

September 18th - Late Afternoon
Sandy Plains
Px3-908

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“Sam!” Doctor Daniel Jackson’s cry was heard by the astro-physicist on the other side of the enormous sand dune they were on. Her head came up, tilting to listen for the call again. When she heard it the second time she rose to her feet and slapped her hands on her beige-covered butt as she made her way up the leg-breaking, soft sand.

As she passed Teal’c she gave a sharp jerk of her head to indicate that she was going to see what Daniel wanted.

“Sam!” The call came for yet a third time. The Jaffa bowed his head slowly then fell into step beside her - his longer, stronger legs pulling him through the soft, shifting sands at a faster rate than she was managing. On the crest of the hill they could see into the very distant future, and there were trees and greenery, and, Daniel had first surmised, a river or some kind of watering hole amongst it all - most probably.

She looked down to where Daniel was hunched over a spot on the sand. Shielding her eyes from the intense reflective glare from the sand and cloudless sky, she started down the side of the steep slope, unintentionally breaking into a trot as she neared the bottom where Daniel was and where Jack was milling about, his hands resting on his gun, his hat pulled low over his sun-shaded eyes. As she drew closer to Daniel, he also came in, so that the whole team was now standing around the sitting man.

“What is it?” She asked, a little out of breath.

“Look!” In Daniel’s long, tanned fingers was a cylindrical shaped object, no wider than his palm, and no longer than his stretched-out hand.

“What is it?” She asked as she crouched beside him.

“I don’t know,” he said as he surrendered it to her for her inspection. She turned the object over and over in her hands, and then passed it back as she said, “Looks to be made of some kind of metal?”

Daniel pressed his thumb nail into the object and the cover dented, forming the shape of the crescent of the nail. The two scientists frowned then looked at each other.

“That’s interesting,” he said in a small voice then pressed his nail against it again, indenting it easily.

“It appears to be a Hak’hartat,” Teal’c said, looking down over Daniel’s shoulder.

The younger man turned to him; his face squinted as he stared up into the brilliant blue sky behind Teal'c's head.

"That would be..?" Jack asked, stepping up to Daniel's other side.

"Bracelet," Daniel translated it easily. He lowered his face, blinking to clear his sight so that he could focus once more.

"That is correct," Teal'c said, looking from Daniel to Jack, who was at his eye level. "It is the Ancient Ritual Bracelet of the Hemmlar Royalty. It is worn only by the elite of their society," he explained further.

Jack nodded and looked around them. "And it's here .. because?"

"I'm guessing that it's here because this used to be a place, maybe of burial, like.. like the Valley of Kings back home..."

"There's a Valley of Kings in Colorado Springs?" Jack was being deliberately obtuse. Daniel shot him a vacuous stare then looked down at the artifact in his hand.

"What's that?" Sam asked, taking the object and pressing a small raised shape on its surface. The bracelet part lifted off, like a lid. "It looks a little like a jewelry box, doesn't it?"

"Hak'hartat's performed a similar function. They housed the smaller pieces of jewelry and then Hak'hartat was placed around it, as a cover."

She passed the bracelet to Daniel while she looked over the empty box closely.

The archaeologist's long nails scratched at the dirt, rubbing away many years of grim, sand and mud from its surface. There was a glint of bright yellow under the dirt.

"Is it gold?" she asked, watching as his nails rubbed the object carefully before turning her attention to the box in her hand. Her efforts proved fruitless as the metal beneath the dirt on her box was like pitted pewter.

"Is it lead?" Jack asked, recalling a piece of lead he had often played with in his father's garage when he was a kid in school. That was, until he heard of lead poisoning, and he dropped it like a hot-cake, never to touch it again. He always had a problem with lead from that day on, and whether it was true or not, he still didn't touch it again. Lead, and asbestos. He had troubles with both those things.

"I'm not sure," Sam answered his question honestly. The colonel watched with certain unease as she squeezed the box out of shape then back into it again.

"Major!" He said in a weary voice as he lifted his face to the burning sun, to hide his

discomfort from the others. "Don't play with the artifact. The good Doctor won't like that!"

Jack turned to meet Daniel's gaze once more, and his lips tugged into a small smile as he watched the way Daniel rolled his eyes slightly at him. The archaeologist went back to cleaning the arm band with the tuck of his black t-shirt and some spit.

"Look!" He leaned over to show Sam the faint etchings in the precious metal. Turning on the balls of his feet in the hot sand, he looked up at the Jaffa, still standing behind him. "Can you read any of this?"

Teal'c lifted the fragile item into his hands, reading the inscription carefully.

"It was the Royal Armband of ..." He frowned. "I cannot make out the name, I am sorry!"

Daniel accepted back the item, a little disappointed as he looked over the worn writings.

"You can read that?" Jack asked his friend.

"I can," Teal'c said, clasping his hands behind his back and broadening his chest slightly.

Daniel was quietly excited about the prospect of learning a new language, one that Teal'c could teach him. Jack eyed the scientist carefully before he lowered his chin look at the man crouched on the hot sands.

"Okay, Earth to Daniel!" He said, toeing at his friend's thigh gently with the tip of his boot.

"What? Oh, sorry Jack!" Daniel said, blinking quickly and looking like the child left behind in the proverbial candy store. Jack smiled gently at him before he shook his head and turned his face to look away.

"What was that?" Sam asked as she felt a slight tremor under her feet.

"I felt it too!" Daniel said his blue eyes wide.

"Major?" Jack asked, having done a complete circle as he looked around for approaching danger.

"I don't know, Sir," she said, standing and feeling the gentle shake beneath her feet again.

Jack turned, she was directly behind him now. "Are we in danger?"

She raised both brows and shrugged. "I don't know, Sir," she repeated her earlier

statement.

Just as soon as they began, the tremors ceased. Jack thumbed over his shoulder, and said, levelly, "Let's go home, people!"

Sam nodded and bent to collect her things. She frowned, stopping in mid-move as she watched Daniel fold his hand so that it was very narrow, then he pushed his hand into the sand, up to his elbow. He smiled and extracted another trinket.

"What.. the...?" Sam asked, kneeling beside him and taking it from his hands.

"There's more down there!" He said with wide eyes. Folding his hand once more, he pressed into the sand and just as he was about to pull out his hand, the ground shook violently.

Like a tiny run in a stocking, the earth puckered then suddenly it opened up, right where Daniel's arm was, sending the unsuspecting archaeologist tumbling through empty space until he landed with a hard thud on the base of a huge ravine that had split the world in two.

It had happened too suddenly, the ground shook then split viciously, separating Jack and Sam from Teal'c, and sending Daniel miles down into a long ravine that stretched off for miles either side of them.

"Are you okay?" Jack cupped his hands around his mouth in an effort to get Teal'c to hear him.

"Teal'c?" Sam's voice was a lot softer, but, as Jack discovered as he turned to look at her, she'd had the thought to use her 2-way radio.

"I am unharmed, Major," the deep voice came over the speaker.

Jack looked down at the rumpled body in the bottom of the ditch. "Daniel!"

Sam dropped to her knees beside the edge and called out, as loud as she could, "D_A_N_I_E_L !!"

Her voice echoed a little but mostly it was sucked up, frustratingly, by the sand surrounding them. The ground shook again and Jack reached out and gripped her by her black flack jacket, tugging her from the edge as it dissolved from beneath them. More sand spewed down the gulf, falling around, and onto, Daniel's unconscious body as the two officers fell, tangled together, on the shaking ground high above their friend.

Jumping to his feet as soon as he gathered his bearings, Jack cupped his hands around his mouth once more, shouting across the huge split to his friend on the other side.

“Teal’c ! Get back!”

It was a warning sent too late, though. Jack stood helplessly and watched as the ground fell like a waterfall, dragging Teal’c with it. Through the billowing sand, Jack could see that the dark body had stopped and once everything had settled a little more he could easily see the Teal’c was face down on a small ledge of sand.

“Teal’c!” Sam was back on her feet and by Jack’s side again. The colonel watched as more sand slipped down the ravine.

“Major! Quiet!” Jack barked. She frowned at him. **“It’s like an avalanche,”** he said, pointing to the sand spilling into the gap.

Teal’c was getting to his feet on the other side of the expanse, something both officers were glad to see. The mighty arms dug at the sand, getting an uneasy purchase on the soft, shifting earth. It was enough though, and with sheer strength and effort, Teal’c managed to lift himself up off the ledge he was on and back onto the top of the earth once more.

The others looked down. Daniel’s body was almost covered in sand now, and Jack was aware that he would soon suffocate to death. Part of the young man’s face was visible, and even at that distance Jack didn’t like the color of it. With the distance and the speed with which the sand was filling the ravine, Jack suddenly became aware how fatal this situation could be.

“Colonel!” Sam yelled as he ran towards the edge. She instinctually went after him, avoiding the sheer drop more carefully than he. **“Sir, what are you doing? We have to go back through the gate and get help!”**

“Negative, Carter. Daniel is about to be buried alive down there.” He yelled back over his shoulder as he fell to his knees on the sand. She stepped up behind him and looked over the edge.

“Sir, if you try to go down there, you’ll be as trapped as he is...”

“Somebody has to unbury him!” He said, not looking at her but intent on finding a way down to his fallen friend.

“DANIEL!” She called down again but the body didn’t even flinch. Jack growled beside her then, without another word, threw himself over the edge of the cliff, bouncing and tumbling down the sheer sides to the valley below.

Sam held her breath until she saw Jack moving below. Face down, he had landed heavily, but soon his arm came out from beneath his body, his hand finding some purchase in the soft sand. Soon he was up onto his hands and knees and Sam drew breath again.

He flopped onto his butt, looking back up at her. Carter had been right - there was

no way up again. He gave a small wave then rolled over onto his knees again, crawling across the shifting sands to the grave that now housed his friend.

“I’m going for help!” Jack heard Sam’s voice and waved over his head, indicating it was a go! She waited a moment, then turned and ran towards the Stargate.

Jack approached the raised sand and knelt as he burrowed at the mound, like a dog intent to find a juicy bone.

“Dammit, Daniel! Where the hell are you!” Suddenly he felt the solid mass of body within his touch and started to throw sand over his shoulder, desperate to uncover Daniel before the man suffocated.

The ground shook once more, and the earth ripped open. Another, smaller ravine ripped across the ground, sucking the unconscious man down with it but leaving Jack on his hands and knees where Daniel had once been.

Jack felt hopeless. Just as he was about to find Daniel, the man had slipped, literally, from his fingertips, and out of his reach!

With fatigue, the colonel rolled back, his hands covering his eyes as he cried out in frustration, unable to move while the earth shook so violently.

“O’Neill!” Teal’c’s voice boomed over the hiss of moving sand. Jack looked up then down, when he saw that Teal’c was pointing into the deep fission that Daniel had slipped into.

The colonel saw that Daniel had fallen further than he’d first expected, and was again lying, crumpled on his side, in the bottom of the ditch.

“Crap!” Jack yelled loudly, rolling onto his knees to look down at the unconscious man. “Daniel!” Frustration and anger boiled within him, now desperate to reach him as the situation started to grow more and more serious - and more and more futile.

“It is unwise to try again, O’Neill!” Teal’c called down to him. Jack looked up, seeing the concern in the dark eyes, even from that distance. “His face is uncovered. He will be able to breath now.”

Teal’c’s words forced Jack to look down at Daniel once more, to see the lifeless body, crumpled and folded like a rag-doll, in the bottom of the ditch. Jack’s stomach lurched but he held back its contents. Dragging one knee up, he rested his elbow onto it as he pushed the heel of his sand-crested hand into his eye. His head ached with a pain that sliced up behind his eye socket, blinding him. He looked up again at his friend, high on the ledge above him. Covering his eyes with one hand he saw that Teal’c was able to see the situation better than he could, and could see how pointless it would be for Jack to throw himself down there again.

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The sun burnt the back of Jack's neck as he remained there, watching the silent body below him, willing it to get up, to move, to show some signs of life. Teal'c was right about one thing, Daniel could still breathe - if he **could** still breathe.

Grabbing up a fistful of sand, the colonel sighed pitifully, "Daniel!" before dropping his chin to his chest, sucking back a shaky breath.

(End of part 1)