

Slave to Your Love

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Slave to Your Love

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Summary

Daniel finds peace in slavery...maybe, maybe not.

Notes

This is a fic I was never very happy with. It just never sat right with me but after much prodding of my beta I posted it. I still want to come back to it someday and hopefully fix it.

I say no...then I tremble with your touch. I scream why...then I weaken with your kiss. Your scent intoxicates me. Your lips immobilize me. The thought of you tortures me. With or without you, I am a slave to your love. ~Author Unknown

Footnotes:

- 1 - Achelois- Name of the servant girl; means 'she who drives away pain', Greek origin.
- 2 - Aphidemas- Name of the master of the house, means 'taming all around him', Greek origin.
- 3 - Asopus- Pet name given to Daniel by Aphidemas, means 'never silent', Greek origin.

Chapter 1

I say no...then I tremble with your touch. I scream why...then I weaken with your kiss. Your scent intoxicates me. Your lips immobilize me. The thought of you tortures me. With or without you, I am a slave to your love. ~Author Unknown

'Jack! Go!'

'Daniel, I'm not leaving you here!'

Heavy fire was raining down on SG-1 and SG-2. They were miles away from the gate and some device the natives had attacked them with immobilized Daniels lower extremities.

Looking up at him, Daniel put a hand on Jacks blood and mud caked cheek. 'You'll come back for me. I know you will. Now go, you have people depending on you to keep them safe.'

'But...'

Daniel couldn't look into those worry filled eyes any longer. 'Damnit Jack, GO! You have to leave!'

Guards appeared at the door and Jack hesitated for one excruciating moment before turning to run. He dodged gunfire for a few hundred feet before he found cover, and the SG teams. A quick squat-run took him to a large stone block where Carter and a few of the men were taking cover.

'Where's Daniel.' Carter asked.

'We need to lay down some cover fire for those of us without weapons...'

'Sir? Where's Daniel?' Carter was worried. She knew how much Daniel was to Jack.

'He's...we'll come back for him.' Jack said with jaw set tight, eyes unreadable. 'We'll come back for him.'

Jack took a quick glance over the block--still replaying the last few moments over and over again in his head but acutely aware of his responsibility to get every one else out. He glanced at Carter one more time to make sure she was ready. 'Ready? Now!'

The team members lay down cover fire while the rest of them scattered in the direction of the gate, another mile or so off. Luckily, the people of this world didn't have any kind of flying ships or they wouldn't stand a chance of getting there before the local reinforcements did. Except for that, their technological advancement was very similar to Earth.

After all members appeared to be clear Jack, Ferretti and the rest of the team turned and booked it for the gate themselves. Upon arriving, Carter was standing with an arm extended

holding the gate open for them rest of them. They didn't even slow down. The remaining members ran through the gate at full throttle. Jack slowed only slightly to allow Carter through, making sure he was the last one to leave...or as close to the last one as he could be.

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Daniel squinted--his eyes slowly coming into focus after being closed for so long. He rubbed at his lids gently, trying to rid them of the ick. How long had he been out? He didn't even remember why he'd lost consciousness let alone when it had been. The last thing he remembered were those huge guards dragging him away. Literally, dragging him. He wasn't able to move his legs and they didn't feel like taking the time and effort to pick him up he guessed.

Daniel sat up, feeling stiff and a little groggy. Luckily he spotted his glasses nearby on a small block of marble, which served as a nightstand. Placing them on his face succeeded in banishing the final traces of blurriness.

Taking in his surroundings in full focus now, it finally registered he was in a bed. A low boxish sort of arrangement, cream-colored sheets, and a canopy of the same color hid him from the rest of the room and shrouded the space in an off-white glow. The material was probably some kind of cotton he thought offhandedly.

Daniel hesitantly tried to move, testing out if he was able to shift his legs. It was difficult but he managed to bend his knees enough to half sit, half lean on the edge of the bed. He pulled the curtain back from the edge and peered out into a tasteful cream and gold decorated room. The floor and walls were a light colored marble. Tapestries, which seemed to be of a Greek origin, lined the far wall. 'Well at least it's not Goa'uld' he thought rather ruefully.

Next to the bed was a wooden cane, probably placed there for him in anticipation of his stiffness when he finally awoke. Daniel grasped the cool marbled handle and steeled himself for what he knew would be an uncomfortable movement. He was right. As he tried to stand, it felt as though he was trying to lift an impossible weight with only half of his usual strength.

The stiff muscles of his thighs, calves, and lower back complained as he approached a standing position. He leaned heavily on the cane, determined to stand and make it across the floor to the only source of natural light to the room.

'I'm glad to see you're awake.' A small voice commented through the otherwise silent space.

Daniel jerked around, startled, and had just enough time to see a small female child standing in the middle of the room before everything tilted, his head connected with the cold marble floor, and everything went black.

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Colonel O'Neil sat on the crisp white sheets of the infirmary bed. Its perfect militaristic corners taunting him with their clear-cut angles while a mess of unorganized thoughts whirled around in his head. Why did I leave him there? It wasn't the right thing to do. I could have carried him. I know I could have. It was only a few miles. I should have tried. Why did I

let him talk me into leaving him there? Cause he was right. God, he's always right. I couldn't have carried him the whole way. And that would have just left him unable to move in the middle of nowhere, or both of us captured. Damn him, why does he always have to be right?

'Colonel?' Dr. Fraiser had been standing there for some time, watching the agonizing show of emotions pass through Jack's face one by one, and each, in turn, being buried deep under that practiced military mask he was known for. 'How are you feeling?' She asked, very clinically, in a way that made Jack know she meant she was interested only in his physical health, for now.

'Fine.'

'You don't look fine. Why don't you take that shirt off and let me look at some of these injuries?' She said as she pulled closed the privacy curtain.

Jack's upper body had several bruises. Some of them already angry black and blue blotches mixed with yellow mustard colored fringe. Jack stared straight ahead while Janet tended to him, making sure there were no immediate dangers. She gently dabbed at the bloodied slash across his jaw, trying desperately to get the dirt out without causing any pain, not that Jack would have noticed anyway.

'What are these bruises from?'

'Rocks, sticks, that sorta thing.' He replied coldly.

'Jack,' she whispered quietly so as not to be overheard, 'you'll get him back. We always do.'

Jack turned his head away. Silently, refusing to acknowledge the tears brimming at his bottom lashes. Silently refusing to admit he'd left his teammate and lover behind, injured and unable to defend himself. He refused to admit how ridiculous their last conversation was, how he hadn't gotten to say goodbye, how he'd just turned and without even really looking back had run away. He refused.

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The briefing room was silent. SG-1 had been assigned strictly to rescue missions for weeks, and still no signs of Daniel. Tensions were high and morale was wearing thin. They all knew the longer it took the higher the probability they would never find him, and that just wasn't an option as far as Jack was concerned.

Not long after SG-1 and SG-3 had arrived back, they insisted they return through the gate to retrieve Daniel. General Hammond agreed, against his better judgment, to let them return after a quick infirmary visit. He didn't really think Colonel O'Neil was in any kind of physical shape to be going back out again, but he also knew the man would not be satisfied to sit around and wait while other members of his team rescued someone he had been forced to leave behind. Jack felt responsible, and Hammond had never known him to back away from his responsibilities, no matter how hard they were.

The sight on the other side of the gate had almost been enough to crush Jack. He wanted to collapse, but the possibility that Daniel had been taken with the fleeing civilization kept him going.

There were bodies everywhere. A normal aftermath, pools of blood circling mortally wounded men, arms and legs at odd angles where they had collapsed chaotically. Some by themselves, others draped over one another in a morbid kind of embrace. It never got any easier to see things like that. And Jack prayed silently that he wouldn't find Daniel, not here anyway.

A glint of light reflected in Jack's eye as he walked by one of the dead bodies. He knelt down and fiddled with a small device that seemed to be attached to the victims' skin.

'What is it Sir?' One of the soldiers asked.

'I'm not sure. Carter, Teal'c, you got any ideas? '

'I have not O'Neill. But they do seem to be on a great many of the bodies.'

Jack removed it from the body and put the tiny device in a specimen container. 'We'll have 'em take a look at it when we get back.'

'Yes Sir.' Carter replied with a nod.

They searched what was left of the city. The buildings crumbled around them as they walked through the maze of fallen stone. General Hammond ordered them back to Earth after a full day of searching the fallen city and the area around it with no clues as to where Daniel or the other people of this world might be.

Jack waited until the last soldier was through and turned to look back at the faint trail of smoke in the distance that marked the location of the abandoned city. He stared at the terrain, scanning it for any signs of Daniel, waiting for him to appear over the crest of the hill waving his arms and smiling, apologizing for taking so long 'the people were just so fascinating' he would say while beaming with new discovered treasures already being analyzed and categorized in his brain...but nothing. Jack turned on his heel and stepped through, feeling as though he was leaving Daniel behind, again.

## Chapter 2

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Daniel woke to find himself neatly arranged in bed again. His head throbbed and his mouth was dry. He groaned softly as he opened his eyes to realize it wasn't all a really strange dream as he had hoped. He really was in a strange bed and strange clothes, and.... he heard a noise...and there was someone outside the bed curtain.

He carefully pulled back the curtain a fraction of an inch to reveal a young child sitting on the floor next to his bed. Her small legs were pulled up close and her head rested lightly against her knees. Her eyes were closed but Daniel didn't think she was asleep, only resting. As quietly as possible he replaced the curtain and tried to decide what to do next.

Other than the obvious, all out firefight on them, these people seemed to be hospitable. He was in a nicely decorated room, in a comfortable bed. He wasn't chained up or hurt in any way. Maybe a little hungry, but Daniel was pretty sure he hadn't eaten only because he'd been unconscious the whole time and not because they weren't willing to feed him. And they apparently didn't feel his was a threat or a prisoner since they had left him guarded only by a little girl.

He wasn't sure what SG-1 had done to cause the reaction these people had, but it was definitely a big reaction. No sooner had they shown their faces in the city than the military type guys were forcing them to leave. Daniel tried to apologize for nothing in particular other than for causing them trouble, tried to explain they were peaceful explorers and so forth, the normal speech. But the people would have none of it. A bit miffed they'd turned to go.

That was when Daniel felt an incredible pain shoot through his body. He cried out and felt everything from his chest down go numb, melting like jelly underneath him. As he lay there on the ground he thought he was dying again, but it didn't have the same feeling as the other times he had died. This time he was totally lucid; he didn't have the fuzzy fading feeling that usually accompanied one of his Lazarus routines. It was just his body that was useless. Nothing seemed to want to work.

Jack dragged him to a semi-safe spot and tried to help him but there was nothing he could do. They were miles away from the gate and would never be able to carry him that far. Plus, they had no way of knowing if he had a back injury that could be made worse by moving him again. The only choice was to leave him.

It was one of the hardest things Daniel had ever done. As he looked into Jack's eyes he saw the agony of trying to make this kind of choice tearing at him. So Daniel made the choice for him.

Daniel mentally shook himself. No use thinking about the past, he thought. Need to keep thinking ahead. Surely Jack and the remaining SG-1 team would rescue him soon.

While Daniel was still in thought a small face appeared between the hems of the curtain. The young girl peered at the thinking individual and giggled softly. Daniel looked over at the source of such an angelic sound and smiled.

'Hello.' He greeted calmly so as not to startle her.

'Hello.' She replied while pulling back the curtain and fastening it with ties. 'How are you feeling?'

'Uh, my head hurts. Probably from when I took that spill when you startled me.'

'I'm sorry about that. I did not mean to startle you.'

'It's alright.'

'Are you hungry?'

Daniel felt his stomach rumble at the mention of food. He felt like he hadn't eaten in days. 'Yeah, actually, I'm very hungry. And thirsty too.'

The girl smiled sweetly. 'There is a cup of water there,' she pointed next to the bed. 'And I will go get you something to eat. Please don't try to get up; you're still much too weak.'

Daniel nodded in agreement and took another look around the room. Definitely not Greek as he had thought earlier, it was more Roman in origin than anything else but there was something distinctly different about it. Although he couldn't quite put his finger on it, he knew there was something strange about this place.

Daniel was sipping at the water and still going over in his head all the observations he'd been making when the girl returned with a plate of food. Handing it to him she asked, 'Do you require assistance?'

'Excuse me? I don't understand.'

Another brilliant smile, 'Do you wish to feed yourself or would it please you to be fed?' She explained.

'Oh, uh, I think I can handle it myself if that's alright with you.'

'I desire only what you desire.' She replied as she bowed her head and knelt beside the bed.

Daniel raised an eyebrow. She was clearly some kind of servant. But certainly she wasn't expected to attend to him, a grown man. She couldn't be older than 13 or 14.

'What do you do here?' He ventured, hoping she would warm to him enough to provide any information.

'I am now temporarily assigned to you. Anything you need I will give you. Anything you desire I will find it. I am to attend to you until you have recovered fully.' She never moved her head the whole time, but her voice was loud enough to be heard.

'Why don't you look at me when you speak?'

'Would it please you if I did so?'

'Yes, very much so.'

The girl raised her head slowly, a smile curling the corner of her lips as if she'd just been given the best present in the world. Her face was beaming and Daniel felt warmth come over him.

'What is your name?' He asked while placing a few pieces of sweet fruit in his mouth.

'Achelois .' She replied.

Daniel grinned, if this was a Roman society this girl had the perfect name 'she who drives away pain'. It seemed fitting for a girl whose smile seemed as if it could perform miracles and brighten even the darkest hour.

'My name is Daniel.'

'Is that what I am to call you or is there another name?'

'What other name would there be for you to call me?' Daniel wondered exactly what she was hinting at.

'There are many, but most prefer master.'

Oh. Daniel understood now. Apparently this culture stood by very strict rules of servant-ism. Carefully he looked at the girl. 'I don't know your peoples customs and I wouldn't want to do something wrong so I have a question. Would you be in any trouble if I asked you to call me Daniel? You are not required to call me...master?' He had trouble letting that word past his lips.

'No, not if that is what you wish. What ever you want I want too. What you desire, I desire.'

'Good then that's what I would prefer...that you call me by my name.'

Daniel had thought her face was bright before, but she was radiant now. It was amazing the expressive properties of joy she seemed able to communicate to him. As if by osmosis he felt like he was enveloped by her joy.

'Well, now that we have the introductions over with, I have a lot of questions. First of all, where am I?'

'You are in our masters' palace. His name is Aphidemas .'

'Aphidemas, Aphidemas, I know that one...um, 'taming all around him'.'

'Yes, you know our language?'

'Well I probably just know a form of it. Your language has undoubtedly developed on it's own from a combination of...uh...it's not important.' He said grinning sadly as he got a flash of Jack rolling his eyes like he always would when Daniel launched into a long explanation of something he could have easily answered 'yes' or 'no' to. 'You said OUR master, do you mean 'our' as you and the others with your same job?'

'Yes, he is our master.' She pointed to Daniel and then herself. 'But do not worry, he is very kind. I'm almost certain you will like him. He will treat you well I am sure. He treats us all well.'

'Wait, I don't understand. Are you saying that he is MY master?'

'Yes.'

'And that would make me?'

'Well, I'm not sure of exactly what he intends for you but...'. She lowered her head and blushed.

Daniel took pity on her, realizing if she was a servant then it probably wasn't expected of her to talk so much. 'Go on, I won't be upset with you, whatever it is that you want to say go ahead.'

'I'm sure a beautiful man such as you is destined to be one of his personal slaves.' Her voice was full of wonder as she said this. 'It is one of the most honored places at our master's side. He saves it for the most beautiful, the most intelligent...the best. But no matter what position you are awarded, you are his now and he will take very good care of you. Don't worry, you will have everything you need and he will love you.'

Daniel's head began to throb again. He was property to these people? Oh God, the room was spinning. Need to lie down.

Achelois reached out, worry slightly creasing her brow. 'Ma...uh...Daniel? Are you alright, you look pale.'

'I think I need to lie down. I'm a bit tired.'

'Very well. Would you like to wash before bed?'

Now that he thought about it, he DID feel pretty grimy. 'Yes, that would be nice, thank you.'

She smiled. 'Relax and I will bring the necessary items.' She took the almost empty plate from him and turned to leave the room.

He lay back on the big soft pillows, trying not to think about what they'd just talked about. She had to be mistaken.

Before he knew it he'd drifted off into a dreamless sleep. A moment later he was stirred by a noise close to him. As he opened his eyes he saw Achelois with a bowl of water and a cloth. She was humming softly as she wet the cloth and wrung it out.

Daniel was still half asleep but sat up to receive the cloth from her. He should at least wash his face and hands he thought. Achelois turned to the bed and pulled back the thin sheet that covered Daniels legs. She then placed the bowl and cloth gently between his knees. Daniel tried to keep his eyes open but his head felt heavy.

Small hands slipped beneath the hem of his shirt. When had she gotten up on the bed? They continued up his chest and into the sleeves.

She giggled a little. 'You need to lift your arms. This won't work if you don't.'

'I'm sorry I'm just...ya know you really don't need to do this.' He felt a little strange at having such a young girl taking off his clothes.

'Yes, I know, you're tired. We've been giving you something every night to help you sleep. It's essential in your recovery that you get a lot of rest.' Daniel lifted his arms and the girl removed his shirt the rest of the way over his head. 'Besides,' she smiled, 'I don't think you're able to do this by yourself right now. You can barely sit up.'

Sitting up on her knees she picked up the cloth, wrung it out with a practiced ease and moved behind him to wipe his back and shoulders.

'Did you just say you're giving me something EVERY night?'

'Yes.'

'How many nights have I been here?'

'Including the night you were brought to us? Almost fourteen.'

'Fourteen? And you have been doing all of this for me every night?'

'Yes, although this is the first you've been awake enough to eat solid food.'

'Even...' he gestured vaguely at the bowl. 'This?'

'Yes.' She said as if it was nothing. 'It's no wonder you are so weak. We were getting a bit worried because you wouldn't wake up and eat.' Her tiny hand, pressed to the middle of his chest, pushed slightly, and he was too out of it to resist much. He flopped back onto the pillows and was barely aware as she continued washing him. 'Sleep now. All will be well in the morning.' She whispered and he fell asleep to a soft melodic humming.

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Fuck, Fuck, FUCK...another mission and another dead end. How many times are we gonna have to do this? Every time I go through that gate I think maybe this will be the one. Maybe this will be the last mission I'll have to step through wondering if I'll see him on the other side...praying I'll see him. God, I can't do this anymore...but I can't stop, not until I find him, not until I find SOMETHING. Damn it! I feel so fucking useless. How many times did Daniel save my life? How many times did he step in the way to save my ass...and I've lost him. I've fucking lost him! I turned around and ran away from him...left him there to die.

Jack slammed his open palm against the lockers. The frustration was getting the better of him. He couldn't help getting worked up. He had no one to talk to. The only person he ever let see this side of him was Daniel and it was obvious he wasn't here. After every failed rescue mission it was becoming clearer to Jack, that there might never be a Daniel for him again. He was slowly resigning himself to self-destruct.

'Sir?'

It was Carter, looking worried.

Jack flexed his hand a few times, working out the soreness already setting in. 'Oh, sorry Carter. I'll be done in a minute.'

'Thanks but that's not what I was talking about.'

'Oh?' He replied trying to seem casual, like she hadn't just seen him contemplating beating the crap out of the unsuspecting row of lockers.

'I've been worried about you Sir...as a friend.'

Jack pulled the T-shirt over his head and peered at his 2C. I need to talk to someone eventually. And if I don't talk to her I'll be stuck with a psychiatrist. Jack shivered almost imperceptibly. Oh, fer cryin' out loud, what the hell are you saying? She's a friend and part of your team. Of anyone, she's the one I would want to talk to about this. It's actually pretty overdue. If I don't I'm gonna explode. Daniel and I had wanted a chance to talk to her about us. I guess it's now or never so to speak.

'Uh, yeah,' he said with a sigh '...my place?'

'Alright. Give me 5 minutes?' Carter smiled and turned to get her things.

'Sure. And Carter...I'll tell you now...don't expect too much. I don't...it's not that I don't want to...'

She cut him off. 'I understand. It's not easy for you to talk. I'll bring my dentistry tools.'

Jack grinned at the obvious rib and turned to get the rest of his things from his office.

They met in front of the elevator and decided on the way up to take one car. Jack offered Sam the guest bedroom since they had to be back to the SGC later on the next day. They were only going home because they were required. If it had been up to Jack he would have showered and gone straight back to the gate room, but regulations stated that after so many hours awake you were required to rest for at least 12 hrs. And neither of them had ever been able to sleep at the base.

Jack pulled up to the house and got his keys out to let them in. Sam hadn't been in his house for at least a year and she noticed immediately how different it looked. She couldn't quite put her finger on HOW it was different but there was something 'homey' about it that wasn't there before.

'I'll show you where you can put that.' He said gesturing to her overnight bag. She remembered where the guestroom was but figured the simple task might be somewhat comforting for him.

She and the rest of SG-1 used to come here regularly. Sometimes to relax, or sometimes they would end up getting royally smashed and stay over. For some reason, she couldn't remember why, they had stopped doing that as much. And now that Daniel was missing, so none of them really felt like partying anyway.

Jack opened the door to the guestroom and let her enter. 'If you need anything just let me know. There should be towels and stuff in the bathroom. If not they are in this hall closet.'

'Thank you, Sir.'

'Carter, we're off duty, drop the Sir.'

'Only if you drop the Carter.' She smirked.

Jack pursed his lips and grunted softly. 'Deal.'

Downstairs Jack busied himself with getting some food and beer out. There wasn't much, but he wasn't that hungry.

'Sam, you hungry?' He called up the stairs to her, 'cause there's nothin' here. If you are I thought we'd order pizza.'

'Sounds good to me.'

Sam descended the stairs into the living room just as Jack rounded the corner into the kitchen for the phone. Feeling like she was free to roam a little, she looked over some of the items on the mantelpiece.

There were pictures of family, the regular knick-knacks, and...a postcard from Egypt? Glancing at the back of the card she saw it was empty with only a scrawled smiley face and signed simply 'D' at the bottom.

In the kitchen she heard Jack ordering the food. It was funny to her how agitated he got over something as trivial as ordering pizza, and yet, under fire, duress of torture, or what ever other kind of horror was thrown at them on a daily basis he remained calm, the proverbial rock, the unmovable object. He was always strong, together, and aware. He watched over his team and took care of them. But get him on the phone with a pizza delivery service and he totally lost it.

It hurt her to see Jack like this. He wasn't thinking straight since Daniel had gone missing. She knew he hadn't been eating right and sleep wasn't something he seemed to be doing much of either. Most of his time was spent thinking of places those people could have taken Daniel. He even involved himself with the research teams they had working on it. He really wasn't as dumb as he tried to convince everyone he was. He'd come up with quite a few viable possibilities they hadn't even thought of. He also insisted on going on every mission,

and he wouldn't take any downtime unless regulations forced it on him, which is why he was at home right now.

As much as his pain bothered her, it was also somewhat of a treat. It was nice to see, first hand, he wasn't really invincible...and did actually have a soft vulnerable underbelly just like everyone else.

She sat down on the couch and picked up a small photo album from the coffee table. She looked at it closely, not sure if she was snooping a little too far or not. It was just laying on the table right out in plain view. While she was contemplating whether to look through it or not, Jack appeared with a beer in each hand. She reached out to take one from him.

'Thanks. You don't mind me looking at this do you?'

Jack looked at her thoughtfully for a moment. 'Well,' he took a swig of the beer. 'There are some things you're gonna find out sooner or later and I guess tonight is the night. And this,' he gestured to the album, 'is probably the most painless way for me to do it.' I just hope you don't try to kill me afterward. His mind added.

Sam looked puzzled, but took her cue from his 'go on' gestures. Jack sat down on the couch beside her, close enough to see the pictures so that he could provide commentary when needed.

The first few in the album were of his family...his mother, Sara his ex-wife, and Charlie their late son. These were all pictures she had seen before and knew the stories so she moved on.

The next four were a few older photographs of friends from the Academy, mostly people she had met or had known him to talk about. Only one of them stood out, and it was because he was smiling. And it wasn't even the smile...she guessed it was the genuine joy in his eyes. She'd never seen him so happy and the other man mirrored the emotion too. She didn't recognize the other man in the picture, but he had a USAF uniform on. She paused and looked up at Jack.

'That was David. He was a really good friend of mine in the Academy.' A smile played at the corners of his lips.

'Was?' She inquired dangerously, not knowing if she really wanted to know anymore.

'He died not long after that picture was taken.' He said. 'We'd just graduated and it wasn't long before they shipped us off to some base with a war on their hands.'

Sam frowned but kept going, not wanting to stir up any more bad memories.

The last few were of people Sam did recognize, and made them both laugh. Her eyes flipped through the images of a party they'd had at Jack's house a few years back. They'd all been so drunk, she wondered who had been sober enough to hold the camera straight enough to take the pictures. Probably Teal'c...he doesn't really get drunk. Poor Teal'c.

She half-joked. 'I don't remember this party.'

'I don't think anyone but Teal's does.' He laughed back.

'I miss doing that. I haven't been to your house even to visit in almost a year. What changed?'

Jack blushed a little. 'Ah...yeah. I miss it too but tell you what. You know how I am with words sometimes so just turn a couple pages in there...you're bright, you'll get the idea.'

'Okay...?' Sam turned the next few pages that were blank until she found more pictures; a few small photos of Daniel. One of just him in sweatpants and a bulky sweater, curled up on Jack's couch, his attention aimed intensely on a laptop and a coffee cup in his hand. The next was Daniel all dressed up looking thoroughly edible. He was leaning against the doorframe with his hands in his pants pockets, one leg crossed over the other and a smile that was probably the smile that inspired the saying 'knock em' dead'.

Sam smiled at the next page, and Jack groaned and chuckled at the same time. It was a rather dark snapshot of Jack, all rumpled and still in bed. He was holding a hand up, body language foreboding, attempting to hide from the camera. But the smile on his face gave away the playful humor he found in the situation.

'Who took this one?'

Jack wasn't looking at her...he couldn't bring himself to look at the picture he knew was next in the album.

'Just keep going, the next couple are the important ones.' He said it quietly, still not looking at her.

Sam slowly turned the page and almost cried as realization dawned. There were several photos of Jack and Daniel, together. One was outside the house, right before one of the SGC banquets she figured. They were both in formal wear, Daniel in a suit and Jack in his dress blues. The next two were self-taken, the kind where you stretch your arm out and point the camera at yourself.

Sam's eyes flickered over the one with Daniel and Jack's faces cheek to cheek, smiling wider than she could ever remember either of them smiling. It even rivaled the one she'd seen earlier of that guy from the Academy. And the very last picture...was something she would have never imagined.

Sam looked over at Jack. He was looking at it too. The last picture he and Daniel had ever taken together, feeling it was too risky to have any more documentation of their relationship. It was one of his favorites and one of his favorite memories. They were going to take another one of the side-by-side one's to make sure it came out but at the last moment Daniel had turned to kiss him on the cheek. At the feeling of Daniel moving Jack had also turned to look and he got a half lipped kiss. The resulting picture was quite adorable. They looked like one of those pictures of the little kids. Both had their eyes closed, Daniel was stretching out with his lips and Jack coyly accepted it.

Taking a chance Sam reached over and rested her hand on Jack's knee, a gesture of comfort and friendship in an effort to take away the pain written all over his face.

'I never knew.' She whispered.

'That was the idea.' He chuckled through clenched teeth. 'I wanted to retire but Daniel wouldn't have it.'

'That sounds like him. You're a good CO and we need you there.'

Jack laughed. 'That's what he said. I think he just couldn't stand the thought of me being home all the time! I'd have driven him nuts!'

Sam smiled. She remembered the last time he retired. He drove them ALL nuts. And they weren't living with him!

'So how long have you been together?'

Taking the last gulp of his beer and setting the bottle down, he sighed. 'Almost 2 yrs. But it was kind of hard for us to tell, so we ended up just agreeing on an arbitrary date. Neither of us really knew when 'friends' had turned into 'partners'...it just happened.' He leaned forward and scrubbed his hands through his hair. 'I need him Sam. I can't do this anymore... if we don't find...' He couldn't finish the sentence, but he didn't have to.

'We'll find him, we always do.'

'That's the whole point!' His hands were clasped behind his head as if to restrain himself. 'To always find him means that we always lose him. God. I'm such an asshole. I left him behind. I left him on that fucking planet to die. I let him talk me into leaving him there. Who knows what those people are doing to him...or if he's even...and he's paralyzed so he can't even fight back!'

'Jack, stop beating yourself up! You did what you had to do. You don't know that he's in danger. For all we know he could have already worked his 'linguist voodoo' and has been crowned king of where ever the hell they took him.'

Jack had to laugh at that. 'Linguist Voodoo' he needed to remember that one. It really was like that with Daniel sometimes. No one ever knew how he did it but he always managed to talk himself and the team out of anything.

Sam still had her hand resting on his knee. It was a kind gesture and he appreciated it. He also appreciated that she was brave enough to leave it there. After all he wasn't known for his touchy feely nature and it showed the trust and feeling of ease they shared.

Straightening up, Jack reached over and let his hand gently rest atop hers. He then tilted his head back to hang over the back of the couch. 'Do you realize how hard this is for me?' He said with a tired sigh.

'Talking to someone or dealing with a missing Daniel.'

'Either.' There was a long pause before he spoke again. 'We usually keep that locked up in the wall safe. We can't take any chances. We even developed the pictures ourselves. I was stupid not to put it back last night but I just haven't been myself, haven't been thinking straight.'



'That's understandable...may I ask you something?' She was careful. She didn't know what kind of ground this was for them under normal circumstances and now, everything was shaky and threatening to crumble.

'Sure, no more secrets now.' He grinned.

'Well, you and Daniel...uh...do you...I mean...'

'Must be a scientist thing to stutter when nervous,' he quipped. 'Spit it out Carter.'

'How do you feel about one another?'

'You mean do I love him?'

'Yeah. That's sort of what I mean.'

His hand tightened around hers slightly because he knew how important Daniel was to her and how much she needed to know this thing between her friends was serious. 'Yes I do. I love him more than anything. This isn't just sex, or companionship, or whatever else. We love each other...and you might not want to know this but it brings home the point...we didn't even have sex for the first year we were together. How committed is that?' He raised his eyebrows, looking directly into her eyes now.

'Whoa.' She said, amazed and relieved at the same time.

'Yeah, whoa. I think the same thing every time I think about it. It's killing me Sam, it's killing me to have to live with the possibility that I've killed him and I might never even get to say goodbye...let alone ever get him back.'

'Jack!' She was outraged. 'You didn't kill him...'

'I left him there to die, alone! That's too damn similar for me!'

'...and we will get him back. I won't settle for anything less. He's like a brother to me, I love him too.'

They both mentally took a step back to calm down a little. Squeezing her hand again he turned very serious. 'How are you handling all of this? I know you two were very close friends.'

Sam sighed. 'I'm not really sure to tell you the truth. I still can't get my head to admit he's missing. I caught myself going to his office today to meet him for lunch like I always do. So that's not going well, I think I'm just still in shock. As for you and Daniel...I know you couldn't tell me about it, but I'm a little upset I didn't notice on my own. I should have.'

'You weren't supposed to. No one was.'

'I know. And I realize it was nothing personal, leaving me out of the loop like that. And...'  
she turned to face him, 'I don't know if it means anything to you, but I'm gonna say it anyway. I'm ok with you being together. The only thing I worry about is one or the other of

you getting hurt. It's a big gamble. You're playing with your jobs, and with the team, although I know neither of you would put the team in danger on purpose.'

Jack let out a breath he didn't realize he was holding. 'Oh god, you don't know how good it is to hear you say that! I really thought you were gonna to beat the crap outta me!' He grinned and laughed a little nervously.

'Well, there's still time for that, and I will someday but only if you do something to deserve it.' The both laughed and it let out a little of the hurt they'd been trying to shed all night.

'No offense but this has been enough show and tell for me.' Jack said. 'Plus, I'm old and it's getting' late.'

'Yeah I'm a bit tired too. Thanks for inviting me to stay. I haven't been...'

'Sleeping well? Yeah, me either. I think we all need Daniel a lot more than we realize.'

Sam nodded.

They picked up their empty bottles and placed them in the sink.

'I just realized something.'

Jack raised an eyebrow. 'Oh?'

'Our pizza never made it here.'

'Huh, I'll have to call tomorrow and complain. I wasn't all that hungry anyway.'

'Me either.'

Jack escorted Sam up the stairs to the guest room, turning off lights as they went.

'Sam, one more thing. I promise you won't be left out of the loop anymore.'

'Thanks, that means a lot to me. Goodnight Jack.'

'Goodnight.'

## Chapter 3

~~~~

'Daniel, Daniel. It is time to rise. Today is the day you meet your master.'

Daniel groaned and rolled over onto his stomach.

'No, you can't sleep any longer.' Achelois had been trying to wake her master for several minutes. He was very...difficult in the mornings. Other wise he was the most pleasant master she'd ever had. She thoroughly enjoyed serving him.

Daniel mumbled into his pillow. 'Are you always this cheerful in the mornings?'

She looked at him trying to suppress a grin. 'You know very well I am. Have we not gone through this every morning since you arrived here?'

Daniel rolled over onto his back, bonelessly letting his arms and legs flop out away from him. Achelois shook her head and began the morning bathing that had become ritual for both of them. At first Daniel had tried to convince her not to do this for him. He tried to explain he didn't condone serving someone with no promise of rewards or anything given in return and further reasoned he had nothing to give her. He suggested they only pretend to live the master servant arrangement.

She then explained she was getting something out of it. She quite enjoyed his company and the way he let her talk to him and actually listened to her when she spoke. It wasn't that the other masters she'd worked for in the past were cruel; they simply didn't have time for a child and her incessant rambling about unimportant things.

She also tried to explain that Aphidemas was under great scrutiny. The other lords were constantly watching how he ruled and how he treated his servants. They constantly criticized him on how easy he was with them and that he never punished them. But the fact was he didn't need to. His servants were much more loyal than any in any other kingdom and when a servant left it was usually accompanied by sadness. If she were to be found shirking her duties completely, even if it was her masters wish, Aphidemas would be looked down upon even more so than he already was. She didn't want that for her master, he was the one who had provided for her when she was ill and had taught her everything she knew.

So that was the way it was. Daniel tried to remind himself that he was in another culture, this wasn't wrong here, and he wouldn't be arrested for allowing this young girl to bathe him, and bring him food, and just generally take care of him. After a while, a shorter while than he imagined, it became almost second nature. It still didn't seem fair to him, but he saw in her eyes she truly did enjoy what she was doing.

Achelois climbed up onto the low bed with the bowl and cloth. As she went about her work she spoke idly. She gently wiped away the dirt and noticed each scar on his skin. It had become one of her favorite things to do, she saw the different lengths and shapes, some

smooth others rough. She wondered what this man had done to deserve so many scars. Daniel didn't seem to notice her quiet classifications, he was always much too groggy in the mornings to notice much of anything.

She liked his company. He was soothing and comfortable, something she felt with very few people. The adults always seemed to make her feel very small, but not Daniel. Maybe it was because he was somewhat childlike himself she mused, but he was not a child he was a grown man with the scars to prove it.

'Today is an important day for you.' She almost sang. 'Today is the day you meet Aphidemas, your master!'

The excitement oozed from her voice and began to make Daniel worry. 'What does that mean exactly? What should I expect?'

She tilted her head in thought for a moment. 'First I will dress you properly and make sure you are acceptably presentable. Then we will both go to the master's hall and wait for him to come speak to you.'

Achelois moved back and Daniel automatically stood to allow her to continue her cleansing. 'I was more asking about the small things...rules, proper behavior, that sort of thing. I know nothing about any of this.'

The small girl nodded. 'When we enter the masters main chambers there will be pillows in front of a curtained off area, we will kneel on them and wait. It is proper to keep your head down and eyes averted, but don't worry, you are new so if you forget it will be overlooked.'

The cloth was replaced in the bowl and she moved on to a brush. She brushed back Daniels dirty blonde hair with purpose. Daniel was still curious and continued to ask questions. 'What is the point of this meeting? I've been kept in this room for a month, why has he waited so long?'

'Our land has been at war and our master has been away tending to other things. Also you must remember you were not well for a very long time, Daniel. But don't think he was unconcerned. Every night before I settled I was to report to the messenger about your progress. He also wanted to wait until you were well, thinking the meeting might distress you further and hinder your recovery.'

'Have you told him the things I've told you about my people and our customs?'

Yes, I tell my master everything. He has the same curiosity about far away places as you do and found what you said very interesting. Was telling him the wrong thing to do?'

'No, not at all. I was just wondering how much he knew about me.'

Somewhere in the distance a low bell rang that spurred Achelois into action. 'Come,' she beckoned, 'we must get you dressed, it is almost time.'

Daniel stood and watched in interest as this small girl seemingly went into autopilot. How many times had she done this sort of thing? First she took a small wooden bowl in her hand and poured a liberal amount of some kind of oil into it. After replacing the bottle of oil and the bowl to the tray she picked up another container and sprinkled a handful of spices into the bowl. Then she picked up a crucible stone and began grinding the mixture together. Daniel continued to watch as she returned the stone to the tray and brought the bowl up to her nose. A pleased smile emerged momentarily before she turned to speak to him.

'You will need to take off the remainder of your clothes.'

He raised an eyebrow. 'Why?'

'I have to put this on you.' She held up the bowl.

'Everywhere?' His voice cracked a little.

'Yes.' She tried not to giggle, 'You are very modest.'

'Yes I am.' He said while turning his back to her and removing the rest of his clothing.

'You don't have to be,' she replied. 'Remember I do this all the time...and besides you have nothing to be embarrassed about. I was the one who took care of you while you were recovering and unconscious, there is little I haven't seen yet.'

Daniel sighed. 'It's just going to take a little time to get used to this.'

She nodded to herself. 'I understand.'

Daniel shifted uncomfortably, feeling very vulnerable while standing in the middle of a room, naked. He heard a faint noise beside him and had to stifle a laugh when Achelois appeared holding the bowl out to him with one hand, and the other hand covered her eyes. The huge smirk on her face gave away what she was really thinking.

'Are you making fun of me?' He asked as she walked back around behind him.

'A little' she giggled.

'Alright I get the hint. So let's just do this huh? It's cold in here.'

'I desire only what you desire Daniel.'

She stepped up on a stool she'd placed at his heels. He was a good bit taller than her and it was the only way she could reach. Once perched, she reached around him and scooped up a dollop of the oil to begin spreading it over his shoulders, back and arms

The scent was something familiar but he couldn't quite place it. He closed his eyes, still not quite awake, and slowly being relaxed even more under the pressure of small hands. He concentrated on the smell more intensely, but was momentarily distracted again by the smooth feeling of an oil trail running down his back. He took a deep breath and let it out. Slowly Achelois worked her way down laving every inch of his skin with...lavender...that's

what it was... Daniels mind drifted to all the similarities there must be between this world and earth if they have lavender plants. Or maybe they only had a similar local equivalent... probably more likely.

During his wandering he hadn't even noticed Achelois switch around in front of him. She'd finished his entire back area, arms, legs and now she was...come to mention it...where WAS she?

'Oh! Ah!'

Daniel jumped at least a foot off the ground and almost spilled the bowl of oil all over Achelois.

'What are you doing?' he screamed in surprise.

Achelois coiled back and knelt down in apology. 'I'm sorry master have I done something wrong?'

Daniel took a deep breath and tried to calm down. 'No. Achelois, get up. You don't need to do that, and I'm Daniel remember? You didn't do anything wrong, you just startled me. Ummm from now on though, if we have to do anything like this ever again...can we let me take care of the more personal bits myself? It would make me a whole lot more comfortable.'

She nodded, still worried and trying to wrap her mind around what she'd done to upset her master.

'SO I have to put this there huh?'

She nodded again.

'Why exactly?'

'Part of this meeting is for your master to look at you.'

'Ah. Daniel rubbed an eyebrow nervously. 'This is a look but not touch sort of thing right?'

She looked at him quizzically so Daniel continued. 'Is he going touch me like you just did? If so, I need to be ready for it. It's not something I'll be exactly alright with.'

'It is a possibility. But I don't understand why you are so worried. Your master is a very gentle and caring man. He would never mistreat you.'

'That's not the point Achelois. He could be the nicest most gentle man in the universe and I still wouldn't happily let anyone I don't know touch me like that!'

'You'll see.' She grinned, still not understanding fully. 'We are not what you think we are.'

'What do you mean by that?'

'You'll see.' She smiled again and changed the subject by holding up a set of armbands. 'Put these on.'

Daniel sighed but took the armbands and examined them. They were simple and decorative--a soft leather band embossed with teal and gold designs. As he placed them on he kept his arms up and out of the way of the flurry of movement about his waist.

Achelois swiftly wound the soft fabric around him and pulled the end through a built in loop at his left hip. 'Now you must practice. Try to take it off while I tell them you are almost ready.'

'Take it off?'

She just giggled as she slipped through the door.

Come on Daniel you can do this. It's no different than the showers at home. You're naked in front of all those people all the time...yeah and are you oiled up, decorated, and considered property? NO!

'Oh God, how am I gonna do this? Think of Jack. Yeah, Jack...showers, Jack...oh...wait...bad bad bad idea. Really bad idea.'

Achelois peeked her head in the door. 'Did you manage?'

'Yes.' Daniel struggled a little in his haste to fasten it again. 'Did I put it back on correctly?'

'It's perfect. Now, it's time. Just watch me. I'll let you know what to do.'

Achelois took the lead and for the first time Daniel was lead outside his room. The decor was exactly like his own had been—very tasteful and clean. Daniel noticed his bare feet make a slight noise as he tried to pad softly on the cool marble floor.

They stopped before an enormous decorated door. Two guards stood watch outside the chamber. Achelois whispered to one of them and he smiled first at her and then to Daniel before allowing them in.

The room was a large open-air design. The walled in courtyard lined where the back wall of the room would have been. The sun reflected slightly against the polished surfaces in the morning sun. Daniel looked around excitedly at the ancient examples of architecture.

Achelois gently tugged on Daniel's arm to get his attention. Her face was unusually serious as she indicated for Daniel to kneel like her on the small pillows placed in front of a large curtained off area.

Daniel strained to see the figures behind the curtain but the light wasn't bright enough to make out any good shadows.

Achelois cleared her throat and looked at Daniel sideways. 'Bow your head and only look up when he is speaking to you.' She whispered. 'And place your hands behind your back like this.' She instructed him as she crossed her wrists behind her lower back.

Daniel assumed the position but his eyes continued darting back to the curtain.

Finally, a man stepped from the curtain. His robes were not overly decorated as Daniel had expected. The man's face was soothing and calming, not showing worry, fear, or anger. All in all not what Daniel had expected in the least.

Aphidemas washed his hands in a bowl before turning to acknowledge the presence of the two.

'Achelois. You have done well my dear. He looks much healthier and very pleasing.'

'Thank you master.' She beamed--looking up at him.

Daniel was stunned by the loving smile the man gave to his servant. It was almost as if he viewed her not as a possession but as his child...he definitely had the 'proud father' look down pat.

'Achelois you may leave us now.' He instructed.

Daniel jerked his head up to look at her. His tenseness palpable. The tension gave Aphidemas pause, so he held up a hand to signal the young servant to wait and lowered to one knee in front of Daniel.

Daniel looked the man straight in the eye before he remembered this was not acceptable behavior and looked down quickly.

Aphidemas smiled tenderly. 'Daniel, did Achelois not tell you I am a gentle master?'

Daniel nodded, then remembered it was expected of one to talk when spoken to.

'Yes, she did.'

'Then why are you so tense? I will not hurt you.'

Daniel took a deep breath and let it out. 'In my world many leaders lie to get what they want.'

Aphidemas frowned. 'Daniel, look at me.' When Daniel did not he took Daniel's shoulder in one hand and his chin in the other to force him to look up. 'Do I look like a violent man?'

Daniel's brow creased and Aphidemas laughed. 'Alright, let me rephrase that, because I see your thoughts...you are weighing out the possibilities--your responses to my reactions are you not?'

'Yes.'

'Good I like a man who thinks before he speaks.' He thought a moment. 'Alright, so don't answer that, answer this. Have I mistreated you since you have arrived?'

Daniel's eyes narrowed but he still answered, 'Not since I was paralyzed and dragged off by a pair of really big guards, no.'

Aphidemas laughed and Achelois giggled. Her master looked at her, a large grin still playing at his mouth, 'Is he always like this?'

'Yes Master.' She managed between giggling fits. 'He has a very quick wit.'

Daniel was watching this exchange in astonishment. This was nothing like the servant-ism with this sort of social structure. This was way more than civil!

Aphidemas looked at Daniel again. 'Come, sit with me.' He motioned to him to come through the room to courtyard. 'Achelois do you have things to attend to or can you sit w/us for a while? I believe it would put Daniel more at ease if you stayed this time.'

'I have plenty of time to do my chores later the day Master.'

'Good, come sit with us then.'

Aphidemas led them both over to a small seating area. There were only two chairs so Daniel automatically waited to the side for Achelois to sit down. He looked at her questioningly as she laid a cushion on the floor next to the chair instead.

'Achelois, you may have the chair is you want.' Daniel told her.

She looked at him and then to Aphidemas...well and truly puzzled.

Daniel looked up. 'Have I said something wrong?'

'My place is here Daniel. Yours is there above.' She explained.

'Why?'

Aphidemas watched the exchange in interest.

'Because you are my master, I am your servant. It is respectful and a way I can show others how much I respect you.'

Daniel sighed and sat down. He needed to keep reminding himself he was in another culture for some reason.

The man in the other chair lent forward and asked, 'Daniel? What was that all about?'

'I'm sorry, I hope I didn't offend you...I'm just having trouble remembering I'm in a totally different place. In my culture it is customary to offer the seat to the woman. Women are regarded rather highly as are children.'

Aphidemas leaned back again, his curiosity satisfied for now. 'We will have to talk more about your ways in the future. But now I must tell you about us, and the reasons you are here. Feel free to speak and ask questions whenever you so desire.'

Daniel nodded and sat back to listen.

'My name is Aphidemas and I am the ruler of this section of our land. We are now in the middle of an emerging civil war. Fortunately the battles are on other planets owned by our people so we are very safe here. I am sorry you and your friends were caught in the crossfire. I was told my guards tried to get you to leave before you got involved but you wouldn't leave.'

'We were...well I was trying to apologize for any offence we had made when I was shot with something.'

'Yes, that is what I was told. You were an innocent bystander--struck by a small device we use. It temporarily paralyses the victim and has a timer...when the time expires a toxin is released into the subject and they die almost instantaneously. Except for the shot required for the insertion process it's painless, clean and very quick.'

'So why didn't I die if I was hit with one of those things? You don't have a sarcophagus around here or something do you?' Daniel looked around the room again nervously. He hated those things with a passion besides the fact that they always signaled a Goa'uld presence.

Aphidemas frowned. 'I do not know of this Sarcophagus. The guards saw that you were injured and separated from your people. If a person is tended to early enough and the device is removed it is possible to recover. Although it is a difficult process. So they took you with us as we retreated. You were innocent and we didn't want you to die. We would have returned you right away but the war forced us to flee and hide. This planet does not have a gateway or we would have sent you back as soon as you were well enough.'

'Well, as much as I would like to go home...I can't.' At the other man's puzzled look Daniel continued. 'The uh...gateway...on our planet has a special shield over it and if I don't send a correct signal through before me they won't open it. Since I am missing they have changed the signal so that an enemy can't use mine. Without the signal I would be killed instantly.'

Aphidemas took a note of Daniel's sorrowful look and mirrored it. 'I'm sorry but we had no other choice if you were to live. I do feel regret for taking you from your people.'

'I am grateful as much as I'm sad. I do thank you for saving my life, you could have just as easily left me there to die.'

'I value life and individuality Daniel, above all else. I am not like the other rulers. They beat and abuse their servants; they take people and force them to be slaves. They rule with fear and control with punishments.' All this he said just above a whisper as if he was afraid to be infected by the words himself if he said them too loudly.

Daniel saw the compassion in the other man's eyes, and the hatred of the other rulers' ways. He began to realize this was definitely not the slave/master arrangement he was expecting...and he wanted to know more.

'How do you keep your power?'

'The people who serve me are here because they want to be. I do not take just anyone, but I try to accept people who need the benefits most. Take Achelois for example,' He smiled at

her and she smiled back, 'she was very ill with a sickness common to the villagers. I took her and cared for her. After repaying her debt she is free to go or she can stay indefinitely. It is up to her when she will leave after that.'

'Debt?' Daniel asked.

'For payment of caring for her, and providing her needs as well as an education I require she stay, learn, and serve for 4 yrs.'

Daniel nodded. He was slowly beginning to understand what Achelois was saying... 'we are not what you think we are'...they certainly weren't. For one he had educated his slaves, who then educated the servants. Daniel excitedly continued to talk to Aphidemas about the arrangements they used. The servants and slaves were given their own rooms, they ate well and as often as he did, and after an agreed upon period of debt they were free to leave if they wished. It was like no other form of slavery he'd ever seen...and it worked! He couldn't believe it, if only Earth had thought of something like this instead of the abomination they'd used so many years ago. But then again that was the point...those slavers had been in it for the profit...these people were in it for betterment of a community and themselves.

'Daniel, I must talk with you seriously now. I have been trying to decide what to do and I would like to hear your thoughts. I realize that coming from a different place, you aren't entirely bound by our rules.' Aphidemas stalled but Daniel knew what he was getting at and decided to make him continue.

'Go on.'

'In our ways, you are now indebted to me.'

'You want me to serve you.' He stated in a flat tone, void of emotion and hiding his nervousness.

'Yes, I would like that. However, I'm prepared to make a slight change in the law. Would you like to hear what I propose?'

Daniel silently nodded.

'Normally you would begin immediately. But considering the odd circumstances of your rescues, and accidental involvement in this I would not feel right...you did not come here willingly after all. I propose to allow you to learn our customs, teach my slaves and servants what you know, and mourn for your friends for a full year. If by that time your friends have not found you or we have not located them you will begin your remaining 3 yrs of full service to me as my personal slave.'

Daniel's head was reeling. This was too much information but his mind demanded more.

'Slave?' He tried not to squeak. 'What would I be expected to do?'

Achelois felt Daniel's distress and tried to calm him by gently stroking his ankle, a gesture he was barely aware of. Aphidemas noted the distress as well but decided to press onward to the

next stage of the meeting. He spoke calmly but left no doubt that he was in control and demanded respect.

'Yes, come with me.' Aphidemas led Daniel across the room to a highly polished surface that served as a mirror. 'Take off your cloth.'

Daniel looked at the other man, barely concealing the wild-eyed fear inside. The meeting has suddenly turned deadly serious. Daniel shook slightly but went along, not wanting to make this man angry. Once he had finished, Achelois slipped the material from his clenched fist and stepped back to let their mast step up behind Daniel. He stood looking into the mirror over Daniels left shoulder.

'Daniel, you are a very intelligent man...and very much an individual. You would do my servants a great service if you taught them even the smallest amount of what you know. I would never want to take any of that away from you. Each and every one of us is special, and the stripping other lords do to their servants is barbaric and cruel.' They exchanged a look in the mirror that held they both agreed. 'And look,' he put a hand on Daniels right shoulder and pointed at the reflection with the other. 'You are very beautiful...I would be honored to have you by my side as my personal slave.'

Aphidemas turned Daniel by the shoulders to look him in the eye. 'Your status would be the highest other than myself, and your duties are simple. Teach, tend to my everyday needs... and occasionally I may ask my emotional and physical needs be met, as well as your own.' He trailed a hand down Daniel's oily chest.

Daniel shivered at the touch and closed his eyes. His mind began chanting to him. This is not happening, this is not happening, this is not happening. The other mans hand rested on Daniels bare hip and a thumb gently rubbed a circle over the bone. Oh God oh God, this IS happening.

Daniel cleared his throat, eyes still closed, not able to look the other man in the eye. 'I don't know if I can provide all that you ask.' His voice cracked slightly.

'Why?'

'I am in a committed relationship with someone else and it's not acceptable to me to be unfaithful to them.'

Aphidemas tried not to look too disappointed. He was not surprised that a man as beautiful as this had already been spoken for. 'We will speak of it a year from now.' He said pertly. 'If you have not changed your mind by then we will agree upon some other kind of arrangements. I cannot force you, and I will not take an unwilling slave.'

Daniel nodded numbly, and silently thanked the other man for his understanding. He stepped away a little and searched for Achelois. Noticing his eyes scanning the room, she hurried over to his side and reached around him to replace the cloth around his waist.

'Thank you.' He said looking down at his young servant.

The two exited the chamber but Daniel couldn't help but stop to and look back. This was all so bizarre it deserved a second look. Aphidemas was already speaking to another man, clothed much like Daniel was. Another slave he assumed. The discussion was something of great importance it seemed. Then Daniel stared in amazement as the slave turned enough to allow a clear view of his face. Tears were streaming down his cheeks. And if that weren't enough to stun him, then what he saw next was the final blow to his heart. He watched as Aphidemas gathered the large man into his arms and placed slow, gentle kisses over his tear-streaked face and shoulder.

Achelois tugged on Daniels' elbow. 'We should go now.'

Daniel nodded still a little bit weak from that display of affection. 'What was that all about?' he asked cautiously.

'That is who you'd be replacing. He has served Aphidemas for almost 4 yrs past his required 4yr agreement.'

'Wow'

She giggled a little at Daniels face and then turned very serious again. 'His mother is very ill and can not be moved to the palace. He is leaving to care for her. He will be missed greatly.'

'They are close?'

'They didn't used to be. I, of course, wasn't around for a lot of the developments, but from the stories I've heard...' she paused to look up at him, 'I believe he acted quite like you are now--slightly unsure, nervous and maybe even a little afraid.' It was almost a question, but not one that needed to be answered aloud. 'He took some convincing, but a few years ago he finally accepted the benefits and the genuine love Aphidemas carries for all his servants and slaves.' Then she added with a smile, 'You will too.'

'I don't know...'

'You will and you won't even realize it's happening.' She beamed at him with a knowing look that seemed genuine and, if he was honest, slightly unnerving.

He shook his head. The conviction in her voice spoke volumes about Aphidemas' character and he wasn't about to argue...at least not yet. He wasn't completely sold on all of this. It was all still a little too weird.

As they continued back to his room he noted a strange tingling feeling beginning at the back of his neck. Crap, it figures...I'm getting a migraine, he thought.

Chapter 4

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Jack propped his feet up on his desk. He couldn't do any more paperwork. Paperwork, paperwork, paperwork, that's all he'd done for what seemed like days but had only been a little over an hour. He should be out there finding Daniel, doing the Colonel thing. Maybe Carter and Teal'c needed a rest, but he didn't, he could go on forever if he needed to...or at least that's what he kept telling himself.

He started at the drab colored wall and carded through memories of his lover. He needed those memories to keep him going, to remind him how strong Daniel really can be. It was a comfort to be reminded of the tougher healthier Daniel and not the scared and defenseless one he'd left on that god-forsaken planet.

There was a knock on the door. 'Sir?' Carter peeked her head inside. 'It's about lunch time you up for a break?'

'Carter, I'm not...' he began.

'C'mon sir. I know you don't actually want to sit here and pretend to catch up on paperwork for another hour or more. Come eat with me and pretend to enjoy the commissary food instead.'

Jack quirked a smile. Carter had turned out to be more of a friend than he'd realized. He always knew SG-1 looked out for one another in the field, but outside of work they had very different lives. They used to be very good friends, all of them, but had grown apart after a while. Jack was relieved to find out they hadn't grown so far apart that they couldn't pick up the pieces when they needed to.

Since the 'talk' at his house that night he and Sam had been looking out for each other and Teal'c...although Teal'c seemed to be handling it very well and took Daniels missing status in the same stoic stride as he took everything else.

Jack was thankful for Carter's presence. It really was the only thing keeping him away from the edge of insanity. Secretly he felt guilty, and Carter seemed to understand that. She knew he felt as if he should be able to carry his own pain and everyone else's too, but realistically they both knew that couldn't last for long. If he hadn't swallowed his own pride he would have crashed sooner or later, and that wouldn't have done anyone any good at all.

Jack lay down the yo-yo he'd been fiddling with and followed Carter down to the commissary.

Jack let Carter in the door first and gestured for her to take a tray and go ahead of him in the line as well. Then he leaned in close, as if he didn't want to be overheard. 'You go first and kill anything that moves.' He whispered loudly. None of the commissary staff seemed to hear him so he continued. 'Mmmm, Jell-O.' He mocked slightly louder than before. Carter snickered but stopped when they both got a glare from the cooking staff.

Safely seated at a table Carter remarked, 'Kinda makes you wonder how horrible it would be to have to prepare this everyday, let alone have to eat it too.'

'I'll stick to the stuff that's pretty hard to screw up like...Jell-O and fresh fruit thank you very much.'

'Good idea sir.' Carter winked.

'How's the analysis coming on that metal thingy we picked up?'

'Not all that well. We do think we understand what it was for.'

Jack gave her a 'go on' look while examining his plate of grapes.

'It appears it's a weapon...but one of the most clean and humane weapons I've ever seen. It's sort of like a tranquilizer dart but with a twist and much more advanced. First it releases a poison numbing the target and rendering them paralyzed. Then it looks like it has a built in timer. We think the timer is designed to wait a certain amount of time to let the numbing agent take effect and then it releases a poison that immediately kills the victim.'

Jack, who hadn't been paying real close attention, snapped his head up at that. Carter was waiting for this reaction and already had a response ready. 'I know...from what you told us about Daniel's condition, it probably means he was hit with one of those things...but we also know that he was the only one of us they took with them. It is possible there's a way to reverse the effect if treated quickly enough. That could be the reason they took him.'

Suddenly Jack was even less hungry than he'd been before.

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Daniel leaned back into the warm body of his master, laughing as he held a piece of fruit just out of reach. This had become a ritual for the mornings. Daniel would wake early, prepare a tray of breakfast and a bathing bowl for the both of them. Then he would wake his master in any number of creative ways. This morning he decided on his favorite way. It was how he had always liked to wake Jack on the rare occasion he woke up first.

Daniel placed the tray on the floor next to the bed. Then reached up to peel the sheet back, expose a pair of feet and calves. Daniel slowly leaned down and began placing small kisses to the warm skin. His lips lightly skimmed over the pads of each foot and up to the inside of each ankle. There was a slight stirring above and Daniel smiled but did not pause. He made his way over each lightly haired calf--his pink tongue slithering out between moist lips to lick first one and then the other fleshy depressions behind the knee.

His master groaned and shifted slightly again, still struggling toward but not able to break through the surface of sleep.

Daniel dipped his head under the covers and continued nipping and licking a path up his masters' body, taking care to rub all his most sensitive spots and press against him to show

how much his slave desired him. Daniel gasped as a hand snaked up between his thighs. His master, fully awake now, rolled over onto his back brining Daniel with him.

'Mmmm...you always know exactly what I want for breakfast.' Aphidemas teased.

'It's not rocket science, you always want the same thing.' Daniel playfully threw back.

Aphidemas caught Daniel by surprise and rolled them over, pressing his lips to Daniels' in a greedy kiss. Daniel moaned into his mouth and arched up, seeking but not finding more contact.

Aphidemas sat up abruptly with a grin. 'Shall we eat first?'

Daniel groaned but obeyed. He sat up and reached over the edge of the bed for the tray of fruit. He picked a few pieces of a mellonish food and fed them to his master. In between bites Aphidemas licked his lips in a way that, in any other context, would have been completely pornographic. Daniel felt a wave of heat tear through his cheeks.

'Keep that.' Aphidemas commanded, pointing to the tenting of Daniels' robes. 'I want to watch you try and keep that for me', he continued in a husky voice '...for after breakfast.'

A devilish smile crossed Daniels lips. There was something he'd come to appreciate about this man that was now his master. He always knew how to keep Daniel on the edge, the thrilling boundary of desire always circling round his senses. There was something incredibly indecent and exciting about being commanded to keep an erection, being watched while doing it, and still going on with his normal privileges of feeding his master.

Daniel pulled back the material covering his thighs--his right hand doing one job while he continued feeding his master more pieces of fruit with the other. Every so often the fingers of his left hand were delicately caught between teeth and the juice from the fruit was sucked and licked away. He was getting good at this he thought with supreme pride.

Three years ago if someone had described this scene to him he would have laughed at them. There was no way he would have imagined being a slave...and enjoying it at that! As a matter of fact he would have probably made some off remark about where they were hiding the crack pipe. But a year of waiting and looking for his friends had brought about many hardships. It seemed the harder he hoped the further his heart broke. After two years, his hopes had begun to dim. He had been given his one-year mourning period, and then some. Aphidemas was very kind and didn't pressure him into anything. After almost two years Daniel finally agreed to become a slave, servant, and teacher as a show of respect to the system that seemed to work so well for these people.

He'd been slightly nervous. Daniel knew he'd have no trouble fulfilling the servant and teacher roles. He'd done things like that in his life before. It was the slave aspect that made the hair on the back of his neck stand up.

Slaves were rare, treated with the utmost respect by everyone, trusted completely with the affairs of those under him in status, and totally at the mercy of their master. They could and were expected to be available to their master at all times. At first Daniel found this

frightening. He was expected to be loyal and attentive to not only his masters' wishes but his desires as well--all of them. But Aphidemas had proved to be an amazingly patient and understanding man.

Since Aphidemas shared quarters with Daniel, he made it a point to talk to him every night about the things that bothered Daniel. He expected and valued honesty. Aphidemas spent the first four months of Daniels enslavement trying to explain and prove he understood Daniel had felt very strongly for Jack and he wouldn't lay a hand on him until he could accept his master's affection without regret. Daniel appreciated that more than anything and spent one more month sleeping in his masters' bed, untouched.

Finally one morning, Daniel had made up his mind. Just like he had done every morning since his enslavement, he brought in the tray of breakfast food. Then setting his features in concentration, he ignored the slight tingling feeling beginning at the base of his neck again and crawled under the covers. He nibbled, licked, and kissed his master awake. It wasn't as hard as he thought it would be. It wasn't love, it was living and they both understood that now.

Aphidemas had been tentative the first few mornings, not wanting to force Daniel into anything...and also realizing the thin emotional state Daniel had been in. He recognized that this sudden acceptance could revert back at any moment.

Daniel had cried after that first time, sobbing his apologies into his shoulder for making him wait so long for his compliance. But Aphidemas wouldn't have it.

'Daniel, you did nothing wrong. When will you realize you are not property to me? I care for all of my servants and slaves. I do not own them like some of the other masters in other lands. If you are required to do something I expect you to want to do it as well. Respect, loyalty and love do not equal ownership...it is a partnership. I desire only what you desire.

That was the clincher for him. He was not betraying Jack; he didn't feel like he was anyway. Jack would have wanted him to move on, not sit in misery and false hope of finding him. Daniel was fulfilling part of a loop, a community. Accepting the full status of his role in the palace was important to everyone, not just his master. He had finally realized what made this situation so different from the slavery models he knew. It was not domination, of course it wasn't a democracy either, but what was done and the happiness of each member seemed important to each other member. They all just wanted to make each other happy in the wake of so much sadness and hardship outside of these walls. It was a closely-knit family, and for the first time in years Daniel felt safe, accepted, and his life finally had found it's meaning again.

Daniel shook his head. He'd strayed into his own thoughts for some times now, simply doing all his tasks on autopilot. Aphidemas was bound to notice sooner or later. Having finished the plate of fruit, Daniel picked up the tray and crossed the room to prepare the bathing oils. His back was to Aphidemas but he knew someone was creeping up behind him. He wasn't disappointed a moment later when Aphidemas plastered himself to his slave and began to nibble on Daniels ear.

Daniel melted into Aphidemas' arms, he loved their morning ritual...teasing, food, sex, bathing. 'A balanced breakfast' Daniel mused.

'This morning is just for you Daniel. You deserve a reward for being so good to me.'

Daniel smiled affectionately. 'Thank you master.'

'What would you like me to do?'

Daniel thought for a moment. There were so many things he could ask for. But to be truthful there really wasn't anything to think about. He loved his masters' hands. They were strong but gentle hands, callused from hard work...and...just simply delicious.

'Touch me. I want to feel your hands on me.' He began.

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SG-1 stepped through the gate and immediately started checking the surrounding area for indications of civilization, hostiles...Daniel...the normal stuff they looked for.

Jack twitched momentarily. The landscape and buildings in the distance looked vaguely familiar and gave him an eerie feeling of dread.

'Hey Carter?' He called.

'Yes Sir?'

He pointed at the city a ways off. 'That look familiar to you?'

She took the binoculars out of her pack and peered at the remnants of buildings. 'Oh, wow yeah.'

'It is indeed the same design as used in the culture we came in contact with when Daniel Jackson was taken.' Teal'c replied.

'Yeah. I'll lead. Carter, Teal'c, ready?'

Carter fell in behind Jack and Teal'c behind her. They could see as they came closer, the city was destroyed much like the other one had been. The only difference this time seemed to be the guards standing watch at the city gates...or what was left of them.

SG-1 approached carefully. Carter stepped up and tried to communicate. 'Hello.' She began. 'We are peaceful explorers from a planet called Earth.'

The guards talked among themselves but didn't give any indication they understood what was being said.

'We may have briefly met your people before.' She continued, but cast a glance over her shoulder to her commanding officer.

'Come with me.' One of the guards spoke with a calm and soft tone.

The three exchanged looks and decided they would follow but stay on alert for an ambush or some such thing.

The guard led them to a small craft and asked them to board. Jack stopped short.

'Wait', he said. 'Why do we have to get in there?'

The guard bowed his head respectfully. 'This is not our homeland. If you wish to meet our master we will gladly take you there. If you do not wish to travel then you must leave this place immediately through the circle where you came. It is not safe for you to stay here.'

Jack nodded at the man and turned to gather Teal'c and Carter together. 'Thoughts suggestions?'

'I don't think they are going to hurt us sir. They haven't shown any hostility, and with the weapons they have there they could easily have killed us all immediately. I think we should go with them.'

'As do I.'

'Alrighty then.'

Jack turned around to address the man waiting patiently beside the ship. 'Okay. So let's see your master then.' Jack's voice was calm but his heart was in his throat. This was a risk but maybe, just maybe this would be the mission they'd finally get some answers on their missing team member.

The ship was fast. Jack would have been enthralled if he hadn't been preoccupied with thinking about Daniel, wondering what, if any, answers they might get from this trip.

'I don't understand', Jack asked the guard. 'Why did we take the ship? Why not just use the... umm...circle?'

'There is no circle on the planet where we are going. Our peoples are at war and that is why we have hidden our master there.'

'Ah. Okay.' Jack's mind immediately began to think if he could figure out how to fly one of these ships in case an escape plan was needed.

'Come, I will show you the way.' The guard beckoned them to follow up the path to a huge palace.

Jack turned to Carter and Teal'c to whisper. 'If Daniel was taken here, no wonder he never came back...he'd have loved this place.' They laughed a little at their leaders attempt to lessen the stress they were all feeling, but all three of them knew that this could be it...the answers they'd been seeking for such a long time could be just behind that huge decorated door.

They walked through the immense marble corridors. Greek thought Jack...it looks Greek. The decoration of the palace was tasteful, not Goa'uld, which is probably why SG-1 subconsciously gave these people the benefit of the doubt when boarding the ship to come here. Finally after what seemed an eternity, they turned a corner and were lead through a set of huge doors. Two more guards came in to accompany them. The First Guard saw the visitors tense a little at the arrival of more armed men and sought to ease their minds. 'You are in our master's private quarters; we must be sure no harm comes to him. We do not wish harm to come to you as we are a preferably peaceful people.'

Jack nodded, thankful for the guard's attempt to make them more comfortable. Although a bit strange, it seemed a very nice gesture.

'I must go now.' The guard continued. 'Our master is with his slave right now but he has been made aware of your arrival. He will be with you shortly.'

Carter stepped forward to bow slightly. 'Thank you.'

The guard returned the respectful nod and retreated.

'Well,' Jack began.

'We wait.' Carter finished.

'Indeed.'

All three of them studied their surroundings. A number of servants went in and out, unconcerned by their presence. They worked at putting up a short table, and a plethora of cream, blue, and white colored pillows all around it to sit on. It was then that a pleased groan directed their eyes to the far end of the room.

Even in the great hall the figures behind the thin curtain were completely visible silhouettes due to the sunlight filtering through from the open courtyard behind.

The two shadows melded into one and pulled apart slightly. Their movement played across the curtain as the slight breeze circling through the room rippled it. Sam blushed immediately and Jack stood open-mouthed but neither could tear her eyes away from the scene unfolding before them. Teal'c continued to be as stoic as ever.

The slightly taller man was preparing something on a shelf along the wall when the other had snuck up behind him and was now pulling their bodies together. By the powers of observation Jack surmised the taller man was he slave and the other his master. He thought a moment, trying to remember what Daniel had told him about ancient cultures and their views on a situation like this. He looked around the room. The guards didn't seem to notice the soft moans coming from the curtained off area...and the servants were either unconcerned or simply too busy to notice. Slowly he walked over to Carter and lent down a little to whisper in her ear.

'You alright?'

'Ummm?'

'You know, I think Daniel once told me that it was common for...'

'No, it's not that sir.'

'Oh? What then?'

'Well,' she gestured nondescriptly with her hand. 'I've never seen...uh...they're guys sir.' She blushed even redder. 'Oh God I can't believe I'm saying this to you!'

Jack chuckled. 'It's alright Carter...I get ya...free educational porn. I was sort of thinking the same thing.'

At Sam's half smile they both turned their attention back to the erotic scene.

The master was speaking softly into his slaves' ear but it was barely a whisper and couldn't be heard. The slave seemed to be enjoying himself, if the way he was grinding his backside against his masters' groin was any indication. The slave was turned around and disrobed simultaneously then pushed against the wall with a delicious thud. The shadows kissed and ground their dark forms into one another.

This was hot! Jack had a feeling this particular scene would be featured in a dream or two very soon. He turned to look at Cater again and stifled a laugh. If she leaned any further forward she'd topple over. Her eyebrows shot up suddenly and he jerked his attention back just in time to see the slave bracing himself against the wall and his master gently sliding home. The slaves' moaning was almost enough to strike jealousy in Jack's heart. And again, there was something strangely familiar to him in all of this.

Jack rocked back on his heels a few times, trying to control the spikes of arousal struggling to take hold of him as the images and sounds began quickening and growing in volume.

The slave murmured as his master continued moving inside him and stroking his hardened erection in tandem. 'Oh God...ah...yes, yes, yes...come on, come on.'

The shadows began to move more erratically, the soft edges becoming sharp and strained, the sounds less articulate, until at last it reached the breaking point and washed over both of them.

Carter turned away from the panting forms and scrubbed her hands through her short-cropped hair.

Jack leaned in again. 'You okay?' He whispered.

'Yeah' she said a little breathlessly.

'Pretty intense huh?' He said reading her mind.

'Yeah.'

Jack couldn't let go of the chance to mess with her mind. He really shouldn't but his inner troublemaker wouldn't let him back down. 'That' he pointed at the curtain with the point of his weapon, 'was impressive but not even the beginning...a good start.' Jack patted Carter on the back with a grin and watched for the appearance of the man they were supposed to meet--paying no mind to the open-mouthed stare he was getting from his second in command. He noticed a small girl slip behind the curtain and help lay the slave down on the floor mat. Then the master walked over to the wall again and washed his hands.

Jack motioned to the others to come join him just as the man of the hour came forth from the curtain, closely followed by the young girl he had seen enter a short time earlier.

'Welcome, I am Aphidemas. I am the master of this palace and ruler of this land. Who are you?'

Carter stepped up and went through the whole 'we're peaceful explorers yadda, yadda, yadda...' Aphidemas seemed interested. After Carter was finished the man invited them to eat in honor of their meeting.

They accepted and sat around the table, leaning back comfortably on the pillows.

'Excuse me a moment.' Aphidemas motioned to the little girl. 'Achelois' She hurried over and knelt before him. 'If he does not wake on his own when he is rested and able to attend to our guests will you please wake him.'

'Yes master, I will wake him shortly as you ask.'

'Splendid my dear. Your are dismissed.'

And with that she smiled and walked over to continue to prepare the food onto trays. Jack watched her for a bit and noticed the slave as he emerged from the curtained off area on his own. His face was obscured completely but his body was well defined, good strong back and arms, definitely well defined and well rounded all the way down to his...Jack stopped himself short. He didn't really want to look at other men but he had been forcing himself to do so for a month now, knowing Daniel wouldn't want him to mope around and wait forever. It still didn't make him any happier about it, and it was just hard not to compare everyone to Daniel...not that anyone ever came close anyway.

Jack watched the almost playful exchange between servant and slave. He also noticed Aphidemas glance over at them and smirk a few times.

Finally Carter was done talking and Aphidemas inquired about Teal's, his tattoo, you know...all the Goa'uld stuff was discussed. Apparently these people had never heard of them, which was encouraging.

Achelois brought the first tray over and knelt by each of them to offer the contents. Aphidemas, concerned by Jack's silence up until this point decided to specifically engage him in conversation. 'What was it you called your team again?'

'SG-1, we're explorers from Earth.'

Just then a loud clattering echoed through the marbled hall. Everyone turned to look.

SG-1 collectively gasped at Daniel who stood gaping at them in astonishment, the food he was carrying now all over the floor at his feet. The only sounds were some dishes still wobbling from their unexpected confrontation with gravity.

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The air was tense between them as SG-1 looked at their missing member. Daniel stood open-mouthed and shocked, looking at them.

Aphidemas looked from one group to the other of the startled parties. He was the first to rise and hurriedly moved to Daniel.

Aphidemas' presence at his side brought Daniel out of his stupor and he immediately dropped to his knees to apologize and recover the tray and its contents.

'I'm sorry master.' He began, fixing his gaze firmly on the floor, 'it's just...' He looked up at Jack, Carter and Teal'c again and was almost overcome with emotion. 'Oh, God. I'm sorry.'

He was shaking now and Aphidemas lent down and grabbed his biceps firmly. 'They are your people?'

Daniel Nodded, still shaking as tears threatened to spill over his bottom lashes.

'Achelois can attend to this.' Aphidemas whispered. 'Take a few moments to collect yourself.'

The strong host stood and turned to his guests. 'Excuse us a moment.' He said softly as he guided Daniel behind the curtain once more.

The two sat on the bed and Daniel looked up at his master then down at his hands. Aphidemas put an arm around Daniel's shoulders and softly tried to hush him, yet encouraging any sort of emotional response he might need to release. Daniel shook again, more violently this time and began to sob--his emotions finally breaking though the tough wall of self control he relied on.

His voice low, Aphidemas addressed Daniel with compassion. 'It is a bit of a shock isn't it?'

Daniel nodded, looking much like a huge teary-eyed child. 'I guess I should be happy they finally found me?'

Aphidemas was shocked. 'You are not? I assumed your reaction was of joy.'

'No!' They flinched at the loudness of the response. 'I mean, yes, I'm happy...but as much as I want to go home...I want to stay.'

'I see.' After a moment of silence between them he gave Daniel another slight squeeze. 'Your friends are being very patient but I believe I owe them a very long and detailed explanation.'

Daniel nodded. 'What do I do?'

'Well, only if you want to...and I mean that...you can sit with me at the table as my slave and carry on your usual duties or you can simply sit by my side. I'm sure Achelois can manage on her own.'

Daniel thought about it for a while. 'I want to proceed with me duties; it will give me something to keep me focused on. I'll be calmer if I have something to do other than just sit there.'

'Very well, it is your decision. We will carry on as usual.' He stood to go but before he slipped through the curtain he looked at Daniel. 'Take as long as you need to collect yourself but I mustn't keep our guest waiting any longer.'

Daniel looked up and smiled honestly. 'Thank you master.'

Aphidemas returned to the table and bowed slightly at the waist before sitting down. The looks on their faces were no longer astonished but had now changed into a wary hatred for him. Aphidemas finally broke the silence. 'When I heard of your arrival I was not sure if you were Daniel's people or not. I am sorry but I had only recently gotten Daniel to a point where he was no longer worrying so much that it was self destructive. I didn't want to get his hopes up and then crush them unintentionally.'

Jack looked at Aphidemas like he was contemplating many grizzly deaths, but he managed to grind out, 'And where is Daniel now? Why isn't he speaking for himself?'

Aphidemas tried to smile a little but it was hard when being attacked with such reproach from the three guests. 'Daniel is taking a moment to compose himself. And in answer to your second question, he has asked me to speak for him. He is however, I assure you, entirely capable and welcome to speak whenever he pleases with no repercussions.'

Carter was looking at her commander, hoping there wouldn't be any blood spilled. The absence of a Gate on this plane would make it difficult to escape.

While she was assessing the situation, Daniel appeared. He walked, a bit self consciously, towards the table and knelt on a pillow to the left of Aphidemas. As far as she could see, Daniel hadn't been harmed in any physical way at least. As a matter of fact, he looked great, much more muscular and a little less stressed...well except for this recent stress, but he no longer gave off that 'strung out' feeling.

Daniel crossed his wrists behind his back and bowed he head, awaiting a request for something. He silence was a solid weight on his chest. At the very moment he thought he'd scream just to hear a noise, his mast lovingly glanced over at him. He was trying resist the urge to fidget, but losing terribly. Aphidemas touched Daniel's knee gently. 'Daniel, I believe we would all enjoy some water.'

Greatfull for something to do Daniel nodded and leaned in to whisper something in his masters' ear before rising to retrieve the water jug.

Daniel has asked me to apologize for him and explain two things. The first is, he apologizes for not speaking, but he doesn't feel he can without becoming an...' Aphidemas stumbled. 'What was it you said again Daniel?'

'An emotional fuckwad.' Daniel mumbled as he leaned down to pour water into a glass.

Aphidemas smiled. 'I assume you understand what that means because I do not.'

They all smirked slightly. Aphidemas, because he loved Daniel for who he was, even if he didn't understand the man most of the time and SG-1 because they were relived that Daniel was still himself, at least in part.

'And the other thing he asked is something that took a long time for Daniel to accept and understand. Slavery is not the same here as it is on your world. Here in my kingdom, it is completely voluntary.'

Daniel continued to pour water in each of their cups and listened to his friends ask the same exact questions he had, well except for Teal'c. Teal'c had no questions; it was no wonder to Daniel really. Teal'c had lived this way for most of his life; this was just a non-dysfunctional version with no snakes.

Daniel couldn't help but feel a surge of pride for his master and the diplomatic way he was handling all this. It was something he and Daniel had spent many hours talking about and practicing the different methods and tactics. Daniel continued to attend to the guests and his master just like he would for any other guests. He found it easier than he expected to lose himself in his tasks--burying worry, fear, and embarrassment down deep.

After serving the food, Daniel excused Achelois to go eat herself and Daniel took his place at his masters' side.

Jack looked Daniel over thoroughly, and action not lost on Aphidemas. He smiled at back, trying to tell him 'see, I am not lying. I have taken care of him and loved him well.' And as if to bring home the point he picked up some food from his plate and held it to Daniels lips.

Jacks eyes went wide as he watched Daniel eat from his masters' fingers, chew, and then lick his lips like it was the most normal thing in the world. Jack assessed himself inwardly. As degrading as he found the situation, because he still didn't totally trust this Aphidemas character, he found the scene alarmingly erotic. Here was his lover of two years kneeling before another man in slavery, not even allowed to feed himself! This was not right. He shouldn't be turned on, he should be mad! So why wasn't he?

Aphidemas continued to keep an eye on Jack but continued to speak with Sam and Teal'c. He ate another bite himself while Sam spoke, then gave Daniel another bite. Sam was a little less obvious in her facial expressions but he could tell she was not entirely comfortable with the situation. The next bite he handed Daniel Aphidemas made sure to study the large dark

colored man at the end of the table. Unfortunately he was not as easy to read and Aphidemas only received a raised eyebrow under his scrutiny.

Sam was mid-sentence when Jack suddenly rose from the table. 'Ya know...' He rubbed an eyebrow with his thumbnail, 'I need some air...it's kinda hot in here.' He mumbled pathetically. He was trying not to make a scene but this was trying his patience. Jack nodded to Aphidemas and walked determinedly out to the courtyard.

The night was cool and clear. Plenty of stars shimmered at him but where he once felt comfort he now only found sadness and despair to greet him with sparkling eyes. 'Have I finally found you Danny, only to lose you again to this guy?' He thought.

'You found me.' Came a whispered voice so small Jack thought he'd only imagined it.

Jack turned toward Daniel who came to sit with him on the stone bench. Jack didn't know what to say, of if there even was any point in saying anything. The silence stretched on and on until Daniel finally spoke.

'Well, this is...'

'...awkward.' Jack finished. They both snorted softly at how easily they fell into finishing each others sentences after so long begin apart.

Jack turned to look at the other man. His eyes filled with worry, disbelief, and a little fear. 'So ah, this is the real deal, what he told us? They haven't hurt you or threatened you or anything?'

'Yes, Jack. Everything he told you is true. It's amazing what they have done here. I mean they even educate the slaves, encourage them to grow beyond this place. He gives them opportunities they never would have had otherwise. And it's true they are allowed to leave after the mandatory time. Even that is open to discussion depending on the circumstances. The one that came before me left early with a promise to come back...his mother was ill and he waned to be with her.'

Jack looked somewhat amazed. 'He...they sound like good people.'

Once again the silence stretched out for several minutes. They both found their own hands suddenly very interesting.

'You're not coming back are you?' Jack whispered, still training his eyes on the hands in his lap.

'I don't know yet Jack.' He said to his own lap. 'I did miss you a lot though; you've got to believe me on that.'

They both looked up at each other. Their eyes trading glances and information. Slowly, Daniel scooted himself closer to Jack. They curled their arms around each other in a much needed embrace--their foreheads resting gently on the others' shoulder.

'I just needed to know you're ok.'

'I know, me too. I'm fine Jack, I'm fine.'

'Oh God Danny, I don't want to lose you ever again. I know It's really selfish for me to say it but, I can't live like that...not knowing what happened to you, if you were hurt or...or dead.'

'I know Jack.'

'I Love you.' They said in unison, eliciting a shared laugh through the tears and tight embrace.

Daniel sighed sleepily. 'I really missed this.'

Jack disengaged himself from the hug and turned his head slightly to look Daniel in the eye. 'I...when we were brought in...'

'You got quite a show didn't you?' Daniel said only smirking slightly, but his blush giving away how very embarrassed he was.

'Uh, yeah.' Jack replied mimicking the smirk.

'I'm surprised Sam didn't pass out or hyperventilate or something.'

Jack chuckled despite himself. 'Well, I thought I was going to have to at least pick her jaw up off the floor. And that was before we...'

'...before you knew it was me wailing like a banshee?' Daniel could see the hurt in Jack's eyes. He felt about 2 inches tall, thinking of how Jack must feel after not only being aware of the situation but having personally witnessed his lover more than willingly having sex with another man...begging for it, begging to get off.'

'I'm sorry Jack. I feel like a real asshole. I didn't know if I'd ever see you again. It had been so long.'

Jack took Daniel's hand in his. 'I understand Daniel. I can't expect you to wait forever. I was even starting to think I'd never see you again either.'

Daniel's heart sunk. Was it possible Jack had found someone else? Is that what he was trying to imply? Daniel felt a surge of fear and anger rise up from his stomach. It was silly, positively juvenile to believe Jack was held up to some rule of devotion when Daniel had so obviously crossed the rule off his own list. But he couldn't help it. Jealousy stung his eyes and he was forced to close them in preparation for the next question he just HAD to ask. 'Did you...?' He left it open-ended, knowing Jack would know what he was going to say anyway.

'Did I find someone else?'

Daniel nodded.

'Yeah, sure.' Jack lied. He knew if he told the truth, that he was miserable and would never move on, it would kill Daniel with guilt. This was a grate place. If Daniel was happy here maybe he should stay. Lord knows the younger man had been through so much heartache

already. He deserved to be happy. Jack was trying his best to make that happen despite his selfish desire to keep Daniel for himself.

Daniel looked down at his hands. He didn't have a right to feel jealous, did he? But the wave of hatred towards this unknown man or woman in Jack's life came at him like a brick wall. He couldn't stop it. How dare they take Jack away from him! But in reality it wasn't this new player that had taken Jack away...it was himself, and his actions that had ultimately kept Jack from his grasp. Oh God what had he done? He'd totally fucked things up.

Midway through Daniel's internal litany of self hatred Aphidemas appeared in the garden. He took one look at the two holding hands on the bench. They were no longer crying but evidence remained on their faces to suggest they had been.

Aphidemas felt a sadness wrap around his heart at what he was going to have to do. But the day had come. 'Come' He said while smiling at them. 'We all need rest and in the morning we will begin preparing for the feast.'

'The feast?' Jack asked.

'Master?' Daniels confusion made Jack feel a little better but he still couldn't help but twitch when he used THAT word.

'Yes, a celebration feast! You have found each other again. You shall be reunited with him and publicly have your debt expunged.'

Daniel stood there amazed, and then a moment later, for a reason he couldn't quite fathom, he felt hurt. 'Master?' His voice was small and pathetic he knew, but he couldn't help it. The insistent fear pulled him back down into that dank familiar hole of worthlessness.

Aphidemas looked at his slave with love. 'Yes, Daniel?'

Daniel felt himself begin to panic. The war of emotions inside threatened to tear him limb from limb, heart from soul. He released Jack's hand and kneeled. 'Master, do you not wish me to serve any longer? Have I done something to displease you?'

Aphidemas put on a hard face for what he knew was to come. The mask was not lost on Jack, although Daniel was too distraught to notice. The master of the house dropped to his own knees to gather his slave in his arms. 'No, no, my Asopus. You have done nothing to displease me. But you have done yourself a great disservice and I you.'

Aphidemas lifted Daniel's chin up to look at him.

'I don't understand master.'

Aphidemas smiled. 'You will in time but now it is time to sleep. Are you well enough to tend to our guests?'

'Yes master.'

'Very good. I will send for you in the morning.'

Daniel nodded and the three of them returned to the main room. The team, reunited once more, watched Daniel as he talked with the small girl who had been serving them throughout the evening meal. She nodded and retrieved another servant. Daniel then turned to them again. 'We will show you to your rooms.'

Jack raised an eyebrow.

'Relax Jack. They are all across the hall from one another and guarded day and night. You're safe here. No one will try to hurt anyone.'

Sam smiled. Daniel wasn't exactly the same but he was still him.

Teal'c was taken to his room by the third servant, Sam by Achelois, and Daniel was left with Jack.

He opened the door to a room almost identical to the room he had woken up in that first time after he'd arrived here.

Jack entered, automatically scanning the room for threats, sources of weapons and surveillance, routes of escape...

'You don't have to do that you know.'

'Do what?' He asked.

'Threat assess.'

'Oh' he smiled. 'I don't even notice when I do it anymore. Used to annoy the hell out of my wife when we'd go out to eat.'

'I bet.' Daniel smiled fondly. It was so easy to fall back into the banter again...but, he chided himself inwardly, he had a job to do. 'You can put your things on that pedestal. I'll bring you sleeping clothes and the items for your bath.'

'Daniel?' Jack watched his former lover turn to face him for the first time since they'd arrived in the room. 'You don't have to do this.'

'No, Jack. I want to.' After a moments pause he turned and left.

A few minutes later Daniel came back carrying a tray and some clothes draped over his arm.

Jack was sitting on the edge of the bed. His gear was sitting in an orderly pile on the pedestal...his boots off and sitting just under the pile. Other than that he was still fully clothed.

Daniel set the tray on the end of the bed and chuckled. 'You know, baths usually work better when you take your clothes off first.'

'Oh.' Jack hesitated. 'Now?'

Daniel inclined he head and laughed a little louder as he watched Jack try and fail to undo the buttons of his fatigue Jacket.

'What?' Jack asked defensively.

'I was just remembering...I acted exactly like this the first time this happened to me. It was just so odd...thinking about someone else bathing me. I understand now why Achelois was giggling so much. It's really not that big of a deal once you get used to it. Kind of calming actually.'

Jack grunted as he finally removed his shirt and placed it in Daniels outstretched hand.

'All of it?' He asked.

'If you're uncomfortable with...'

'No. I'm fine. It's just...this is a little weird. Sorry.'

Daniel understood. This was a little weird...even for them--people whose job it was to define 'weird' on a daily basis.

Jack finished removing his garments and sat on the bed, naked as the day he was born. He watched Daniel. I was amazing how changed he was and yet how very the same as he remembered. 'His' Daniel was still there but a calming and sexy edge had been introduced. Not that Daniel hadn't been sexy before, God No! Daniel was so damned sexy Jack sometimes didn't know how he'd managed to control himself. But now...watching Daniel mixing something with the water in the bowl like he was doing right now looked sleek and sensual. His feet padding across cool marble, stimulating...those eyes staring into his...staring...deep...

'Jack!' Daniel said for the third time. He was beginning o worry the other man was having a seizure or something.

Jack was startled out of his reverie.

'Are you alright?'

'Um yeah, sorry I spaced out there for a minute.'

'Yeah, I noticed.' Daniel gave him a brief look over. 'Come on. Let's get you cleaned up and in bed.' He smiled again. 'You must be tired. I know I am and I still have a few things to do before I can go to bed.'

'Do they...?'

'Work me too hard?'

Jack closed his mouth and nodded.

Daniel wrung out the cloth and began with Jack's neck and face. 'No. It's a lot of hard work but today was different, much busier since we had company.'

'Ah. Sorry.'

'Don't be sorry Jack!' Daniel was taken by surprise by the apology. 'I'm so glad you finally found me! I know it may not seem so but...I really missed you. I grieved for more than a year you know?'

'Daniel, you don't have to explain.'

'Yes I do Jack.' Not so incidentally he stopped his cloth covered hand over Jack's heart. 'I need you to know I didn't just roll over the first chance I got and begged him to fuck me.'

'Daniel! I never thought that!' At Daniel's quirked eyebrow he continued. 'Okay, maybe for two seconds I thought that...but I know that's not you. You're not like that...it was just jealousy talking!'

'Thanks' he blushed a little. 'You were jealous?'

Yeah, of course I was jealous.' He smiled and put a hand to Daniel's cheek. 'You might not wanna hear this but...I have to say it in case I never get a chance to say it again. I still love you. You were the best part of me, of my life on earth. It's hard to go on without you. If it weren't for Sam and Teal'c I don't think I would have made it to this point. Never would have found you. I'd have just holed up at my place and died.'

Daniel closed his eyes and luxuriated in the touch and almost palpable love of his mast... uh...

'Shit.' It was barely a whisper.

'Shit? I remind you I love you and you say shit? Daniel? A little explanation?'

'I'm sorry Jack. I've just got a lot on my mind. I love you too ya know? This is all very confusing for me.'

'I know.'

'Let's finish up here ok? You must be getting cold.'

Daniel continued his task, but let Jack take care of the private bits...Jack thanked him for that. After that Daniel helped him put on the long robe.

Jack slipped into the cool sheets and Daniel stood beside the bed holding the tray. 'Do you need anything else?'

'No, I think I'm fine. Do you need help?'

'No I'll be done in no time. You Sleep. If you need anything let me or one of the guards know.'

As Jack watched Daniel go, his heart felt uncharacteristically light and he found himself thinking...I need you Danny...but you don't need me anymore.

Chapter 5

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The light was barely filtering through the curtain when Jack woke. One of the drawbacks of being such a seasoned soldier. It didn't matter what day it was or what was going on, or even what planet he was on, he just woke up at a certain hour which is annoying when Earth time and alien planet time doesn't coincide.

Jack quietly opened the bed curtain and scanned his things and the room for any kind of tampering. Then he spotted 'them'.

Over against the far wall were two curled up figures, sleeping on cushion. Jack rose and went to investigate. He found Daniel lying on his side cuddling a small child in his arms. Her head was tucked under his chin and his arms encircled her in a protective embrace.

Jack stared. He had never seen Daniel like this. It was odd and strangely endearing. He looked so childlike himself when he was sleeping but somehow he had taken on fatherly qualities just by holding this child in his arms.

Daniel stirred and Jack found sleepy blue eyes staring up at him.

'Good morning.' Daniel whispered. 'Are you alright, do you need something?'

'No I was just watching you sleep.' He blushed a little and then continued in the hushed tones. 'By the way, why are you sleeping on the floor and why is she in bed with you?'

Daniel snickered. 'Don't make it sound so perverse Jack. This is my servant Achelois. She had a bad dream last night. And the reason we are on the floor is because I am attending to you and must make myself available.'

'Wait backup. She's your servant?'

'Yes.'

'I thought you were a servant'

'No I'm a slave...As a matter of fact I'm THE slave...the next step up from slave in this household would be Aphidemas himself.'

'Oh!'

'Yep.'

'So what's the difference?'

'Well, the slaves are usually more intelligent...they are given the responsibility of teaching all the servants what they know. Slaves have servants, and then of course there's...the sex.'

Jacks face screwed up a little. 'Don't tell me you...' he pointed between Daniel and Achelois.

'Jack! God NO! She's much too young in the first place. Besides the women aren't generally as sexually active as the men...for obvious reasons. No Jack, ewwww....' He laughed at the relief on Jack's face. 'The slaves are the only ones expected to tend to ALL of their masters needs.'

Jacks face fell once again and a line of worry creased his face.

'What's wrong Jack?'

'I...I don't know.'

Daniel gently disentangled himself from Achelois. Jack had gone back to sit on the bed. Daniel joined him.

'I think I know you well enough to figure at least some of this out.'

'K, go ahead.' He said, basically relived to have the heat taken off him.

'Alright...uh...you DO miss me. And I know you DO still love me.' He rubbed his thumb over Jacks knuckles and was rewarded with a smile and an offered hand. 'And I STILL love YOU.'

Daniel could feel the tension begin to lessen in his partners' body already...So much so he tried to speak.

'I've been talking a lot lately, so I'm gonna try this out.'

Daniel nodded.

'Okay so...I lied to you when we were talking last night. I haven't found anyone else. I'm lost without you. Carter comes over a lot and has been teaching me how to talk about stuff.'

'Why did you lie to me Jack?'

'Because...I saw you...with him and I didn't want to...I don't know. You're so much calmer here. This place was apparently very good for you and I didn't want to ruin it for you. You look happy...and that's all I could ever want for you.'

Daniels heart almost broke. 'Oh Jack. You could never ruin anything. YOU make me happier than anything. This place, I won't kid you...it's amazing! I AM much calmer. I really took to the structure and the slavery a whole lot more easily than I would have imagined. It creates a one mindedness effect I was never able to achieve on earth. Every small thing has some sort of joy in it...before the small things would be down out by the big picture.'

'But what about...?'

'Aphidemas?' Daniel took a deep breath and then let it out slowly. 'He will let me go, but it's going to be hard. I think he's fallen in love with me, but I don't feel that way about him. I

respect him and all he's done here, and I may even feel some responsibility to him...but I don't love him. To me I'm just his slave and maybe even a very very good friend.'

He looked over at Jack who was still holding his hand. The floor was also seemingly very interesting.

'How are you handling this?' Daniel asked.

'I don't know. It's weird I know, but somehow it was easier when I thought you were in love with him.' He looked up at Daniel, the pain in his eyes readily apparent.

'Oh God Jack. I'm so sorry. You've got to believe me. I love you and have always loved you. What happened between Aphidemas and me...it was like...I don't know...comfort.' He took Jack's hand into both of his own. 'I missed you so much. I was really having a hard time filling that void and he was a good friend. I waited for so long, I didn't think I'd ever see you again. Not in my wildest dreams did I realize you might actually find me...I could have been anywhere, and I didn't have any way to give you even a single clue as to where to start looking.'

Daniel looked Jack in the eye with renewed fervor. 'Today we will attend the feast, I'll formally be given my freedom to go back to all of you...and then we can blow this popsicle stand and go home.'

'That easy huh?'

'Yep.'

'Uh yeah right.' Somehow Jack didn't believe that. Nothing was ever THAT easy.

~~~

The feast was spectacular. Every single one of the servants and slaves attended. Some had families who also joined in the celebration. Jack would have enjoyed the food and general good will and happiness to all feeling if Daniel being a slave in the first place hadn't been the reason for the shindig.

'Jack?' Daniel approached him warily. 'What's wrong? You've hardly touched your food... that's really not like you. And you've barely said a word to anyone all night. You've even been ignoring me. I would have thought you'd be happier about me coming home.'

Jack just looked at him with exceedingly hopeful eyes. 'Are you really coming home Danny? I've waited, looked for you, dreamt about this day for so long. And now...there's something really wrong here Daniel. Why would he just give you back to me?'

'Because I asked him to.'

Sam was standing across the hall with Teal'c--trying to be sociable. She glanced over to see how her boys' conversation was going. She and Daniel had talked earlier. She'd told Daniel

how torn up she'd watched Jack get. How he refused to leave the base unless under direct orders. General Hammond, after a briefing, had once even pointed at the door of the briefing room and said 'Jack, go home. Get the hell out of the mountain in ten minutes or I'll have you forcibly removed. That's an order.' If Jack's face hadn't contorted into such a look of betrayal it would have been somewhat humorous. She also told Daniel she knew about their relationship. He was slightly taken back by it at first but found out a moment later that he wasn't thrown by the fact that she knew so much as the fact that Jack had talked to her... about his feelings! They both laughed at that for a moment but it didn't last. Daniel knew Jack would be a mess and he needed to be there when it all fell apart.

Sam smiled when she saw Daniel raise a hand to cup Jack's face. Teal'c noticed her smile and followed his path of vision only to raise an eyebrow in contemplation of this new information about his teammates.

'Jack? What's wrong?' Daniel watched as the colonel was visible working in the background of Jack's mind.'

Jack softened under Daniel's concerned gaze. 'It's nothing...I'm sure it's...'

'Jack.' Daniel reproved him. 'What is it?'

'It's just...something's not right here Daniel. I want to believe you're coming back to me but my gut says otherwise.'

Daniel grimaced. 'Well, it is my pleasure to inform you this time you really ARE wrong.'

But no sooner than Daniel had spoken the words then Jack's said gut feeling went on high alert. Daniel hesitated as he stepped forward, a wave of unsettling dizziness pulling him down.

'Whoa Danny.' Jack said gripping the other man's arms in a protective and secure grip. 'What's wrong?'

'I...I don't know Jack...everything's all fuzzy and far away. I'm gonna pass out.'

Jack carefully helped Daniel to the floor. 'It's alright Daniel, I've got you. Don't worry, don't worry Danny I've got you.'

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'What's up Jan?'

'Funny you should ask that particular question Jack. What's up is just about everything. Daniel's dopamine levels are sky high, indicating mental trauma of some kind, his brain activity has increased since he became unconscious, which is abnormal, and his hormone levels are all altered as well. What the hell were they doing to him Jack?' Janet had barely taken a breath through the duration of her speech. Her concern was more than a great bedside manner, or doctor/patient compassion. Daniel was her friend and she was ill herself with worry for him.

To the surprise of Janet, and frankly himself, Jack stood up from the chair he'd been sitting in and grabbed the petite woman for a hug. Once the shock wore off the both relaxed into the embrace.

Jack whispered, hoarse with emotion, 'I don't know Jan, but if there's anyone who can help him I know it's you.'

A short clearing of someone's throat brought both of their heads up.

'Oh, geez general. I'm sorry sir I was uh...'

'You were doing what we all wish we had the guts to do son.' Hammond explained. 'You were comforting and showing support to your people, your friend, in any way you can. Besides,' he added with a wry grin, 'it takes a special and confident man to get his arms around that ball of sass!'

Jack and Janet smiled; the General was a great commander, and an even better friend. They were glad he understood.

'Doctor. How is Doctor Jackson?'

'Not good sir. That's what I was telling the Colonel when... ' She let her voice trail a little.

'I see.'

'To tell you the truth General, I'm not sure how to help him. His increased dopamine levels, heart rate, respiration, and brain activity all seem to point to psychological tampering. Except for a few minor abrasions along his shoulders and the backs of his thighs there is no evidence of physical trauma...not even a blister or paper cut.' She took a deep solemn breath. 'Even the marks on his shoulders and thighs don't seem to be anything more than chaffing, probably from clothes that didn't fit correctly or a repeated motion like when you get a callus on your hand from writing all the time. These people either treated him extremely well or are very good at covering up their mistreatment.'

Hammond thought about what Fraiser had said for a moment--turning it over in his mind. On one hand he wanted to follow protocol and call Dr. Mackenzie immediately after Daniel woke up. On the other hand he respected Daniel's abject dislike of the man and the understandable resulting mistrust of the profession. 'Are there any indications of what kind of psychological trauma we're looking at here?'

'No sir. We won't know until he wakes up...until then we just have to wait and see. And as much as I hate to admit it, after he recovers a bit I'm afraid I'll have to suggest at least a preliminary psychological examination.'

All three cringed.

'Very well Doctor, keep me posted.'

Janet picked up Daniels' charts from the end of his bed and took his vitals once more.

Jack sat in the chair next to Daniel again, scrooching around uncomfortably. 'So what do you think we can expect?'

Janet's eyes met Jack's. She could see the desperation there, the love and hope that his last shot at happiness would finally be within reach again. It wasn't a surprise to her. She'd known about their relationship almost from day one. Being their primary physician had more perks than the occasional fodder for her off-duty fantasies //Hey, she was only human after all!// No, more than that, was the chance to get to know them in a whole new light. They'd never told her and she'd never let on she knew. It just never seemed the right time. But now, she felt as if Jack needed a guiding hand, an unexpected friend from the ranks. Hopefully it wouldn't be too much of a shock for him...

Her eyes regarded him softly. 'Jack, we won't know until you take him home.'

She watched the thumb that was softly stroking Daniel's knuckles falter. His large brown eyes traveled up slowly to meet hers. She waited for a reaction. The corner of her mouth, although she willed it not to, slowly crept up in a knowing kind of smirk. When still no reaction came she worried she'd managed to completely overload his systems. That was until...

'Oh fer cryin' out loud!' He mumbled into his hands. 'How did YOU find figure it out! Does the whole fuckin' base know?'

Janet came to crouch beside his chair. 'Well it wasn't easy if that's what you're worried about. You were both very careful...especially prior to pre-mission physicals.' She wiggled her eyebrows a bit to lighten the mood.

'Oh God.'

'Why Jack...you're blushing!' She teased theatrically. 'I've been your doctor for how many years now, poking and prodding...and you don't think I'd notice when repeatedly on the same day both of you...'

'Jan! I get the point.'

She laughed. But soon the seriousness of the situation set in again. She put a hand on his knee to balance herself as she stood. 'Jack, I really don't know what's going to happen, but I can almost guarantee a full psych evaluation before it's all over and done with. Just be there for him, he's one of the most resilient people I've ever met, and with you by his side, how can he fail? She laid a hand on his shoulder in comfort and friendship.

'Thanks Janet.' Jack whispered as he resumed his gentle hold on Daniel's hand.

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Jack pulled another bottle of beer and an orange juice from the fridge before returning to his living room. The whole team was there celebrating Daniel's return and good physical and emotional health.

'Here's to Daniel,' Carter raised her glass, 'He's harder to kill than a dandelion and twice as pretty!'

Jack, Daniel and Teal'c exchanged humorous glances with one another. Carter had already had too much to drink and the night was still young. Teal'c was definitely driving her home tonight instead of the other way around.

'DanielJackson I am glad to see you return to the SGC.'

'Yeah, we weren't sure if we were going to get you back, and to have you now, back safe and sound, relatively unscathed...it seems almost too good to be true.'

Daniel nodded. 'I know what you mean. Seems like I got off easy on this one...didn't die this time, not even once! But hey, I'm back. Maybe not for off world missions...those will be a while yet, but I've been cleared to work a desk again. Never thought I'd be happy about that, but I am.'

'We're all glad to have you back Danny. No matter whether you're behind a desk or out on the front lines. We missed you and are overjoyed we got you back in one piece.' Jack smiled up at Daniel.

'Thanks guys. It's really a lot to take in. I don't remember most of what went on. It was like the longer I was here it all just melted away like some kind of dream. I'd really just like to spend some time with my friends.' There was a short pause of amicable silence between them.

'How about we spend some of our downtime together? The general gave us a few days so why don't we have one of our team parties just like old time? We'll invite Jan of course.'

'Sounds good Daniel' Jack and Sam said almost in stereo.'

'I desire only what you desire DanielJackson.' Teal'c intoned respectfully.

Daniel winced and absently rubbed the back of his neck.

'Daniel? You okay?'

Daniel only nodded, but that was enough for Jack and the others. He was probably just getting used to being stable and on two feet again they figured.

'Well Sir, I think it's about time for me to get home,' Carter said. 'But first...I need to visit the ladies room.' She stood and walked toward the bathroom, only slightly off balance.

Jack went into the kitchen to deposit the empty bottles from his hands. He heard something strange coming from the living room so he quickly rinsed off his hands under the faucet and returned to the scene of the noise. He'd just entered the room in time to see Daniel coming to kneel in front of Teal'c who was still sitting in the armchair where he'd been when Jack left.

'DanielJackson, do you require something?'

Jack walked over to the two men cautiously. 'Daniel, watcha doin'?'

Daniel simply ignored their comments and stared blankly at the space of empty floor between Teal's feet.

Teal'c and Jack, now also accompanied by Sam exchanged odd and inquiring glances.

'Daniel?' Sam tried kneeling down to his level.

Daniel pulled the hem of his t-shirt over his head with aching slowness...muscles rippling everywhere in the process. With unfocussed eyes he shifted forward and toed off his shoes and unfastened his pants as he came to kneel again with his knees spread wide.

The sound of Daniels fly coming down tooth by tooth was almost a deafening roar over the stark silence that had descended over the whole group.

'DanielJackson.' Teal'c boomed. 'I do not know the reasons for this, but I am most confused and as a friend must ask you to stop.'

When Daniel did in fact not stop, but proceeded to thrust his right hand into his pants, Sam gasped. 'Oh my God.' From somewhere behind Jacks left shoulder.

Jack had had about as much as he could take. He had to stop this now. 'Daniel!' Jack grabbed the kneeling man by the shoulder.

'Yes, do it.' Daniel moaned breathlessly.

From his position in the chair Teal'c leaned forward slightly to stare into the blue untrained gaze. 'Do what my friend?'

Daniel moaned again while completely undoing his flies and thrusting his hips slightly forward.

The rocking form on the floor continued to stroke himself and mutter. 'Do it, do it, do it.' He seemed to increase his actions every time any of them would touch him or speak to him.

'I won't come, I won't come, I promise' his voice broke in frustration, 'I promise I won't come.'

That's all he would say, over and over again until Jack finally broke out of his panic.

'Daniel! Daniel, you've got to snap out of this.'

'O'Neil, perhaps MajorCarter and I should leave. Our presence only seems to exasperate the situation.'

Jack was lost in what the hell he was supposed to be thinking. He didn't know what to do...he wasn't a psychologist. No, but...a light suddenly dawned in his mind. He had dealt with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder before. And if Jack was right, this seemed like a classic case. Daniel didn't remember much of anything about his life on that planet, but Jack had a feeling

his subconscious did. He had to help Daniel through any demons that might be surfacing up to his conscious mind.

'Yeah Teal'c, that's probably a good idea. If he remembers any of this in the morning he'll be extremely embarrassed if it gets any worse and you two were here. I'll give you both a call later if I can't calm him down I'll give Fraiser a ring.

'Very well O'Neil.' Teal'c bowed his slightly and motioned for Sam to go ahead of him.

With the others gone Daniel seemed to calm down a little. He was still muttering softly and rocking his hips against his hand but he'd calmed considerably since the other had left.

Jack approached Daniel carefully again while trying to ignore what the man was actually doing on his living room floor.

'Daniel, I think it would be a good idea if you went to bed.'

'Bed' he said with such an even tone that it gave Jack chills that seemed to shoot straight from Daniel's glazed eyes through the air and straight through his own, down his back.

'Yeah Danny. Follow me.'

Jack led the way up to the stairs, turning every so often to make sure Daniel was still trailing him. When they arrived in the bedroom, Daniel stood stalk still, facing straight ahead.

'Daniel?'

He didn't answer or move or even blink. Such a strange shell of what Daniel usually was.

'Daniel, why don't you take the rest of your clothes off and get into bed? I think we could use a bit of sleep.' He tried to use soothing tones.

Jack watched as Daniel turned toward him and locked fiery eyes with his own worried pools of brown. Daniel continued to remove his clothes in a sinewy display of obedience. Eye contact was broken momentarily as Daniel's eyes fluttered closed at the feeling of cloth brushing his groin.

Once he was gloriously naked he once again resumed standing there in front of Jack, panting and clenching his fists with restraint. Jack unconsciously looked Daniel over. Just as Janet had said there weren't any marks on him. No traces he'd been tortured or mistreated in any way. For weeks now Daniel had been home...normal. And now...? Now, something had finally surfaced. He was having some kind of flashback and Jack had no fucking clue how to help him.

He let his eyes graze over Daniel's flushed face. Slowly the gaze trailed down the young man's throat, collarbone, concentrating on the indentation between the well defined pectoral muscles. Daniel threw his head back suddenly in frustration and his cock twitched as if Jack was physically touching him with his vision.

'Jesus Danny.' Jack was amazed by how hard Daniel was.

'Do it.' Daniel whispered, looking at him with pleading eyes. 'Do it.'

'Danny I don't know what you want me to do. I want to help but I'm out of my depth here. Please just tell me how to help. Tell me what you want.'

Without even enough time for Jack to react, Daniel reached out and grabbed a fistful of Jack's shirt and drug him along toward the bed. Daniel backed up until his knees touched the edge. In one fluid motion he shifted his weight until they fell. As Jack's weight descended on him Daniel arched his back and moaned out his joy at their more horizontal positioning.

All evidence was pointing to //fuck me Jack, fuck me NOW// but Jack wasn't sure if that was such a good idea. Not that he didn't want to, not that this sensual animal beneath him didn't turn him on. Actually, that was the thing. This WAS turning him on, big time, and somehow that just wasn't right. Something was very very wrong in Daniel's head and he needed to correct that before he did something to worsen the situation.

'Danny, DANNY look at me!' He said sitting up to straddle the other man's thighs. 'You've got to tell me where you are. You've got to tell me what to do to help you out of there.'

Jack pleaded with Daniel who was now writhing in agonized pleasure below him. Nothing seemed to get through to Daniel but touch. Words were not working, but touch only helped to arouse Daniel into an even more heartbreaking state.

He'd begun muttering again...over and over and over again the same passionate mantra. 'Do it, do it, do it...I won't come, I promise...do it.' While he clenched his fists in the bed sheets, clearly yearning to touch himself, but restraining for some reason.

Tentatively Jack gave in. Maybe giving Daniel some relief would help him think more clearly...be able to communicate better? He didn't know but there was nothing else he felt he could do. He slid his hand up over Daniel's hip. Jack watched as Daniel's eyes rolled back into his head and his lid fluttered closed. The prone man teased his bottom lip between his teeth in concentration. Jack carefully guided to Daniel's leaking shaft.

'NOOOO!' Daniel's horrific scream shook and he drew his hand back with a jerk, as if he'd touched something scalding hot.

Tears threatened to fall from Jack's eyes. What was he supposed to do?

Daniel began chanting with abandon now. 'Do it, do it, do it. DO IT!' His head thrashing back and forth across the pillow in agony.

And Jack...Jack had reached the end of his rope. He didn't want to do it but it was the only thing left he hadn't tried. It hurt him to think about it but it was all he had left.

The loud 'THWAP!' barely registered in Jack's ears as he slapped Daniel hard across the face...it's sound having been overcome and consumed by Daniel's immediate scream of release, and the shock to Jack as the man underneath him came with incredible force.

In the split second before Daniel blacked out from the intensity of his orgasm he looked at Jack with tear-filled soulful eyes and whispered. 'I'm sorry Master.'

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Jacks mind slowly began to filter through the white noise of his silent disturbing dreams. It led him higher and higher into a weightlessness of sensation. One by one his senses began to connect with the real world, each cataloguing what he was feeling at this subconscious level.

He opened and blinked his eyes rapidly at first, adjusting to the lightness of the room against the white sheets. A small round bulge beneath the covers made him smile sedately. Then, he realized, that small round bulge was connected to a neck and one long and lean frame.

Jack grinned, content to allow Daniel to work up his firm body, stopping to caress each sensitive spot with his tongue or teeth. It was so perfect, so like Daniel, the way it was before...

A sudden halt in Jacks mind had him remembering the events of the night before...the months, weeks, and day that led to those events. This should not be happening right now no matter how much he enjoyed it. Daniel needed to work through this not pretend it never happened.

Daniels head came out from under the top edge of the sheet, having completed his trek. The angelic smile that greeted Jack broke his heart. It was so like what it used to be like.

'Good morning Jack.'

'Mornin' Daniel.'

'So ah...' Daniel paused to nuzzle his nose to Jacks collarbone. 'Want breakfast or do you just want to skip to dessert?'

'Daniel. I think we should talk first.'

The coldness in Daniels eyes at the mention of talking clued Jack in. Daniel didn't want to talk and that was usually a bad sign when it came to Daniel. Daniel consistently ALWAYS wanted to talk.

Daniel dropped his head to plant nips and kisses along the naked expanse of chest below him. 'What is there to talk about?'

'I think there's quite a lot to talk about. Starting with what the hell they did to you, and next on the list is what happened last night.'

A short push of air tickled Jacks chest hair. 'I don't see what there is to talk about. We had sex...we do that a lot don't we? Or we used to anyway.'

'Sex? When during that episode last night did sex occur? Maybe my definition is a little different but I thought sex was somewhat a kin to making love where BOTH parties were

getting something out of it." The tone of Jack's voice was dripping with sarcasm but he didn't care. Maybe getting Daniel mad would force this stuff out of him.

'Come on Jack, you and I both know I don't really remember any of what happened to me.' He was stalling, Jack could tell.

'You don't remember what happened last night do you?'

'Of course I remember!' He'd jumped to answer too quickly and knew it. 'Well some of it's a little hazy...' he continued. 'Alright, a lot of it...but...'

'Ah! No buts. You scared me Daniel. I didn't know what to do. You were like this sex crazed maniac and you kept mumbling the same two things over and over again.'

'What was I saying?'

Jack looked down at his clasped hands. He couldn't bear to lie to Daniel but he wasn't sure if he should tell him everything or not. The only thing Jack knew was that he'd be there for his lover if the words were too much for him. 'It was something like...do it do it, I won't come I promise, do it, do it.'

There was a long silence. Jack waited a moment and then looked up. Daniels face was white and a trembling was beginning in his lower lip. Their eyes met for a brief second before Daniel got up to pace back and forth across the room.

'Oh God' Daniel whispered. 'Oh God, oh God, oh God...' He continued his circuit around the room until his quaking legs couldn't carry him anymore. Collapsing beside the bed Daniel wrapped his arms around his knees and rocked while fighting the oncoming tears. The words and memories echoing inside his head like the forgotten touches and emotions that flooded through his protective superficial defenses.

Jack crawled across the bed and over the edge to sit on the floor behind Daniel just as the floodgates opened. He held Daniel close, burying his face between the other man's neck and shoulder.

'Fuck you.' Daniel sobbed. 'Fuck you , bastard. Why did you have to make me remember? Why? Why did I have to remember?'

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Daniel sat at the kitchen table holding onto his coffee mug like a lifeline. He stared into the dark depths of his mug wondering how he was going to even begin to explain what it was like for him those years without Jack. 'I don't where to start.' He said in such a small voice, Jack wasn't sure if he'd heard anything at all.

'Take your time. As long as I know you're willing, that's a big step in the right direction.'

'No I need to get it out. You're right, now that I remember all of it I need to get it out...'

'But'

Daniel grinned at Jack's ability to read him. '...but I'm ashamed of how I acted. Whether under the influence of their mind games or not, I...I don't know how you'll forgive me.'

Jack moved to kneel at Daniel's side. He lifted his lover's chin so that they were eye to eye. 'Danny, I love you, and nothing you did or will do will ever change that. I don't care if you were out of your mind or completely sane at the time, I'll always love you that will never change. I promise.'

If Jack had never said the words Daniel knew all he had to do is to look in his lover's face to know they were true. Jack didn't talk about feelings much but when he did it knocked you off your feet. This was one of those moments. Daniel leaned down and pressed a kiss to Jack's lips. Their hands slipped round each other for a tight hug and then Daniel was talking.

'They put me in a room. It was very, very dark, and cold. I could walk about 12 steps before I hit another wall. At first I got food and water but eventually those dwindled down too. I lost track of time because there was no way to know what time it was...but after a while they took me to a smaller room...only 10 steps then.'

Jack sat down on the floor next to Daniel even though he knew his knees would protest later. He just knew Daniel would need him close by to get through this.

'One day they blindfolded me and took me to this room that had really soft sand on the floor. I think it was probably some kind of auditorium because there were lots of people there... they never took my blindfold off but I could hear them. That's when the torture started...'

Jack sat next on the edge of the bed and stroked Daniel's hair gently. The poor boy was tuckered out, mentally, emotionally, and physically. He'd spent four hours telling Jack all the things that had been done to him, while an alien drug administered to him in the food had brainwashed him into thinking they were all dreams and that everything was a happy wonderful walk in the park.

Daniel spoke of sexual abuse that Jack wasn't sure he could bear to listen to, but he knew he had to let Daniel get it out or he might hold the festering filth inside him forever. How could Daniel have endured it he wondered? After all he's been through how could he go through any more of this shit and come back kicking?

Jack sat back on the couch in the living room and thought about all his lover had told him.

//They touched me...so many hands, seeking and wanting. I had no where to go, I was secured tightly, the pain in my wrists and ankles were my only link to reality. I didn't realize I had a masochistic bone in my body, but if it hadn't been for that I would have slipped totally into the psychosis of need. I can't tell you Jack how much my subconscious loved what they were doing. It had been so long since I had been touched, but it wasn't right, it wasn't you. //

God damn! Jack slammed his fist into the pliable cushions of the couch. Why am I always somewhere else when Daniel needs me? Why can't I be the one that shit happens to instead of Danny?

// I learned very quickly what they wanted from me. Every time I disobeyed, struggled, or made a noise they'd put me in a smaller room. At one point I was in a room that was so small I couldn't crouch down or lean. I was continuously standing...I don't know how long I was in that room but I knew I couldn't go back. I'd do anything not to go back there. //

Jacks thoughts drifted and he soon found himself in those places Daniel had so painstakingly described to him. He was in the crowd, watching as the countless pairs of hands caressed and fondled his lovers' body. He watched as Daniel, blindfolded and manipulated beyond comprehension arched into each of their touches, desperately searching out something real.

Menacingly, a strong man without a face walked up between his captives bound and spread legs. He leaned over the prone man to pour some sort of dark liquid down Daniels throat. Daniel didn't resist, learning long ago that resistance would only bring him closer to death, and he had to stay alive so Jack could find him.

'I desire only what you desire' the man whispered into Daniels' ear. 'I desire only what you desire.' He said just a little bit louder. Over and over again he said those words as if trying to spellbind his captive with them.

Soon the crowd began to chant those same words. The roar of the crowd began to overpower even the grunts and moans of the two men. Love was nowhere to be found in their actions as the faceless predator took Daniels body.

Daniel moaned, and writhed, clearly fighting to put on a good show even though what was happening disgusted him deep down inside...anything so that he would live one more day, one more day with his self proclaimed 'master' so that his real 'master' could find him and bring him home.

But somewhere in the darkness he heard a voice...a voice so familiar, Jacks voice whispering the repeated mantra...'only what you desire Daniel...I desire only what you desire.'

Something inside him broke; the last tie inside that kept him hoping for the chance to be away from here was manipulated into a dizzying event of defeat. Jacks memory grayed with the fading roar in his ears. Jack wasn't coming, he was already here and allowing this to happen. Maybe he should too; he should obey what Jack wanted for him.

Jack yelled out in surprise as he rolled off the couch, now completely awake from his dream. The disturbing images Daniel had told him insinuated themselves inside his mind and wouldn't let go.

Daniel had explained that he'd given in because he thought that's what Jack had wanted him to do...but also that he'd done it many times since each night the drug was given to him he'd forget everything that had happened. It was as if the drug and the mind controlling properties preyed on his worst fears, and greatest hopes, molding them into a huge bundle and smashing them all to pieces at once, leaving Daniel effectively pliable and unsure as to what to do next.

Jack wasn't sure what to do next either.

A shiver went through Jack's body, just an unnerving shake at the things he'd heard, seen, and felt tonight. He climbed the stairs and got undressed for bed, waiting a moment to watch the slow rise and fall of Daniel's chest before climbing under the covers and holding the other man close--assurance that Daniel was real, and alive, and back in his life once again.

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The next few months were difficult for everyone. Daniel was in and out of medical care. Janet being his primary physician, as well as the psych-ward under the care of Dr. Merley, a new addition to Stargate Command and a very accomplished and understanding doctor.

As for the rest of the team...Jack tried to be the strong leader and lover that he was, while coming to terms with his own anger and fear of what had happened to not only a member of his team, but the most important person in his life. Carter showed her support anyway she could. The sibling bond between her and Daniel only grew stronger as she deliberately snuck in chocolate macadamia nut cookies into his room when no one was looking. Teal'c looked on in a Teal'c sort of way, always the strong, silent and supportive type, he invited Daniel to learn meditative methods that would help clear and focus his mind.

Doctors Fraiser and Merley made swift progress in determining ways to help Daniel through his memory loss and physical trauma, mostly due to Daniel's cooperation. Among the things Dr. Fraiser was able to determine were the nature of the viscous liquid given to Daniel and its effects. She believed it was a form of waking hypnotic drug similar to those experimented on by the military not so many years ago. It left almost no trace in the bloodstream, but kept the individual extremely susceptible to suggestion and/or programmable to act out a desired set of preprogrammed variables based on a certain phrase, gesture or situation. Where the US military had never gotten this far in their experimentation, this civilization apparently had.

Currently Daniel was in the infirmary for what they all hoped was the last time...

'Jaaaaanet!' Daniel whined, 'Please, just let Jack take me home. You don't have to... OUCH!...poke me with anymore needles...hey! Stop that! Jack help!'

Jack walked through the door just in time to catch the look of amused panic on his lover's face as well as the patient, yet un-amused expression of his doctors'.

'Now Daniel, you know you have to get poked one more time...it's a tradition!'

'Masochists, you're all masochists.' He mumbled.

Jack leaned in close to Daniel's ear to whisper. 'Wada ya say...I'll be your whipping boy when we get home.'

Daniel snorted and took a short nip at Jack's earlobe. It had been so long since they'd been away from prying eyes. Even in the light of Daniel's better, but still not great mental health they just couldn't wait to get their hands on each other at last.

'Boys, please...I don't need his blood pressure going through the roof again.'

Both blushed and looked like thoroughly chastised schoolboys just going through the motions so they could go outside in their Sunday best and play in the dirt again when the adults looked away.

'Alright,' Janet finished and taped a wad of gauze over the needle mark on Daniel's arm. 'You're free to go home. BUT...' She waved a latex gloved finger in front of both their faces. 'Please, take it easy...I know you're feeling better' she pointed at Daniel 'and you're horny and deprived' she pointed at Jack 'but I don't want him back in here again for overdoing it. Do you both hear me?'

'Yes Ma'am' they chorused in unison.

'Alright, now get out of my infirmary.'

She'd barely gotten past 'get out' before she heard the swinging doors clatter against each other.

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At home, they did TRY to take it easy...but the forced 'easiness' turned into a bout of long drawn out foreplay...

They sat on opposite ends of the couch, Jack reading the sports section of the news paper, and Daniel snuggling up to a new modern art book he'd bought.

Jack stretched out across the couch, as did Daniel. One foot came to rest in each others lap, while the other curled underneath in comfort. Slowly, Daniels' foot moved to gently push and stroke against the awakening bulge in the front of Jacks' jeans. Jacks foot, not wanting to leave anyone or anything out began to do the same. Both sets of eyes continued scanning the words on each page respectively, although not really reading them anymore.

Head down, and book forgotten Daniel let out a moan. 'Oh God...need to...upstairs.' Jack took no more prodding. Quickly he scooped Daniel up, ignoring the slight protest. He maneuvered them into the room dogging a few misplaced items of clothing on the floor and placed Daniel and himself on the bed gracelessly.

'Oof, sorry' He mumbled against Daniels neck.

Daniel laughed, this is exactly how he wanted it and who he wanted...Jack 'I can kill you in my sleep and no one would find your body or hear you scream, but I can't kiss without bumping noses' O'Neill.

"You have too many clothes on,' Daniel mustered up through his lust filled haze.

More than happy to comply, Jack stripped off his shirt and pants then helped Daniel with his. Their lovemaking was quick and without pretense. They'd been waiting, trapped in hospitals and offices, enduring the slow burn for months now, neither were in the mood or condition to draw it out any longer. They rubbed their bodies together furiously, trying to get under each others skin and mold themselves together permanently. One body, one mind, one soul and one love. Too soon they each howled out their release and lay sated in each others arms.

Daniel was the first to break the silence. 'You know you're the only reason I got through this.' It was more of a statement than a question. 'Even in my mind when you were telling me to give in to what they were doing I knew, somewhere in me that it wasn't you. I couldn't possibly submit to anyone else.'

Jack frowned at the word 'submit'. Was that what Daniel felt he was doing, being with him? 'Daniel, you were under some strong mind control...I mean that stuff made you do things that you wouldn't normally do. I know you don't like all that slave/master stuff.'

There was a long drawn out silence that made even Jack nervous. Daniel felt the body next to him tighten at the expanse of silence. 'I...Never mind Jack...I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable.'

Sitting up, Jack took a moment to look into Daniels eyes. 'No, if you need to tell me something, anything, you can. You know that. You know I would never hate you or judge you for something you feel or need to say, so say it. I want to know what's going on in there.' He stroked a finger across Daniels forehead.

'Well, I was thinking about what Janet said about the different characteristics the drug has and I asked her specifically and Dr. Merley too about the hypnosis-like characteristics.' Daniel bit his lip nervously. 'Jack I don't know how to say this...I...the drugs couldn't easily make me do anything that I didn't at least have a tiny little hint of wanting to do already somewhere in the back of my mind. We decided that the...uh...sexual submission was magnified by my already miniscule amount of desire for that sort of thing.' He finished his speech and took a big breath, not having taken a breath since he started.

Jack looked at him confusedly for a moment until Daniel finally saw the light go on. 'You mean...you at least have a little desire to submit to someone else?'

Daniel nodded. 'I guess I've always known, it didn't surprise me when we worked it out in therapy one day. But I don't want you to think that I enjoyed what happened to me. It was all blown out of proportion by that damned drug. The stuff takes hold of the smallest thing and magnifies it into immense proportions.'

'Daniel you don't have to explain, I understand all of that. It's fine.'

'You mean you don't find it disgusting or weak or anything?'

'No, not at all...Actually I find it sort of admirable.'

Daniel cocked his head to the side.

'Yeah, you know what you want, you know how you want it, and you know you're strong enough to deal with that. I spent so much of my life hiding from the things that I wanted that at one point I couldn't even remember what those things were. I wasn't me anymore without my needs.'

'I didn't know what I wanted either until I met you. That's what I meant when I said you were what got me through all the delusions even though you weren't there. I just knew in the back

of my mind that I couldn't be a slave to these people."

Jack lay back down beside Daniel and propped his head up with one hand. Daniel sat up facing Jack and drew him in for a slow kiss.

'Why is that and what did I have to do with it?' Jack asked.

'I knew I couldn't be a slave to those people because since the day I met you I've been a slave to your love.'

The words filled Jack up, full as he'd ever felt in his life. The pressure in his heart had nowhere to go but into his eyes. He held Daniel close and smiled kissing his forehead. 'I love you too.' He whispered as they curled around one another...safe, content, and together again.

End

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