had made him absolutely miserable in the Colorado winters he'd faced for the last 5 years. O'Neill remembered fondly finding Daniel thoroughly bundled in several layers of clothes chattering in his overly warm office the first year after his return. He'd even worn mittens on his hands which he had had to strip off every time he wanted to use his computer.

The heat kept everyone from sleeping, but no one wanted to take the effort to talk. Their hosts made sure they had water close to hand and food, if they had the stomach for it. Jack closed his eyes a bit, watching as Teal'c settled comfortably into Kel-no-reem and wishing he had taken more time to learn the technique from the Jaffa.

Time crawled by infinitely, yet O'Neill was surprised when he heard the noises of Nagada moving back into activity. He rose slowly to his feet. Slapping his cap onto his head, he stepped out into the lower sunlight and only a little less stifling heat. As he glanced around, trying to find

Daniel or Skaara, he only caught a glimpse of the family as they headed out of the gates. With little energy to run, he stalked as quickly as he could after them, knowing he'd never catch up with them until they stopped. All of them were far more acclimated to this hellish heat than he was. He just hoped he could keep them in sight.

Beyond the gates, they turned to the east. Half-way to their destination, O'Neill realized where they were going and nearly turned back. However, he satisfied himself by reaching the top of the dune that looked down upon the site and remaining there.

Below him lay the last resting place of Sha're, Daniel's wife. The sword still stood there, though some storm must have knocked it a bit off kilter. Skaara stood at his sister's grave for long minutes, then slowly sank to his knees, obviously letting go of his grief. Daniel fell to his knees beside him, hugging him close as Skaara wept. Kasuf's hands rested on his sons' shoulders. For a long time they held their vigil, surrendering tears and speaking amongst themselves, undoubtedly sharing their memories.

O'Neill slathered on more sun block, happy he had left it in his pockets during their siesta. Unlike the men below, his arms were bared to the sun. After a while, he heard the approach of another person and turned to find Teal'c slowly making his way up the dune upon which he sat. When he reached the summit, he took one look at the vista below and chose to remain beside O'Neill.

"One of the boys told me you had vanished in this direction, O'Neill," he explained. "I did not know what to make of your disappearance, so I chose to follow you. Why do you not join them?"

"Figure it's a family thing. I know Danny knows I'm up here. If he wanted me down there, he'd have given me some signal by now."

"Like that one, O'Neill?" The Jaffa directed Jack's attention to Daniel who was waving at them.

"Yeah, I'd say that was a good guess."

O'Neill stood, brushing sand off of his pants, and trudged down the dune with Teal'c. Skaara solemnly faced the Jaffa.

"Thank you for freeing my sister," he said quietly, "and thank you for saving my brother."

Teal'c inclined his head, accepting the thanks. "I regret we did not have the time to free your sister as we did you. Had I..."

Daniel crossed the space between them quickly and clasped the bigger man's shoulders. "No, Teal'c. What's done is done." Tear-reddened eyes moved to Jack. "No regrets. I won't have them. Not here."

Teal'c's eyes widened in surprise at Daniel's blanket forgiveness. Jack gave them all a lop-sided smile, even as his heart tripped in the face of one of his main reasons for loving this man - his ability to care so much. True, like every other virtue the man held, it was tattered, torn and tested, but he still clung to his own values with a tenacity O'Neill envied, though, at times, he cursed Daniel for it. Skaara clapped a hand on Teal'c's shoulder.

"Sha're would be glad to see us all here, as friends." Kasuf grunted his agreement. As one, all 5 men turned and bowed slightly to the spirit that lived here. Slowly they made their silent way back to Nagada.

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"Oh, Dan-yel, I cannot wear this," O'Neill heard the next morning very early.

"Please, Skaara, you're my brother. If I had had it, I would have worn it on my own wedding day, but the circumstances..."

Skaara giggled, "We know the circumstances, Dan-yel. It's so much simpler here to get married than what you have told me of the First World's customs." O'Neill heard the rustle of heavy fabric. "This is so beautiful. I am nothing..."

"You're my brother," Daniel repeated firmly. "Any bride would love to see you looking so fine for your wedding day. Please."

The fabric rustled again, which made O'Neill curious as to what Daniel had brought with him. He rocked himself out of the hammock Daniel had strung up for him last night and pushed the heavy curtain between their room and the common area. In the center of the room, Skaara stood in a heavy tunic of black and gold, holding a matching burnoose in one hand. Jack could tell the fabric was expensive, so beautifully embroidered.

"Wow!" Both men turned to him. Daniel smiled blindingly as Skaara looked sheepish. "I gotta agree with Daniel on this one, Skaara. No woman's going to be able to resist you lookin' like a prince!" From another curtained area, Kasuf entered the room. He, too, stared at the clothes in amazement.

"You brought this for Skaara's wedding, good son?"

Daniel nodded. "I got this years ago during one of my digs. I always thought I'd wear it for my own wedding, but..."

Kasuf fingered the fabric, marveling over the workmanship. "It is so fine. No one could make its like here. Do not insult your brother, Skaara, you must wear this."

Daniel suddenly looked distressed. "No, please, good father, it must be Skaara's choice." Slowly the younger man slipped out of the outfit, laying it carefully in Daniel's hands.

"I will think on it, my brother." He went to his room. After several minutes, he emerged, dressed in his own clothes and left them.

Kasuf turned to Daniel. "Good son, you must not..."

"Please, good father, I wasn't thinking. I am certain these clothes must remind him of when he was Klore's host. The times we saw him, he was dressed in very fine garments. I didn't think..."

"Whoa, Daniel," O'Neill said. "Just let Skaara decide. It's not your fault that you wanted him to look nice. Just don't push him, okay?" Daniel nodded.

"Knock, knock," Sam's voice said brightly from outside. At Jack's "C'mon in, Carter," the blonde entered the room. "Is everything ok? I just saw Skaara..."

"Everything's fine, Carter," Jack cut her off. "So where's everyone?"

"Well, Ferretti and the rest of SG-2 are currently teaching a bunch of people how to handle chickens..."

"Ferretti?!"

Sam shrugged, "Well, Dougherty, really. But you know Ferretti, he's got to remind everyone that he's the one in charge. Teal'c's teaching some of the boys hand-to-hand techniques."

Daniel jumped to his feet and ran to their room to put the robes away. "Good father, it's time for me to teach you how to ride the camel," he called from the curtained area. Jack could hear him stripping from his nightrobe into his regular robes, that, quite frankly, Jack saw no difference between.

"Can I learn, too?" Sam asked.

"Sure, why not?" Daniel laughed. "How about you, Jack?"

"Um, I think I'll pass. I prefer my transportation to eat gas, not grass."

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The rest of the day passed in a hazy hot daze, though the doldrums were broken about midday when the camel came flying through the town proper, Sam whooping and hollering while Daniel hung onto her in absolute terror. Upon seeing Jack, he screamed for help. The only thing Jack heard clearly as the pair zoomed past was Carter yelling, "Wuss!" back to her companion. If Daniel had refuted that claim, it was lost in the cloud of dust they kicked up.

The siesta found all of SG-1 in Daniel's room. No one spoke, preferring to bask in the calm that came from knowing each other well enough to respect each person's space. Skaara returned, but went straight to his room, Daniel and Kasuf respecting his desire to keep his solitude. However, by the time dinner was ready, Skaara had apparently gotten over whatever funk had kept him away. He chattered with the group animatedly, laughing over O'Neill's description of Daniel's earlier terror.

As dinner was winding down, a couple of old women begged for Kasuf's attention.

"Matchmakers," Sam informed them. "I met a couple of them yesterday after Kasuf made the big announcement. They still have dowries here, do you believe that?"

Daniel shrugged. "There are still places on Earth that have them. Go to India some time. A woman really has to prove herself to not be thought of as her husband's property. Think of all the widows who died in the sati back in the 1800's and the bride murders of today. Suddenly a dowry looks pretty harmless in comparison."

"You're *not* defending this practice, are you?"

"No, Sam, I'm not. But it's easy for us in the US to get all bent out of shape because we don't



agree with someone else's customs. Think of the people who live in those situations. In a lot of cases, these customs have been passed down over millennia." Daniel shook his head. "We aren't that far removed from them ourselves. We just think we are."

Kasuf finished speaking to the women and moved back to his family and SG-1. "The matchmakers have narrowed your choices down to 7, my son. Tomorrow, I..."

"No, father, let me speak to them. They will be forced to make a difficult decision if they marry me. I will give them the choice to refuse me if they cannot bear to have me away from them for long periods of time."

"This is highly unusual, but," he looked around at the visitors from the First World, "I will let you do so. All of the girls are worthy of you, my son. I would not mind any of them as my daughter."

Skaara smiled sadly, thanking his father. He inclined his head towards Daniel, signaling that he wished to speak to him alone and the brothers retreated to Skaara's room. Kasuf yawned broadly and excused himself. The guests took Daniel's room. Clearly Carter had wanted to say more on the subject of matchmaking and dowries, but she acquiesced in good grace and took the hammock Jack had slept in the night before.

In the morning, Jack stole out of the room with Teal'c barely acknowledging his passage to find Daniel and Skaara in the younger man's room wrapped around each other like sleeping puppies. For a moment Jack envied the innocence of the tableau, then realized he would rather have his adult passions for all the comfort of Daniel's fraternal embrace. Daniel's eyes half opened, looking up at Jack.

"Go back to sleep, Daniel."

"mmm 'kay, Jack," he slurred, eyes already drooping shut. Jack stared for a few minutes longer. *God, have I got it bad!* he thought. He stepped out of the house to watch as the village stirred with the rising of the sun. The biggest moon was setting to the west, splashing the dunes with a mauve tint. Women began moving to the well to draw the first water of the day, staring at Jack as they passed with huge jugs settled on their heads. The chickens began clucking as Dougherty threw them their morning meal. Slowly Nagada lumbered to life, the smells from breakfast fires now collecting in the area.

*Is this what Danny woke to every morning when he was here? O'Neill wondered. The same thing day in and day out? Routines that haven't been broken since they got here all those years ago? Man, I must be insane! It's too early in the friggin' morning to get philosophical!*

In the room behind him, O'Neill could hear the first stirrings of his friends. As he stood there, a young woman, whom he vaguely remembered seeing in the house, sidled past him with her own water jug and went to the fire pit, stirring up the embers. She dropped a cloth bundle she had tied around her neck onto the ground and started breakfast. Carter crawled out of the room, coffee pot in hand. The woman filled it with water and let Carter place it on the cooking grill, though she seemed rather uneasy with the contraption.

"Daniel'll never forgive us if we don't get the coffee brewing," she told O'Neill.

"He's not the only one with the caffeine jones," O'Neill laughed, taking in his 2IC's disheveled

appearance.

"Man, what I wouldn't give for a shower right now, Sir. I smell like camel."

"Yeah, Carter, ya do."

The look she shot him would have nailed his coffin shut and buried him far under Abydos' sands. Jack laughed. "It's a bit of a haul, but there's an underground river. It's not real big, but it might work. You just need to find out when communal bathing day is."

"It'll be soon," Skaara said sleepily, trailing Daniel behind him. "Everyone will want to be clean for the wedding."

Sam looked horrified. "*Everyone* will be there?"

Daniel almost laughed, but knew he would do so at the risk of his life. "It's like a beach, Sam. Everyone will just be wearing a lot less than they usually do." The Major looked relieved, then stared poisonously at the oh-so-innocent faces. Daniel sat at the fire, watching the top of the percolator for any sign of coffee life.

"I, too, must confess a desire to be cleaner," Teal'c said.

"You've been spoiled by too much technology," Jack sniggered. "You haven't lived until you've been crusted with week-old dirt..."

"...bitten by sand fleas..." Daniel chimed in.

"...have to pry your clothes off..."

"...have to beat them with a rock to make them wearable..."

"...have to..."

"I...'get the picture', O'Neill," Teal'c said darkly.

Skaara snickered. "You will out of your pain very soon, Teal'c, Samantha. I will make sure the preparations begin as quickly as possible."

"Speaking of which," Daniel queried, "when are we going to go talk to the women? We should get ready for that. Maybe the coffee'll be done by then." The last was a mutter as Daniel proceeded to his own room to change his clothes. O'Neill and Teal'c joined him shortly, glad of the fact that they had brought extra changes of clothing, despite the teasing they'd been giving Sam. Once they were presentable, Sam got the room to herself.

Daniel poured himself coffee, his eyes nearly crossing in bliss as the caffeine slid into his veins. Both Teal'c and Skaara made distasteful faces, while Jack poured himself a cup. "So, after you talk to Skaara's fiancées, where are you going, Daniel?"

"To the map room," he said, pouring his second cup. "I want to make some notes on some of the stuff I skipped the last time we were here."

"Want me to come along?"

"You'd be bored out of your mind, Jack, really."

Jack smiled. "Then let's say I bring you lunch. You'll have had a few hours by that point and you can let me know what you found."

Daniel shook his head exasperatedly. "How can I refuse? Ok, I'll see you then." With that, he and Skaara took off.

Sam stuck her head out of the curtain. "They gone?"

"Yeah, but we'd better get our seats fast before they know we're there."

Teal'c looked at the 2 humans in confusion. "You intend to eavesdrop on Skaara and Daniel Jackson?"

"Wouldn't miss it for the world, big guy. Are you in?"

The Jaffa stared at Sam, then Jack. "I am 'in'."

"Great, cause we're gonna need you there to translate!"

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Traditions kept both Skaara and Daniel out of the room with the young ladies for a few minutes, allowing the rest of SG-1 to settle into the area Sam had scouted out yesterday. It was a cozy fit, but their position allowed them to see right into the little room where the women sat on large pillows, murmuring amongst themselves. All of them were heavily veiled. When Daniel and Skaara walked in, all of them quieted immediately and turned to the pair.

"I have been told by the matchmakers and my father that you are the ones from whom I should pick a bride," Skaara said. Teal'c's translation was a quiet monotone that did not carry beyond the 3 SG-1 members. "Before I choose from you, I will make your decision and mine easier."

"I know all of you expect to marry into position as father is hetman of Nagada. However, this is not without a price. All of you know that I was hosted by the demon, Klorei, and forced to leave my home and my family behind. My beloved sister died when her demon tried to kill her beloved husband, my brother. I have promised that I will do all I can to destroy the demons and to that end I have joined with the Tok'ra - those who rebel against them. What this means is that I will not be home very often."

The women turned to each other, surprised at his words. Before any of them could say a thing, Skaara continued, "I need someone to look after my father before I return to take his place. She needs to be strong because Father can be very stubborn, but I need her to have good judgement of when she should yield to his demands. I fear I will not be a very good husband to you. I hope to have many children, so that they may keep your days full of joy, but I may die on a world far from here and unless the Tok'ra are informed, you may never know my fate. I may also be killed by those who know Klorei - his friends or his enemies. I need a bride who is strong enough to wait for me, no matter how long it takes. If you need a husband who will dote on you, I am not he. Daniel and I will go to the waiting room. If you are unwilling to live this life that I have spoken of, you may leave and I will pass no judgement on you."

The two men rose and walked into one of the curtained areas, closing it behind them. One woman barely waited for their departure to initiate her own. The other 6 sat for long moments, staring at everything around them. One of them spoke quietly, drawing the others' attentions. They spoke too softly for Teal'c to hear them, but at the end of the conversation, 3 more left. The 3 remaining women waited patiently until Skaara and Daniel returned.

"Thank you," Skaara said quietly as he sat. "I will need to speak to each of you alone."

"Or as alone as we're going to be here," Daniel smirked, pouncing on the curtain the rest of SG1 hid behind and yanking it open. The women gasped as Skaara laughed.

"Did you think we were going to get left out of all the fun?" O'Neill told him. They scrambled out of the small space, Sam sprawling across several of the pillows. Teal'c sat himself down carefully like a prince, while Jack made his way over to the archeologist over the treacherous pillow footing.

"And you must be able to deal with this as well!" Skaara chortled. "They have no decorum, but they are friendly."

"But not easily trained," Daniel muttered. "Sit down, Jack." The Colonel sat next to Daniel. The three women looked a little more relaxed now that the presence of the others had been acknowledged as part of the proceedings.

For a couple of hours, Skaara spoke to each of the women, asking each questions about what they wanted, what they expected of him, what they would do if he never returned. The humans all remained quiet except Daniel's and Teal'c's quiet translations. Jack heard almost none of it, thrilling quietly as Daniel's breath whispered across his ear and neck as he spoke. The second woman noted how close they were sitting and gave Jack a knowing look. He almost froze up, but he noticed that Daniel had not seen her gaze, staring as he was at Skaara's face. Assessing Skaara's reaction to each woman.

When the third one had retired to the waiting area for refreshments, Skaara had Sam and Teal'c move over to them.

"What do you think?" he asked them.

"This is your decision, Skaara," Jack and Daniel said in near unison. They looked at each other in surprise, then turned simultaneously back to Skaara.

"I like Raxchal," Sam said. "She's very smart."

Oh, yeah, the one giving me the x-ray eyes, Jack thought, pointedly not looking at Daniel. He shook his head.

"You don't think so, O'Neill?" Skaara asked.

"No, I like the first one myself - Deina? She's pretty and she really seems to like you."

"I liked Neftaya," Teal'c spoke up. "She will make you a very dutiful and conscientious wife."

Daniel looked at each of his friends, a smirk gracing his features. "Not a surprise in the lot," he

told Skaara. "Well, you've heard each of their best points, so now it's up to you."

Skaara got to his feet and, nodding to them to wait for him, left the building for a walk. The friends relaxed in the growing heat of the day, lazily talking about work, missions and base gossip. Sam had them snickering over the infirmary soap opera when Skaara returned, a very determined expression on his face. Daniel went to the waiting room and called the women out.

"I have made my decision," he said with no preamble. "I choose Raxchal."

The other 2 girls bowed and departed. Raxchal gave them all a little bow, went to her matchmaker to settle the fee and left. Sam's grin lit up her face. O'Neill didn't want to think of how much she was going to rub this into his face. *Pretty and likes you? Can I be any more shallow?* No wonder Sam was ready to crow in triumph. Skaara had shown a lot more in the brains department than he had.

Jack watched Daniel depart for the map room, carrying a satchel containing his tools and a canteen full of water. Jack itched to go after him, but decided to leave him to his own devices for a little while. All of this matrimonial hoo-hah had to be scraping open his own memories. Jack tried to join the rest of his people in their chosen preoccupations, but was unable to drive Daniel from his thoughts.

The news of Skaara's choice spread through Nagada like wildfire. Immediately Raxchal was sequestered from all save her female relatives, not to be seen until the ceremony the next day. O'Neill dispatched Dougherty to the gate to tell the General that the wedding would start tomorrow and to let the Tok'ra know as well, should any one of them want to attend.

At mid-day, as Jack had promised, he trekked over to the map room to find Daniel writing furiously into a notebook. He was busy transcribing some of the other text around the coordinates, so he never heard Jack enter. As a result, he nearly went through the roof when Jack lay a gentle hand on his shoulder. Pressing his hand over his heart, he turned to his commander, even as he picked up the notebook he had flung into the air.

"Jack! Warn somebody when you walk into a room!"

O'Neill snickered and handed him the bundle that Kasuf's housegirl had made for him along with a new canteen and a thermos full of coffee. Daniel hungrily dug into the flatbread and dried meat, washing them down with the last of his own canteen's water. "I forgot to eat this morning," he explained.

"Breakfast is the most important meal of the day," Jack laughed. Daniel froze, his eyes going wide. For a moment, he looked completely panicked and far away at the same time. Then, as if he had snapped back to the real world, he relaxed and chuckled a little at Jack's cliché.

"Tell that to my stomach in the morning. I think the only time I eat breakfast is when we're on a mission."

Jack picked up the notebook now lying beside Daniel, looking at the new pages of picture writing that meant nothing to him. He sat down next to Daniel, facing the opposite direction, his shoulder touching the younger man's. Daniel chewed on a piece of the jerky, staring at the wall he'd been copying for the last hour as Jack stared at little pictures, wondering how anyone

could make a language from this.

"You ok, Daniel?"

In one of those moments of complete insight, Daniel said quietly, "It's been a bad year, Jack."

"I know I didn't help."

"It's not all your fault, Jack; we've all had a hand in it. I think this whole situation finally just got to all of us. We all broke down at the same time and it wasn't a pretty sight. I don't blame you for anything."

"Not even for almost blowing you up?"

Daniel shook his head. "You were backed against a wall, Jack. What if I hadn't managed to get through to him in time? Were you going to cut off your only means of escape? Leave the Enkarans to die?"

"I guess not. So, why didn't you take me with you to Chicago when Dr. Jordan died?"

He turned to look at Jack, a sad smile taking away the thoughtful expression. "I couldn't expose you to them. All that petty bickering. I was figuring that I'd be snubbed by the rest of my colleagues. Just didn't expect the rest of it, though you could have let me talk to Teal'c a little longer."

Jack snorted. "I was on *vacation*, Daniel. If Teal'c had really felt a need to get back to you, he could have picked up those batteries and called you back. Though I do have to admit, he sounded pretty desperate to get back to civilization when you called him."

"I've been to that fleatrap you call a vacation home, Jack. I don't blame him."

Jack gave him an arched brow. "Oh, really? I seem to remember you didn't scream and cry too much the last time I took you there."

"About a millennia ago," Daniel whispered almost too softly for Jack to hear.

Jack sighed. Here it came. "Daniel, I'm sorry. I've been so messed up this year. We almost lost you to that damned appendicitis, then the whole thing with the Replicators, Teal'c going darkside, the Eurondans - and I still owe you a really big apology for that - the crap in Russia, the..."

Daniel stuck a piece of the jerky in Jack's mouth, effectively silencing him. "It's not your fault, Jack," he reiterated. "We've all been doing things that have hurt the team. I've been so fucking self-righteous where I've had no right to be. I've treated all of you like crap at times, acting like I know everything. We've all had a bad year, Jack. Let's just put it all behind us."

For several moments, neither man spoke, feeling the oppressive heat in the spacious room. Jack stared at the profile looking back at the wall behind him. Daniel's eyes were far away, not seeing where they were looking. He had one of the most classically beautiful faces that O'Neill had ever seen, despite the glasses and the hacked hair that should have been swept back as opposed to giving the impression of a bowl-cut gone bad. What did he think of Jack? Jack

would definitely give himself points on his nearly tip-top physical shape, despite the knees. The gray looked better than his brown and pepper of a few years ago. But was he what Daniel wanted?

"Um, you and Sam, you know I'm ok with it, don't you?"

Here it comes, confession time. "I'm not in love with Sam. I - thought I was."

Daniel's head tilted and the eyes peered intensely at his face. The heat of the room was nothing in comparison to the scrutiny he was receiving. He felt himself flushing a little from the heat and the embarrassment. "You 'thought' you were?"

"Yeah. Y'know, Sam's so much smarter than I am. She's the one who saw it wasn't real first and she was really nice about letting me off the hook. When I wasn't thinking about her anymore, I-I suddenly realized who I was I-looking at." He hated the stammer. It had been so many years since he'd been a teenager, begging for his first date. He was already regretting this conversation.

"Jack?"

"It was you," he said bluntly. "I treated you like crap cause I figured if I drove you away, I wouldn't have to deal with it. You're a hard guy to scare off."

"Me?" Daniel's eyes were wide behind the lenses. Jack couldn't look at him any more.

"Yeah, you. I never meant to hurt you, but, damnit!, I've always been straight. I loved Sara and I know you loved Sha're. It's a little hard to find yourself switching streams in a mid-life crisis."

"Yeah," Daniel breathed. "So, have you...er...?"

"Uh, no. You?"

"Nuh uh. Thought about it?"

"Before you? No. Have you - thought about it?"

"Uh, once. Long time ago. Before me and Sarah...we, um, did it. A hero-worship thing, I guess," Daniel said nervously, fidgeting under Jack's gaze. "One of my professors." Jack watched the crimson creep up Daniel's ear even as the blue eyes refused to make contact. "How long have you - felt like this?"

Jack sighed softly, resting his chin on his knees. "I don't know, Daniel. A while, I think. I can't say that I suddenly woke up one morning and said, 'Gee, I'll fall in love with Daniel.'" Daniel snickered. "I really started to notice it after Teal'c and I nearly turned into popsicles in that glider. I was just so happy to see your face. And then this really insane thought crossed my mind that I'd really be happy to see more of your face. Isn't that nuts?"

"See more of your face'?"

"Yeah, like waking up first thing in the morning, seeing your face. I guess it all went downhill from there."

"Why didn't you say anything, Jack?"

Jack shrugged elaborately. "I don't know. Too much crap going on, too many missions you weren't there, going quietly nuts in the meantime." He pushed his cap off his head, scratching his scalp. "Then you went missing. That really slammed it home, I guess. All I could think of was you. Didn't matter that there were a bunch of people missing, I only thought about you. Some CO I am."

Daniel's eyes narrowed as he turned back to Jack. "You're a great CO, Jack. I wouldn't trust anyone else."

"Even after this crap?"

"Is that what you think it is? 'Crap'?"

For once in his life, Jack couldn't read the look on Daniel's face. It seemed foreboding, but at the same time disappointed. Daniel's little tics and twitches were not to be seen. "My feelings for you? No. But...but laying this all on you now. You gotta be missing Sha're something awful and here's Skaara getting married. I guess we're all turning into head cases. But I couldn't *not* say anything. Not after we almost lost you. I didn't tell you earlier, cause you were in the middle of PT and getting better. I didn't want you to think this was just comin' out of some need for comfort that we'd gotten you back. I...just..." He felt himself running out of steam, still unable to fathom Daniel's expression.

"You are such a selfish bastard, you know that?"

Jack smirked at the blue eyes trying simultaneously to freeze him and fry him. "Yeah, I know. Why am I a bastard now?"

"You haven't asked me how I've felt once."

The atmosphere suddenly felt so much less oppressive, heat be damned. The unfathomable became open. The shyest grin that Jack had ever seen quirked up the corners of Daniel's lips. "How do you feel, Daniel?"

"Like I'm not alone," he said quietly.

Jack snorted. "How long?"

"Ever since Sha're died. When you got trapped on Edora, I realized how much you meant to me. But I couldn't say anything. Then, as, uh, you said, things got kinda hectic. Then you and Sam...I figured it was best just to stay out of it." The faraway gaze had returned. "I guess that's part of the reason I drew apart from everyone."

"We weren't doin' such a hot job trying to get you back with us. God, look at us. The sorriest pair of..."

Daniel scooted back abruptly. "Don't finish that sentence. Don't, just don't." Impulsively, Daniel leaned forward, kissing Jack, drawing back when he received no response. "Jack?"

Freezing, frying, emotions scattering all over the place, Jack took Daniel's face into his hands,

his lips locking onto the archeologist's, making certain that Daniel couldn't confuse his intentions. Moaning gently, Daniel slid his arms around Jack's neck, pulling their upper torsos close until the sheer intensity forced their mouths apart. The blue eyes were saucered.

"This is a big step, Danny."

"To say the least," Daniel giggled a little nervously. "If anyone finds out..."

"...I retire, no questions asked."

"What if this is just a mid-life crisis, Jack? What if you decide tomorrow that you really do love Sam and that you want to win her? I don't think I could live with that. I'm not casual about my relationships, not my loves, not my friends. I can just stay your friend, Jack, but I can't take this any farther if you're not with me."

"For cryin' out loud, Daniel! What do you think I am? A masochist? You think I like bleedin' all over the floor just for the fun of it, tellin' you how I feel just cause I wanna get you in the sack?"

"No, Jack," he said carefully. "I guess I just wanted to know where I stood. This year..."

"...sucked. Let's take what's left of it and start over again, huh?"

Daniel's head dropped to Jack's shoulder, one hand reaching into Jack's hair, gently running trembling fingers through the grey. "Best advice I've heard all year," he whispered. He kissed Jack's neck. "Although, can we wait till later? It's too hot for one thing and I-I don't think I...not here."

"Too many memories here?" At Daniel's nod, he began rubbing the younger man's back. "I understand."

For several minutes they held on, until the heat became too much. Daniel lay back, eyes half shut, staring at the ceiling. Jack returned to Daniel's journal. Nope, it still didn't make sense; they were still little pictures that didn't equal a language to him. Slowly, Daniel drifted to sleep.

At the end of the break, Sam showed up at the map room, to find Daniel still asleep and the Colonel helping himself to the rest of Daniel's food. "Sir, I think you'd better get back. Ferretti's trying to set up a stag party."

"Oh, peachy. C'mon, Sleeping Beauty," he prodded Daniel's shoulder, "gotta save Skaara from a fate worse than death."

Daniel blinked at both of them. "Wha's wrong?"

"Ferretti's tryin' to run the world again."

Daniel gathered up his supplies, took a large swig of the coffee Jack had brought and scrambled after his teammates. Upon their arrival, Skaara immediately raced over to O'Neill, demanding to know what the heck Ferretti was going on about. Ferretti smiled broadly upon seeing Jack.

"Hey, Colonel, just in time!"

"Ferretti, what the hell's going on?"

The shorter man swung an arm around O'Neill's shoulder, pulling his face down to his level. "We can't let Skaara leave the good life without some kind of send-off, can we? If we had more time, we could've done one up almost as big as yours, but, well, you gotta do what you gotta do."

"Ferretti," Jack growled.

"Aw, c'mon, Sir, this is the only fun the kid's gonna get before all the brass shows up and we gotta behave."

"Did you ask him if he wanted a stag party?"

"I don't think he got what I was talking about, Sir," Ferretti said sheepishly. "Daniel can explain it to him best, I guess."

O'Neill slid out from under the other man's arm. "If Skaara says 'no', you *will* respect his wishes, right?"

Drawing an 'X' on his chest, he said, "Cross my heart, Sir."

After a lengthy explanation in Abydonian, Skaara shrugged. Ferretti whooped, grabbed his team and ran off to start the preparations. Jack shook his head. This was so not what he wanted to be doing tonight. Sam snickered something about being glad *not* to be a man and having to deal with "this juvenile tradition" as she sauntered away to the stables to get some more riding practice with the camel.

"Don't look at me," Daniel said. "I'm not the CO and it wasn't *my* idea." Teal'c, who had listened attentively to Daniel's explanation to Skaara, just blinked in the manner that let O'Neill know that he was completely confused by the Tau'ri again. O'Neill watched the Jaffa and Daniel follow Sam to the stables.

"Skaara, remind me why I agreed to bring these bozos with me, will ya?" The young man shrugged again and joined the rest of the camel crowd.

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"Tell me we're having fun," O'Neill whispered to Daniel. The food had run out early, since most was being saved for the feast tomorrow night. So, they had degenerated to swilling down the moonshine, or, rather, most of the humans did. The Abydonians, Jack, Daniel and Teal'c watched them get drunker and drunker. Of course, the whole fiasco had started when Ferretti discovered that Nagada didn't have any hookers that they could drape all over Skaara, so he'd looked for dancers. Unfortunately, the young unmarried ones could not be out of sight of their chaperones, the married ones could not be out of sight of their husbands and the only ones left were widows, most of whom were about Jack's mother's age. There had been 2 very pretty young ones in the crowd, but they had more sense than to stay around when the booze started flowing.

Daniel shook his head. "Not in my book. It wasn't even fun back in my college days, except,

well, maybe Oktoberfest, but that was in Berlin and I..."

"Don't want to hear it, Daniel. I don't want to get even more depressed than this is already makin' me."

"Well, I'm hoping they don't become belligerent when they realized they've nearly drunk all the booze. I'm glad we managed to hide most of it so that there's some for tomorrow."

Jack grimaced. "Hey, Ferretti! Time to call it a night! The general's going to be here at O-god hundred hours and you gotta be able to stand upright when he arrives." After a bunch of sloppy salutes and several attempts to stand, the drunks wandered off to bed.

Shyly, Skaara drew Daniel away from Jack, speaking to him in quiet tones. Whatever he said, it made Daniel very happy if his smile was an indication. They chatted all the way back to Kasuf's house. Jack trailed behind them with Teal'c, feeling a little left out and feeling not a little tired. Emotional releases always exhausted him. Unlike Daniel, he hadn't slept and his body was now letting him know that it hated 36 hour days along with heart-to-heart talks. He didn't even rise to Carter's baiting when he stumbled into the sleeping room.

Teal'c woke him out of a dreamless slumber just after the sun rose, letting him know that the General had arrived with a few of the Tok'ra. Jack scrambled out of the blankets, rushing past a number of people surrounding - what? - as he made his way over to his CO and Jacob Carter who was smiling at his daughter...from a distance.

"I understand that I've gotten here just in time for the annual bath, Colonel. However, seeing as I just showered this morning, I think I can forego the festivities."

Jack and Sam smiled wanly. "Just my thought, General," Jack said. "Umm, we'll be heading out now. You ready, Teal'c?"

The Jaffa mumbled something that sounded to Jack's ears like, "At last," but he didn't elaborate. The members of SG1 picked up their changes of clothes and joined the crowd outside heading for the underground river. Most of them were already down to their version of swimwear which did little to encourage any fantasies in Jack's mind. He scanned the group for Daniel and Skaara, not finding them anywhere. The party pals he spotted easily. They looked a little worse for wear, but Jack knew they'd be looking far worse after tonight's festivities. He shook his head. So sad to be so predictable.

Jack had only seen the river during his first trip to Abydos. Just before the team had left Daniel behind, they had cleaned themselves here of the blood and gore of their fights with Ra's people. The water ran fairly swiftly here and, around the mouth of the cave that sheltered it from the blazing sun were some of the crops that provided Nagada with food other than meat. He noticed some of the farmer types stopping to peer at various plants, assessing their readiness for harvest.

The crowd sauntered into the cave, chattering amongst themselves about the festivities to come. Many of them drew the humans into their conversations, but Jack had no real desire to chit-chat, so he watched the people. At times like this, he could appreciate Daniel's fascination with other cultures.

The women separated immediately from the men, heading to a bend in the river where they would not be seen. The men stripped down and waded into the water, the younger ones immediately turning into 5 year olds, splashing their friends and running around like maniacs. When Teal'c stripped down, a number of envious and curious eyes turned to him. A boy shyly asked if he could touch Teal'c's pouch. After a gentle poke, he asked Teal'c if it hurt. When Teal'c gave him a negative, he peered at the opening, then traced it with a curious finger. To Jack's relief, Junior didn't make an appearance.

As was the way with children, the boy lost interest and joined his friends. Teal'c and Jack immersed themselves into the fresh water, both of them lazily swimming to the greater depths. At Jack's guess, the bottom was probably only about 20 feet down, but the water flowed pretty quickly. Not knowing enough about this planet, he had no idea where it came from, but he wasn't about to worry. It was enough that it was here.

By the time Jack had cleaned himself to his satisfaction, dried off and re-dressed, the women were already walking back towards Nagada, most of them carrying water jugs on their heads. The men straggled behind them. As it seemed to be with any men anywhere, including Ferretti and the rest of the party boys, the men were very obviously watching the women, discussing their "assets". Jack shook his head. Not too long ago, he would have probably been leering with the rest, but between thinking he was in love with Carter and knowing that he was in love with Daniel, he just couldn't drum up enough interest in the "man talk" to even throw in a comment.

Back at Nagada, everyone headed to their homes to make final preparations for the ceremony. Kasuf's house was conspicuously empty save for Airman Randall who quietly handed Jack and Carter their dress blues. A kind soul in Nagada have given Teal'c some robes to wear - cream colored with black piping, the work of a patient seamstress. Carter had opted for pants, unwilling to deal with the skirt when most of the women would be far more covered up than the skirt would have left her. She didn't want to become the object of lecherous drooling.

When they were finished, Airman Randall led them to the temple proper where the brass waited. The only temple in Nagada was simple compared to the pyramid that housed the Stargate, opened on 2 sides to the village square with only an eye of Ra decorating its walls. There weren't too many people at the temple yet, only the Tok'ra, General Hammond and Kasuf. The air force personnel saluted the Major General smartly.

"At ease, people." Hammond gave them all the once-over, then turned back to Kasuf and Jacob Carter. Jack looked at the other Tok'ra; the one person he recognized in the lot was Aldwin. The young man acknowledged him with a nod of the head, then returned to the conversation he was having with his friends.

"Hey, Carter, did anyone bring a camera to this shindig?" Jack asked.

"Airman Randall did, Sir. His hobby is photography, but he really should think about going professional. I've seen some of his work, Sir, it's really amazing."

The young man blushed at the Major's praise. "I should probably start taking some right now, Sir." He walked towards the town gates to retrieve his gear from the General's jeep.

"So, where is the blushing groom anyway?" Jack asked, still not seeing him or Daniel in the immediate vicinity. Aldwin, who had overheard his question, pointed to the single doorway in the temple proper. Jack thanked him politely and headed over to it. Making a big production of covering his eyes just before he entered, he called, "Are you boys decent?"

"Yes, Jack," Daniel sighed. Jack walked in, prepared to fuss over them and stopped dead. Two young gods lounged on burgundy divans, waiting for the ceremony to start. Skaara wore the black and gold outfit that Daniel had brought him. His long, heavy hair was braided in gold beads and charms on either side of his head, much as Klorel had worn it. The burnoose hid the rest of the dark mane. His dark eyes seemed even darker in all the black, lending him an air of mystery.

Daniel was the exact opposite. The brilliant white robes he wore, though plain in contrast to the embroidery on Skaara's clothes, made the blue of his eyes so brilliant that Jack couldn't look away. He didn't know how mesmerized he was until he found himself standing over Daniel, still staring into blue eyes now wider with Daniel's surprise.

"J-Jack?"

The white fabric glowed with the reflection of the sun, dazzling Jack even more. Carefully, Jack cupped Daniel's chin, staring at the man as he were a glass of water that would slake his thirst. Daniel's tongue slipped out, which almost drove Jack nuts. His thumb caressed the soft, slightly moist lips. He leaned towards his desire.

"O'Neill?"

Shit, shit, shit! Skaara! Daniel turned beet red and dropped his gaze. "Uh, S-Skaara, I-I..." O'Neill stammered.

The dark eyes glinted with amusement. "It is not forbidden here, O'Neill. Dan-yel has told me of the customs of your world, so I will not tell." He looked from his brother to his hero. "This is new? You have not...?"

"Uh, haven't had the time," Jack muttered, realizing at that moment that he still held Daniel's chin. He tilted Daniel's face back to him. "But we will," he promised gently. The blue eyes shone even more. "Watch it, Daniel," he said quietly, "or Skaara's going to get a preview." He let Daniel's chin go with a gentle caress. "You're both gorgeous. You're going to have everyone staring at you."

"They should all be staring at Raxchal," Skaara laughed.

"Holy Hannah!"

O'Neill wished the sands would swallow him right there. If she had walked in only a few seconds earlier...He turned to his 2IC. "Major?"

"Wow! I didn't think we were going to be entertaining 2 sheiks here. You guys look wonderful!"

Jack fondled the white fabric. "You didn't tell me you'd brought an outfit, too."

Daniel shrugged, then grabbed his glasses, which had been hanging from the belt. "Well, I

brought this one just in case Skaara didn't like the black one. Figured I'd be wearing one or the other."

"I bet this'll be the prettiest wedding party Nagada has ever had," O'Neill laughed.

"At least the prettiest men," Carter said. Daniel's face returned to red, while Skaara looked askance at the Major. "Oh, Colonel, General Hammond and Kasuf want to talk to you about the party last night. They're not upset as far as I can see, but they're rather confused."

"No rest for the wicked," Jack sighed. He stared at Daniel for a few more minutes, then followed Carter out.

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The wedding, for all its simplicity, seemed to take a very long time to Jack. The bride didn't even show up until after the noon break, having had a ritual bath, ritual lesson in the duties of a wife, ritual this, ritual that. At least according to Sam. She had joined the rest of the women after delivering Jack to his superior. Airman Randall had wandered around, taking pictures of everything, especially, after Jack's 'subtle' hint, the 2 young men. He had 2 cameras hanging around his neck, one digital, the other a very expensive Nikon his parents had given him as a high school graduation present. At the moment, he was showing the Nikon to Aldwin, who had never seen this kind of technology.

Most of Nagada's inhabitants showed up in their nicest clothes. The din, however, of all those people chattering all at once gave Jack a headache. The men sat to one side of the structure, the women the other and still the noise didn't diminish. Over the voices, a long mournful horn brayed, though it certainly did nothing to shut anyone up.

In answer to the summons, Skaara and Daniel left their refuge and moved over to where Kasuf stood under the eye of Ra. Silence reigned. *Well, they're a hit*, Jack thought, as every eye in the place raked over the 2 beautiful men. Then the hiss of whispers started.

The horn moaned again, much closer. The whispers died down slowly as the bride's party approached. Raxchal, draped in burgundy and veiled to the point that her eyes were the only uncovered part of her body, rode the camel up to the edge of the crowd. Sam ran forward, catching the reins as they were tossed down. Speaking the same word Daniel had before, she got the camel to kneel. Raxchal's father helped the bride down. He walked up to Kasuf, his daughter a half-step behind him.

There was much chanting that Jack and the other Air Force personnel didn't understand. Finally, Raxchal was escorted over to Skaara. Kasuf moved over to where Daniel held an ornate cup in his hands, pouring wine into it. Daniel knelt between the couple, offering the cup to his brother, who took it and drained it. Kasuf refilled it and Daniel held it out to Raxchal. After she finished, Kasuf took their hands, meshing them together and offered his final benediction. The crowd shouted their response, deafening Jack. A great cheer went up and the happy couple were swept over to the camel, placed on its back and Sam took the reins to lead them to where the reception had been set. All the way along, people sang and danced around them.

Jack had to shake his head, wondering how the camel took all this noise. As he trudged after

the throng, a laughing whirlwind caught up with him, taking his arm and pulling him into the center of the celebrants. Dazzling blue eyes, lit with happiness, drew him as surely as the hands. Daniel was singing, though Jack could not hear a word of he sang, lost as it was with all the other voices that fed the single great voice that echoed through Nagada. Not knowing the words, Jack just sang "la, la, la" which made Daniel laugh. Jack saw Randall flitting through the party, taking pictures, focusing mainly on the beautiful pair riding high above the people.

About a half a mile outside of town, tents had been pitched to accommodate the reception. Several women waited, tending to the cooking and seeing to the placement of the honored guests at the main table. Jacob Carter and General Hammond already sat at one end of the table, talking and laughing together, watching the crowd surge around them in a chaotic swirl of noise and color. Jack and Daniel, who had speeded up to get there before the bulk of the crowd, walked over to the 2 generals.

"Well, Sirs, what did you think?" Jack yelled, trying to make himself heard.

"Well, it certainly is the biggest wedding I've ever been to," Hammond laughed. "They don't even have 'em this big back home!"

Jack was about to answer when the camel and its cargo arrived. Daniel ran over to them, helping them down. The singing and dancing swelled to a crescendo, then silence fell. Holding tightly to Raxchal's hand, Skaara turned to the partiers around them and began to speak. Of course, in Abydonian, so Jack stuck close to the Generals to hear Selmac's translation. He thanked everyone, invited them to the reception they were already crawling over, the typical speech. They managed to wade to the table through the press of well-wishers. Taking 2 seats in the middle of the table with their parents and family to either side, they flopped down, looking tired already.

*And this is a simple wedding?* Jack mused.

Daniel materialized beside him and pulled him to a seat beside him. Sam grabbed the one beside him and Teal'c took the one beside her. Then the feast proceeded. Much larger than even the one Nagada had thrown for the humans when they first arrived, Jack had never seen so much food in his life. He had to hand it to the women who managed to make the huge spread with only 3 days notice. The guests of honor sat on only one side of the table so that gift-givers and well-wishers could approach. Jack doubted that either Skaara or Raxchal had more than 10 bites to eat the entire time, since their mouths were constantly occupied with thanking so-and-so or gulping down water so they could continue to thank everyone.

Food passed by Jack in a blur. He remembered some of the dishes from the first time they had come to Abydos, others he just couldn't bring himself to even try. The rest of the people had brought blankets and what looked to Jack like campstools. It amazed Jack that this many people could get together in such a peaceful manner. Having to deal with a capricious god must have bound them tighter together than Jack had imagined. All these people, just sitting down and eating and talking. No arguing, even when the chicken ran out half-way through the crowd. No bickering over portions. No nastiness that Jack could see in the whole group. When the children began to get restless, a few women, without having to be asked, took them back to the village.

Jack turned to find Daniel watching him, a warm smile on his face. "I don't know how you ever left, Daniel."

"It was hard, but I had to."

A swirl of music moved the reception to the next phase. Beautiful young women, the type that Ferretti had wanted for the stag party, moved to the front of the long table. Slowly they performed a belly dance reminiscent of a dance of the 7 veils, though they were hardly naked by the end of it. Tumblers, story tellers (including Daniel), stupid people tricks and other fun filled the rest of the day. When the shadows began to lengthen, torches were erected and General Hammond had to depart for Earth. Randall left Sam the digital camera after a brief display of how it worked.

A bunch of the men started a syrtaki that Daniel had shown them when he had stayed on Abydos. O'Neill had joined them, but the first knee bend finished him off. He crawled over to where the Tok'ra and Dougherty were lounging on some of the blankets, having given up on trying to sit at the table. Sam prowled the crowd, playing with the digital camera. The dance sped up. Teal'c and Daniel were to either side of Skaara, all of them smiling and laughing as they went round and round, kicking and squatting and going faster and faster. Men began to drop out of the line, too winded to keep up with the younger ones. The line dwindled down to Daniel, Skaara and Teal'c. As they moved even faster, Skaara tripped over the hem of Daniel's robe, sending them all into the sand. Everyone began laughing and Sam was right there with the camera.

As O'Neill turned to Jacob Carter to ask him a question, an old woman plunked herself down beside them. Looking significantly to where Sam was talking to Daniel, she said, in very heavily accented English, "Trust the blue-eyed Goa'uld." Jacob swung to her.

"What did you say?"

"Trust the blue-eyed Goa'uld." With that, she vanished back into the night. Jacob turned back towards his daughter, who was helping Daniel and Skaara back to their feet.

Jack shook his head. "What the hell was that about? I don't know any blue-eyed Goa'ulds."

"She was looking at Sam," Jacob said quietly. "Maybe it has something to do with Jolinar."

Jack shook his head furiously. "No, I won't believe it. Not this mumbo-jumbo, weird messages in the night crap. There are a bunch of people here with blue eyes. It's probably some parlor trick for dumb Airforce flyboys."

"Selmac's seen some pretty weird stuff, Jack. She..."

"No, no and no, Jacob. This kind of stuff gets you killed if you listen to it. I trust Sam anyway. I don't need some psychic granny to tell me to trust her."

Jacob shrugged. "Like I said, Jack, Selmac's seen some pretty strange stuff. This is pretty mild in comparison."

Jack was glad when the rest of his team and Skaara dropped down on their blanket, effectively



ending the conversation. Daniel and Skaara were still panting heavily while Teal'c was sweating only a little. No doubt who would have won, had they been able to continue. Daniel took a big swig from a jug he had managed to snag somewhere, passed it to Skaara. The young man drained almost half of it before he handed it to Teal'c. The Jaffa took one disdainful sniff and gave it to Jacob. Jacob took a sip before he gave it to his daughter who, with a big grin, finished it off.

"Hey! What about mine?" Jack complained.

"I got you your own," Daniel grinned, producing a jug from behind him. O'Neill took a cautious sniff.

"Ooh, rotgut. My favorite."

Skaara scampered over to the main table and grabbed another jug which he, Daniel and Sam shared. As they came close to finishing that container, a loud cheer was heard over in the vicinity of Raxchal. Skaara paled. Daniel squeezed his brother's hand gently.

"I have always hated this part of any wedding, Dan-yel."

"I'll try to get them out as quickly as possible, Skaara. We might as well get it finished now."

Daniel called the group's attention to the groom, then helped them hoist him up with his bride as both were carried back to town with their relatives, village elders and a few others. Before he left them, Daniel begged them to stay where they were.

"What's going on?" Jack asked. "What are they doing?"

Sam's mouth twisted in disgust. "They've got to make sure the bride is 'pure'. It's disgusting. God, how did Daniel deal with it?"

Teal'c shrugged. "It is a typical custom among Goa'uld-owned races. Especially when the Goa'uld want to make certain that desirable characteristics are bred into the stock." Jacob looked sick as he obviously received some kind of enlightenment from Selmac.

"What?!" Jack cried. "What's going on?"

"Well, Sir, they're taking Skaara and Raxchal to their honeymoon 'suite' where they're all going to be sitting around, watching like hawks to make sure that Raxchal bleeds when Skaara takes her for the first time."

"In the same room?!"

Sam shook her head. "No, the next room, usually. I hope Daniel can help them get through this."

Jack felt nauseous as he realized that Daniel was *intimately* acquainted with this custom. Sometimes he had problems in the shower room with a bunch of guys. How had he managed to deal with a bunch of vulture relatives waiting around for Sha're to bleed from their sex? Jack took a very large slug from the jug. This was definitely a custom he was glad to have never been a part of.

As they sat, they noticed the party starting to break up into family groups or couples. None of the rest of the humans or Tok'ra were anywhere they could see. SG1 and Jacob Carter picked themselves up and proceeded to Kasuf's house. Father and daughter bunked in Daniel's room while Jack took Skaara's. Teal'c chose to perform Kel-no-reem in the main living area.

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Some while later, Jack heard Teal'c's deep baritone directing Daniel to Skaara's room. He heard the curtain rustle as Daniel entered, then he heard the quiet slither of fabric being untied, finished with a soft thump as it hit the floor. Jack smiled in the dark as he heard Daniel move towards him.

"Jack?" he whispered, alcohol wafting over to the other.

"Daniel? Are you drunk?"

There was a quiet snort. "No, I just needed a little Dutch courage. And, since I *am* Dutch..."

Jack reached for him and found his hand hitting the man's chest. He slid it up to Daniel's neck and drew him down to rest full-length on him. Daniel rolled over, taking his weight off. "I don't need to be crushing you."

"What?"

"I'm not that drunk, Jack. I don't need to be crushing you."

Jack grabbed Daniel's face, kissing him, shutting him up. Daniel melted against him. Jack separated them a little, taking the glasses off and laying them aside, hoping that they wouldn't roll over onto them. Daniel dove back for his lips, crushing them like he wanted to completely fuse them together. His tongue stroked Jack's lips. Jack just let the tip of his own tongue gently flick against it just before he grabbed Daniel's in his teeth and chewed. Daniel's surprise froze him, letting Jack take advantage to pull him back on top. Daniel managed to retrieve his tongue and giggled.

"What was that?"

Jack shrugged. "Tongue sandwich?"

The tip of said appendage slipped back into Jack's mouth, tenderly stroking every part he could reach. When he had satisfied his curiosity, he drew Jack into his own mouth, letting him do a little exploring of his own. When he had completed his inspection, Jack drew back and kissed Daniel on the nose.

"Just how drunk are you?"

For an answer, Daniel grabbed Jack's hand and settled it on his dick. "Not *that* drunk," he whispered. A gasp followed Jack's gentle stroke. "I can definitely keep up with you."

Holding Daniel's member in his hand suddenly slammed it home to Jack just what was happening. He had never touched another man this intimately in his life and he started to panic. This could so ruin what was left of his career. What if he didn't like it? There was their friendship

to consider. Sex almost inevitably killed any friendship or changed it to something unrecognizable. With all the knocks their friendship had taken so far this year, could it survive this?

"Daniel..."

Amazing how just one word could bring a man from ready and willing to limp and nervous. Daniel moved away from him, standing up and fumbling for...?

Light warmed the room from an oil lamp set to one side. It burnished Daniel's skin in a soft bronze, though the red in his face was still noticeable. Suddenly it occurred to Jack what had made him so anxious.

He hadn't been able to see Daniel's eyes.

Those beautiful expressive eyes that told him everything that Daniel felt, even the disappointment highlighting them now. He knew in this light that Daniel couldn't see his face, so he reached out a hand and a gentled voice, "Come here, Daniel."

The archeologist hesitated. For a moment, Jack despaired that he had crushed Daniel's heart completely, then the man moved onto the sleeping platform. He did not, however, resume his place, choosing to sit at the end of the bed, his hands folded discreetly in his lap. He managed to catch a glint from his glasses and reached for them. After settling the primary piece of his armor back into place, Daniel drew himself up, ready to bolt if the situation got ugly.

"I'm sorry, Daniel," he said quietly.

"That's ok, Jack, we'll call it a night and I'll see you in the morning." He reached for the robes. Jack grabbed them from him and dropped them down his side of the platform, away from him.

"Stop being a butthead, Daniel. Can't I be a little nervous? I've never done this before."

Daniel chuckled, "And I'm the big expert?" Jack pulled the younger man to him. "You still have on too many clothes, Jack." Before Jack could say anything, Daniel began to unbutton his shirt, stroking every bit of flesh he revealed. Jack watched the long fingers, loving the way they investigated his body, learning where he liked to be touched. One of them brushed a nipple. Jack gasped. Daniel pulled the shirt opening to it and applied his tongue, swirling round and round it to Jack's complete delight. Gentle teeth plucked at it, zinging nerves from Jack's chest to his groin.

"Geez, Daniel, trying to give me a heart attack?"

Daniel nipped hard. Even as Jack yipped from the pain, the slut between his legs grew harder. Daniel snickered evilly and pushed the opening of Jack's shirt to expose the other nipple. He gave it the same treatment, then resumed removing Jack's shirt. Jack thanked whatever gods had seen it fit today that he be wearing his uniform as opposed to his jeans. At least they had more give. If he'd had his jeans on, the zipper print would have never left his dick, as it was, the buttons of his dress pants were doing their damndest to embed each fastening into his rapidly hardening flesh. Deliberately, Daniel slowly unnotched the belt, agonizingly drew it from the loops and dropped it in the vicinity of the robe. He pet Jack through the fabric.

"Are you sure, Jack?"

O'Neill growled, "Stop being a sadist, Daniel. Gimme a break!"

Daniel nuzzled Jack's groin. Then, with his teeth and tongue, he unbuttoned Jack's fly, which wasn't easy considering how badly Jack's horse wanted out of the barn. He'd barely gotten the last undone, when it popped out of the boxers slit, letting Daniel know exactly where he was supposed to be paying the most attention. Daniel tugged at Jack's pants. Jack's upper brain finally kicked in and he began to help Daniel divest him of the pants and the boxers. Throwing them carelessly away, he let Daniel push him back to the bed. Daniel leaned down and Jack heard a sniff, then another. *What the...?* He looked down at the archeologist who was obviously in the midst of smelling him. Just as he was about to ask Daniel what the hell he was doing, the tongue whipped out and began laving his balls. Jack crammed his fist into his mouth. Daniel stepped up the tempo, adding nips to spice up the combination. Jack's free hand knotted into the blankets. He didn't dare grab Daniel's hair; it was short enough. Daniel stopped. Jack nearly screamed.

Oh, no, not the sniffing again... he almost cried out, but Daniel had changed targets. He was now examining the weeping tip of Jack's penis with that look he gave his artefacts or some new language. Then the tongue tip dug in, nearly undoing Jack. He drew more cum out, smearing it and saliva over the head as he began to explore the new toy. *Well, maybe not-so-new toy, but it sure as hell hasn't gotten a work-out in a while.* The tongue drew delicate patterns down the length, mapping Jack's favorite nerves, cooling and heating him all at the same time.

Daniel's warm hand closed around the base of his penis as his mouth moved onto it. Rolling the primary vein under his calloused thumb, he took as much of Jack as he could. At first his inexperience nearly proved to be a hazard, as his lips kept slipping and his teeth grazed a bit across the sensitive skin. A bop on the head later, he was doing much better, although Jack still felt a little tense.

Then Daniel sucked *hard* and Jack returned to swallowing his fist. Daniel had finally gotten the perfect seal and managed to get his tongue in on the fun which turned Jack to putty even as it made his dick as hard as a rock. The free hand grabbed Daniel's hair, tugging gently, even though what Jack really wanted to do was cram himself as far as he could down Daniel's throat.

"Daniel, you can stop now. R-really, you can s-stop now. Daniel?"

The imp smiled around his taste treat, but showed no signs of listening to Jack's entreaty. He continued his loving torture, sucking even harder when Jack grew that last little bit, ready to shoot his load. Both hands slammed over his mouth as he came, nearly bucking Daniel right off of him. But Daniel was nothing if not tenacious, and he managed to hang on without missing a beat. He even managed to get some of it swallowed. Jack sagged onto the blankets, his brain blissfully blown away and his eyeballs learning how to see again. He stroked Daniel's hair absently.

"Been a while?" Daniel smirked.

"Mmmm," Jack sighed. Lethargy began to steal him away when first a kiss, then an elbow in the ribs, abruptly brought him back.

"Don't go to sleep on me, Jack. It's my turn." As Jack's mind tried to process his words, he began chanting something else as he began searching around the bed, then around the room. Another language? He was muttering something that sounded like "Loobloobloobloob". Russian, maybe? Goa'uld? Jack felt himself starting to drift, when he heard an "Ah ha!" and Daniel bounced back onto the bed.

In his dreamy state, Jack let Daniel man-handle him until he was lying on his side. Daniel's glasses were already hidden somewhere, Jack noted sleepily. Even as he started to drift away, he felt Daniel's fingers stroking his butt, gently pinching him. The hand lifted away, then returned, nudging Jack's legs apart. A finger slid between his buttocks, stroking intimately, then gently circling his anus. Before Jack could wonder what he was doing, a strange sense of fullness shot up from his butt, pushing him back into the waking world. It wasn't unpleasant, but he'd never felt this particular sensation before that wasn't accompanied by a doctor in rubber gloves. The finger inside him now gently stroked, not probed, moving in small circles inside him.

"You're pretty relaxed," Daniel said.

Jack looked at him over his shoulder, his eyes wide. "I am?" he squeaked.

In answer, Daniel inserted a second finger, gently working more of whatever lube he'd found into Jack's virgin rectum. With his other hand, he stroked Jack's thigh, his hip, his arm, anything he could reach easily, letting Jack know he was cherished, that the younger man would never hurt him. Jack was still unsure whether or not he liked this sensation. He lay quietly, letting himself just feel what Daniel was doing.

A third finger joined the others inside him. Jack became *very* unsure of whether or not he wanted this. However, Daniel's thumb began to stroke his perineum gently, which felt nice, and Jack sighed. The fingers stroked harder and Jack could swear it felt like Daniel was searching around. He gave a shuddering moan when he and Daniel both discovered his prostate. Daniel was smirking now, rubbing the gland until Jack was ready to scream.

Laying behind Jack, Daniel spooned up against his back, his penis sliding between Jack's cheeks until the head rested on the opening. "Do you want me to take you, Jack? If you don't, I won't."

Jack nodded quickly, hoping he wasn't about to regret his decision. Pumping himself with one hand, Daniel guided the head in, stopping when he saw Jack swallow in surprise. Jack shuddered, trying to reign in his panic. He'd been tortured before, but this wasn't supposed to fall into that category, not unless he made it so. Sighing, he forced himself to relax and let Daniel in a little more. The archeologist was panting from the exertion to move slowly, even as Jack felt him get even harder.

It seemed to take forever before Daniel was completely buried in him. The archeologist trembled and gasped, using inhuman willpower to not move now that he had reached his first goal. Jack lay quietly, caught in a conflicting maelstrom of feelings, sensations and desires. Part of him wanted to push Daniel away to relieve the pain, but he knew that if he reneged now, Daniel would never touch him this way again, no matter how much he begged, feeling too guilty

that he had caused Jack pain.

"Jack?" he gasped. "Are you all right?"

"Fine."

"Don't lie to me, Jack," Daniel warned.

Jack reached back until he was stroking Daniel's hip, sweaty and trembling under his hand. "It hurts, but it's the first time. Don't stop."

Daniel pulled out a little, making the colonel gasp with the odd sensation. He pulled back slowly, only moving out before he slid back in again, still vibrating with the need to control - his need not to hurt Jack. "Go for it, Daniel. I'm with you."

It must have been what he wanted to hear because Daniel began to thrust in earnest, changing his angles of penetration until O'Neill growled low in his throat. With a breathy laugh, Daniel pounded the colonel's prostate, then reached a hand over his hip to aid Jack's hand to a second orgasm. Jack nearly swallowed the blanket as Daniel's teeth buried themselves in his shoulder to prevent him from screaming the house down. Jack felt hot cum shoot into him as what little his body could produce dribbled over Daniel's hand.

"Oops," Daniel giggled after he'd unlatched his mouth from Jack's skin.

Jack tried to turn and see what Daniel had done. "Did you break the skin?!"

"No, but you're going to have the mother of all hickeys. Luckily I bit low."

Jack fell onto his back, breathing like a bellows, feeling ripped open from his butt to his gut and smiling so wide that a funeral home's cosmetologist would never erase it. He felt different, but still Jack. He was Daniel's lover, but that didn't mean he would treat the archeologist any differently in public. *Ain't love grand?* he thought, as Daniel snuggled into his shoulder and promptly fell asleep.

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A few hours later, Jack awoke to find himself sweating under the weight of Daniel, who obviously had decided to begin a new career as a human blanket. Jack gently slid out from under him. The archeologist was drunk enough that Jack's movements didn't wake him; he rolled over and began gently snoring at the opposite wall. Jack slipped out to the main living area to find Teal'c deep in Kel-no-reem. The woman who helped with the daily chores walked in at that moment, giving Jack some water for the coffee pot as she set about her morning tasks.

Skaara stole in, grinning when he saw the older man. They strolled outside into the warming air. "Thank you, O'Neill," Skaara said, without preamble. "It means much to me for all my friends to be here."

"Hey, you couldn't have kept us away." O'Neill grinned at the young man, watching Skaara's grin blossom into a genuine smile. He squeezed the young Abydonian's shoulder. "Should you be here? Shouldn't you be back with the wife? It's your honeymoon, after all."

"Yours as well."

Jack almost choked, wondering how the other had gotten so perceptive. "Yeah, well, y'know how it is."

"I do now, O'Neill." At Jack's mock growl, Skaara took off for his temporary quarters, waving merrily at everyone he saw. Raxchal appeared at the doorway, tousled and obviously very happy, pulling her new husband back inside.

Teal'c stirred, gently calling O'Neill's name. "Will we be leaving soon?"

"Yeah, I think so," O'Neill sighed, running a hand through his hair. As he went to pour himself a cup, the Carters made their appearance, chatting happily and making plans for Jacob's next vacation on Earth. Kasuf padded out his room, reaching for the basin nearby and washing his face. The young woman stood to one side, watching him carefully, knowing this would most likely be her last day serving him. She seemed unhappy.

"Nee'ra?" he queried when he had finished. She blushed and handed him a cloth to wipe his face. Unable to say anything, she just stared at the floor. When Kasuf called her name again, her eyes, full of tears, swept up. She gently stammered something in Abydonian. Kasuf answered her. Whatever he said made her squeal and she hugged him tightly, then suddenly let him go, realizing that there were strangers watching. She fled from them.

"Kasuf?"

"I'm sorry, O'Neill. She wished to still serve me. I have told her that she can help my daughter-in-law care for me. If Skaara has his way, she will probably be large with child soon enough that she will appreciate the help." Nervous grins and chuckles agreed with the older man.

Daniel chose to appear at that moment, the robe billowing around him, definitely still out of it, and probably only reacting to the smell of coffee. He didn't say anything as he filled a cup and swept into his room, presumably to get dressed.

"Did I order a mummy?" Jack quipped. Sam snickered.

The conversation then turned to the wedding and all the fun, each reminiscing and teasing the others. Daniel appeared sometime during Carter's stuffing more batteries into the digital camera to show them what she'd gotten last night. The picture of Daniel, Skaara and Teal'c in a pile got the most howls of laughter.

Jack's eyes caught Daniel's. The younger man grinned even more, disguising it as merriment about the pictures for the others. As soon as Daniel knew he was no longer being watched, he gave Jack a soft, secret smile that made the Colonel's chest clench with the happiness that threatened to escape as a full-throated bellow.

*Just wait till I get you home and we can scream the roof off, Dannyboy!*

Ferretti and the rest of the Air Force personnel crowded in, enlivening the party atmosphere and bringing it out to the street. Though the routines of the day still were served, people

seemed a little happier, a little more pleased with their lot than the day before. Everyone greeted them joyfully, whether or not they personally knew the members of the First World. They especially made a fuss over Daniel and Kasuf, congratulating them for such a wonderful event.

Daniel let Kasuf bask in the praise, falling a step behind his good father and walking beside Jack. As they drew close to the well in the center of town, people began to follow them, obviously wanting to hear what he had to say.

Jack saw the happy couple already sat there, holding hands and whispering softly to each other. Raxchal's dark eyes were fixed on her new husband, a sadness few saw lurking behind the happiness. To fall in love when he was going to soon leave was her lot in life, but she obviously wasn't as ready to accept it as she'd appeared when Skaara chose her. Jack watched Daniel squat down with them, offering whatever solace he could. A head tilt from Skaara drew Jack to them.

Whatever Kasuf said to the people around, Jack never heard, caught as he was in the carefully controlled misery in Skaara and Raxchal's faces. When Kasuf called their names, they erased their sadness and joined the others. More thank you's, Jack sighed. Hopefully they don't need to spend their whole honeymoon going through the presents and writing little cards for the friends and neighbors. He remembered leaving that duty to Sara when they'd been married, feeling now vaguely guilty that he hadn't been more help. Firmly shoving it back into the box he kept a lot of his feelings in, he slapped a smile onto his face.

Saying goodbye was hard. It always was. The Abydonians loved them so much, especially Daniel, their adopted son, grateful for their help, grateful for their presence, that they would always lament every time the First Worlders left them. Daniel was surrounded by them, all of them touching and hugging him in an eerie replay of his departure after Skaara's and Sha're's capture. Though, happily, it was Skaara in his arms, Jack felt a strange déjà vu freeze his blood. Skaara and Daniel spoke happily, the earlier melancholy at bay for the moment.

Dougherty and Sam came back with their gear from Kasuf's house, leading the procession to the jeeps. A boy led the camel up to them; Kasuf and Skaara mounted and they headed back to the Stargate to find Aldwin and the rest of the Tok'ra already there, waiting.

"Jacob," Jack said pleasantly, shaking the general's hand. "You staying for a while?"

"No, we can't. But you know where to rendezvous with us," he said to Skaara. "We'll see you in a few days." With that, Aldwin pressed the glyphs on the DHD and the Tok'ra departed, only Jacob waving back to the people watching them.

The gate snapped shut and Dougherty took Aldwin's position at the DHD. Ferretti and the others shook their friends hands and clambered into the first jeep, getting ready to go. Teal'c clasped Skaara's forearm Jaffa-style, inclined his head respectfully to Kasuf, then headed through the wormhole to alert the base the jeeps were coming back. Sam hugged both men, then took the driver's seat of the 2nd jeep.

"You will return to us soon, good son?" Kasuf asked Daniel.



"As soon as I can, good father. Remember that all of you are close to my heart."

"You will take care of him, O'Neill?"

Jack inclined his head as Teal'c had. "I will, Sir. You have my word." The old man hugged both of them as Jack found himself drawn to Skaara's sorrowful eyes. "Hey, Skaara, we'll see ya again. After all, you're working for the Tok'ra and we see them *\*all\** the time." He climbed into the passenger's seat as Daniel crawled into the back. Slowly, the jeeps trundled through the gate and into the SGC.

"Welcome back, Colonel," General Hammond's voice echoed over the intercom. "Since it's mid-afternoon here, you have the day off, but I expect to see all of you here early tomorrow."

"Thank you, General," Jack called up, as the jeep crews took over the vehicles. "We'll be in bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at 0800, Sir." At Teal'c's raised eyebrow, O'Neill cut him off, "An expression, Teal'c, just an expression."

"You have to wonder, though, where it came from," Daniel mused. "I have a couple of reference books I could check..." As he continued to prattle at Teal'c, Jack grinned at the fact that Daniel would certainly *not* be pounding the reference books and the poor Jaffa was going to have to suffer in ignorance a little longer.

Tonight, he and Daniel were going to see if a roof could actually be screamed off.

The End  
To be continued in "Trust"