

September 23rd –Late morning
Cave
Px3-908

Daniel roused slowly from his sleep. There was silence in the cave around him and he recalled that Trepur was going hunting that morning. As he straightened up something struck him as peculiar. He started to see very blurry shapes of things. His eyesight was returning! Trepur's treatment was working and he could see again, albeit nothing other than differences in light and shadow, but it was a positive start.

He held his hand out before him but the image was far too blurred for him to make out any of it, not even confident he knew where the hand ended and the background began. It didn't dishearten him though. He looked around the cave. He was able to pick up the brightness of the fire in the middle and nothing else, everything else was dark.

A noise at the entrance of the cave, unseen by Daniel, caught his attention and he turned towards the sound. "Trepur?"

"Good news, Genkel," came the excited reply as a shadow flashed past him and crouched beside him. Trepur's voice was full of elation. "Yukking went well. I have enough for us for cycles!"

Unable to see where Trepur had gone in the shadows, Daniel was still blinded to his friend inside the cave. Trepur was ignorant of Daniel's news as he went on to say, "We will eat like Lords in the House tonight, my friend!"

The jubilation in the alien's voice captured Daniel and he laughed as he said, "You are the Yukking champion!"

"I am a warrior!" Trepur roared in good humor then he clasped his hands over Daniel's face and squeezed him firmly. "But now, my friend, I must reggen, for I am.. phew! .. plektart!" He laughed as he waved his hand before his face, wafting away the odor caused by the intense long hours of yukking in extremely high temperatures.

"Take me with you. I need to neykof," Daniel said as he felt Trepur pull away and get to his feet. The young male stopped, turned and reached for Daniel's hands, pulling him up effortlessly.

"I will guide," Trepur said and instantly took Daniel's hand while he wrapped an arm across his back to guide him.

Outside the cave Daniel recoiled as much from the fuzzy brightness, something he wasn't used to, as the intense heat of the sun. Holding his hand up to his eyes Daniel exclaimed, "Wow!" as perspiration beaded on his forehead almost instantly.

"The orb is fierce. It grows fiercer by cycle."

"It's going to get hotter?" Daniel asked, unable to comprehend it being any hotter.

"We must prepare. I cannot yuk soon. It is what perished the Lord.."

"Your Lord?"

Trepur was silent a moment then said, "He went yukking and never came back. I went to ... find.. him. He was at the low of a great valley. I could not reach him. He was covered in trenal. He was already ickschtog."

Daniel recalled the words from the other day. The Lord was covered in the earth, buried. He recalled his recent burial by trenal himself -it made his chest tight. He also recalled the word ickschtog. It meant finished. It must also mean dead, he surmised.

"I'm sorry, Trepur."

"The legend prophesized that the Lord and I would perish if we were to go against the Gods on our world. I was afraid, but I still came with him."

"What do you mean?"

Trepur stopped and lightly touched his hand to the front of Daniel's body, indicating that he was where he needed to be. Daniel tried to look around but there was no defining image, just a mass of blurred grays, sand and black, like someone had painted a picture and smeared the paint before it was completed. He decided to wait until he could see better before sharing the news with his friend. He wanted to see Trepur more than anything, but he would need to be patient.

Daniel raised the many layers of clothing and relieved himself, smelling the tart stink of urine as it hit the ground. After he was done, they held together again and Trepur began to lead him to the cave where the waterhole was.

As they walked together, Trepur explained, "My Lord was of Hemmler royalty."

The name pricked a slight memory in Daniel's mind but it was gone in a flash and the man barely noticed it.

"He was betrothed to a Klemminar royalty. They were to raise new royalty. My Lord did not want to wed. He did not want to raise new royalty. He asked me to younker with him one cycle of the orb and I did. There he told me he wished to escape his fate by the herrict. I was .. afraid. I told him that we would be caught by the Gods and punished for refusing to follow the line of the royalty. He did not care. He did not want to wed. We gathered some of his things that night.."

As they spoke they neared the water hole. Trepur stopped his friend and indicated, by tugging on the clothes, that Daniel could undress.

As the naked men waded into the water, Trepur with a steady hold on the blind man, Daniel asked, "Why did you go with him, if you knew it was wrong?"

Trepur smiled sadly. "I wanted to remain his younker."

"Why you? Why not the Second?"

"The Second was my Lord's least favorite...."

"Well, what about the Fourth then?"

"My Lord did not care for the Fourth as much as he did for me. He called me his konkewpisens."

"You were his favorite concubine?" The unexpected knowledge of the word surprised even Daniel. He sunk to his knees in the cooling water and enjoyed the feel of his arms floating out beside him.

Trepur tossed water over his face then sunk to his knees in front of his companion. "What is.. con-cue-bine?"

"Ummm I think..." Daniel searched his mind for the word again, wondering why it had come so easy to him yet he couldn't recall his own name. "I think it's a favorite sexual partner.. out of many."

"Then, yes."

Their conversation lulled for a moment while Daniel dived under the water then came up, carefully assisted by the seeing man. As he swiped water from his eyes, Daniel asked, "Did you love him?"

"Love?"

"Enjoy being with him. Want to be with him, always?" He placed his hand on his heart and gave a gentle smile. "Love."

"I suppose," Trepur said. "He was not my Heptake."

The new word brought Daniel up short. "What's a Heptake?"

"My Lord wanted me to be his Heptake. He should have found that with his Klemminar bride, but he did not wish for it"

Daniel's face furrowed as he tried to work through the odd language. "I'm guessing here then that you mean he didn't want a life companion, just...a concubine?"

"He wished for me to be his heptake.." Trepur repeated.

Daniel nodded, and realized his misunderstanding. "Only you didn't want to be tied down?"

"Tied... down?"

With a soft cough, Daniel explained, "I think what you're saying is that your Lord wanted to make a life mate of you.. but you didn't want that. Why?" When he heard a soft grunt Daniel quickly added, "If you don't mind me asking?"

"We must only allow one heptake in our life.... It was impossible for me to offer my heptake to him.."

Confused, Daniel realized that he might never fully understand the situation so he nodded and said, "I see," despite his own perplexity.

After a moment the soft voice said, "Though I did.....love him...."

Daniel gave a weak smile to that acknowledgement then bowed his head.

In velvet tones, Trepur said, "He was very handsome... Like you are, Genkel."

The complimented man raised his head and said, "Th.. thank you."

Trepur touched gentle fingertips to Daniel's bearded cheek. With a laugh that broke the intense moment, the alien said, "He did not have your.. hair though."

Daniel now touched his own whiskers and smiled also. "I guess not."

He allowed Trepur to help him out of the pool and they moved to the mouth of the cave together, finding a rock to sit on until the sun could dry their bodies.

After some time in the heat, Daniel felt sleepy but he also yearned to know as much as possible about his kind stranger. "Were you together here long?"

"Many cycles of the orb. I have been without younker... kumpany... for many cycles now... until you fell through the cave." Trepur touched his hand to Daniel's shoulder, and indicated that they should dress.

"About that," Daniel said, furrowing his brow after he lowered his garb over his head and then settled it around his waist. "How did that happen?"

"I do not know." Trepur assisted Daniel in adjusting his garments so that the hem did not scrape in the sand or trip the blind man up as they walked. Taking Daniel by the hand, Trepur led the way down the rocky outcrop and away from the waterhole cave.

Con conversationally, the guide said, "I do believe it was the fate of my Lord also. The

trenal here is often shifting, great valleys form without warning. I, too, have almost ended on the low of a valley, but I have been spared by the Gods so far.”

The sun was growing hotter by the hour and the young alien raised his face to the source of heat and smiled at its life-giving force as they walked.

“Do you know why the God’s spared you?”

Trepur was quiet, as if considering his words carefully. “Perhaps so that I might be here to offer hum-coff to you, Genkel.”

A small smile curled the edges of Daniel’s lips. “Perhaps.”

Trepur stopped and turned, offering a second hand to assist Daniel down a particularly stony, steep slope then they returned to the single hand-holding as they walked over hot sand towards the cave. “I am glad for it,” Trepur informed his companion.

A smile kissed Daniel’s warm face again. “Thank you.”

“I thank you, Genkel, yet I wish we could find your House for you.”

After a brief moment, Daniel tilted his head slightly, budded his lips in a smile and said, “You know, Trepur... I’m not in such a hurry to leave here ...”

Trepur stared at the handsome man, and then a smile filled his face. “I am glad for that.” He reached out and grasped Daniel’s hand in his, squeezing it firmly in a show of camaraderie.

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September 23rd - Middle of the night
Colonel Jack O’Neill’s house
Earth

The lonely sounds of opera filled Jack’s house as the man slept on his sofa. He had one hand trapped under his face whilst the other draped over the edge of the sofa and onto the floor. His sleep was fitful, full of images of Daniel lost beneath the sand, or unable to breathe, or crying out to Jack to save him from suffocation.

Jack sat bolt upright, drool strung from his mouth to the cushion as he blinked hard to remove the image of Daniel’s tormented face from his mind. He looked around his darkened house as he came to realize that it was just a dream. He shook his numb hand, dreading the moment the pins and needles started up. Groggily, he got off the couch and stumbled over to the stereo, hitting the button on the cd player.

He stretched as he yawned then rubbed his usable hand over his ragged features. The opera had interfered with his dream, making Daniel’s recurring death all the more poignant - as sand filled the young man’s mouth words of lost loves echoed

through Jack's empty home. Flicking his stinging hand now, Jack started to make his way towards his bedroom. He reached his door and stopped against the door frame. He imagined that Daniel could be there, in the bed, waiting for him. He knew that would never happen now. Pressing up from the door jamb Jack went to the side of the bed, unbuttoned his pants and kicked off his shoes. As he lay down on his bed he stared up at the ceiling, a part of him wishing that he wouldn't wake up the next morning. After all, what did he have to get up for anymore?

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September 25th – Early morning

Cave

Px3-908

Daniel was woken by a sudden and earth moving thud. The cave around him was dark, the fire having gone out hours before. He grappled to sit up; the skin tucked in tightly around him impeded his movements.

"Trepur?" he called to the blackness of the cave. "Trepur?"

There was no verbal answer but Daniel could sense, if not hear, something in the cave with him. "Trepur, is that you?" He used the wall behind him to push himself to his feet. He cocked his head and strained to hear. A sound to his right had him swinging in that direction. "Who's there!"

He heard a snort, like the sound a large beast would make as it readied itself to charge. Daniel wasn't sure what the sound was though, only that he heard it. He kept his hands on the wall behind him as he made his way, side-stepping, towards the opening of the cave. There was another sound, the sound of his cup being kicked over. Daniel knew he wasn't alone and knew he was in great danger.

He crouched to reach for anything that might provide him with some protection, but all he could find was a rock. Clasped in his hand, he continued to back towards the opening of the cave. He kept blinking, trying desperately to clear his vision that was still too fuzzy to see anything, especially in the dark cave. His hand soon found the opening and he started to follow the wall behind him, backing his way from the sound. But the beast traveled with him, that much Daniel was certain about. He thought he'd made some room between then when he suddenly heard the snort again, and felt the pungent breath waft over his face.

"Holy!" He cried out as he threw the rock, hoping to hit the beast. He failed. Daniel turned and was about to try to run, using the faint glimmer of hazy light between the slits of his eyes as his guide to the sun outside, when he felt the back of his robes were snared on something. He reached back to tug the robe free and felt the furry nose of the animal that had sunk its teeth into the back of the flowing clothes Daniel wore.

"TREPUR!" Daniel screamed as loudly as he could, his voice echoing on the cave around him. He turned to the animal, deciding to try to fight it as best he could

when he suddenly felt something thud his elbow as it rushed past him, then he heard snarling and grunts, grunts that distinctly sounded like Trepur! Daniel tried to feel for the fighting pair but all he could do was wait against the edge of the cave and hope that Trepur came out the victor.

Fear made him rigid as he waited for an eternity for the cries, grunts and loud snarling to abate, then there was silence. Daniel held his breath, too afraid to move. He couldn't hear a thing shift around him and wondered if either survived the battle. Suddenly a scraping noise made the hackles on the back of his neck stand up and his nails scratched the surface of the rock behind him as he curled his hands into fists, tensely waiting.

A warm, moist palm cupped his cheek. "Genkel!"

"Trepur!" Daniel's emotions spilled from him in a rush of tears and sobs. He threw his arms around the man before him, feeling the sodden clothing on Trepur's back but paying no mind to it as he buried his face in the clammy throat. "You're okay!"

"Yenstolf... I am o...kay," Trepur reassured him breathlessly, soothing Daniel's hair as he whispered in his ear.

Daniel's bristled cheek brushed along Trepur's smooth jaw as he pulled back slightly, and his lips found the alien's soft mouth clumsily. The kiss was brief but enough. Daniel pulled all the way back and held Trepur's face between both hands, wishing he could see the face of the man before him. Still too blind to see any details, Daniel was unaware of the blood he'd left on the alien's soft golden face when he'd touched him.

Puffing hard, Trepur told him again, "I am o-kay. The beast is .. icksch-"

"Dead. Tell me he's dead."

"Yes, I believe so," Trepur said, his voice weak and shaky. In a heartbeat, Daniel was aware that Trepur was slumping to the ground. Unable to stop him, Daniel fell to the ground with him, trying to cradle him in his arms to soften the blow.

"Trepur!" He cried out, his hands touching his unconscious friend everywhere to try to find the problem. "Trepur!" He called, gripping the front of the robes the alien was in to pull him up to his face. He held Trepur close as he sobbed softly against the inert body.

(End of part 5)