

**September 25th – Early morning
Jack O'Neill's house
Earth**

Jack woke with an intensely throbbing head. He rolled onto his side, hung his head over the bed and threw up on the wooden floor of his bedroom. After three chucks he grappled to sit up, his arms weakened by his ill state. He ran the back of his hand over his mouth and then crawled off the bed and made it to the bathroom just before throwing up again. Once he had no contents of his stomach left he pushed a shaky hand through the door of the shower cubicle and switched on the water. He swallowed a fist full of aspirin then turned to get into the shower. It was too hot and stung his skin, but he seemed to feel that he needed that kind of flaying, to rid himself of his grief.

The shower worked miracles. By the time he was ready to surrender it he felt more alive than he had in days. After a quick towel off he changed into light, loose fitting clothes, grabbed his keys and made his way to work.

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**September 25th – Mid Afternoon
Cave entrance
Px3-908**

With his knees bent acutely, and his bare feet partly tucked beneath him, Daniel's legs had grown numb from the stillness of the past few hours. He dare not move, however, as Trepur's head rested on his lap. Gently, Daniel caressed the bald pate, waiting until his partner would waken from his miggs.

Daniel could smell the blood now. The metallic odor offended him but he couldn't move. He had no way of getting Trepur anywhere safely. He hoped that the blood was from the beast and not from the unconscious man in his lap. During the hours of waiting Daniel noticed his legs and butt growing, at first warm then just wet, as blood seeped across the sandy floor and was absorbed through the many layers of clothing he was in. His naked toes felt sticky.

Daniel eased his head back against the sharpness of the rock behind him. He positioned himself to be the most comfortable then he closed his eyes and thought about the kiss.

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**September 25th – Late Afternoon
Briefing Room – SGC
Earth**

"You have got to be joking!" Colonel O'Neill slammed his hand onto the black table top in the Briefing Room. Sam Carter flinched on the other side from him, but Teal'c remained stoic. This was SG-1's first day back after their enforced leave and Jack had rounded up Carter and Teal'c in an effort to try to make Hammond renege on

the order to cease looking for Daniel on Px3-908. Sam did point out that in their absence it was reported that her upgraded UAVs had returned no further information, other than a few buried carcasses of the indigenous animals on that world, but it was clear that Jack wasn't ready to give up. He confronted Hammond about trying again. So far, he wasn't having much luck.

The General was red faced but he still met the glare from Jack's brown eyes. "Sit down, Colonel."

Jutting a finger angrily, Jack hissed, "Daniel might be alive out there and you've given up on him?"

Before Hammond could respond, Sam cut in with, "Sir, did the upgraded UAVs show anything?"

"As I told you, only a few carcasses of the indigenous animals of that world buried beneath the surface." Hammond saw the hope drain from her eyes. "I'm sorry."

"So sorry you let them give up on him.."

"Colonel, I had my orders.."

"You've disobeyed them before!"

"There is no hope this time!"

"There's ALWAYS hope. For crying out loud, this is Daniel!"

"SIT DOWN Colonel!"

Jack ignored him and turned to face the large window that over-looked the gate room. His clenched fists came to rest on the glass as he leaned his forehead against the smooth surface. Hammond decided to ignore his insubordinate subordinate – this time. He steeled himself to deliver the hardest news he had to. "As of thirteen-hundred hours today--"

Jack groaned and remained with his back to the room. Sam watched him closely while she listened to the words they had all been dreading.

"I must officially record Doctor Daniel Jackson's loss." The small blue eyes shifted to the fidgeting officer on his right. "He'll be registered as NBR."

****No Body Recovered*** Jack's heart plummeted at the thought. His fist clenched more tightly. Dammit, they'd been wrong before. It wasn't the first time Daniel had defied the odds and returned after being listed as KIA/NBR.

Behind him, Hammond continued, "As there is no family to inform--"

“Begging your pardon, Sir,” Sam interjected with a thick voice. “What about Nick?”

With a sharp nod, Hammond told her, “”I’m willing to let you and Teal’c go through to try to find him,” he said, shooting Jack a quick look. There was no response from the man leaning against the large glass windows.

Hammond lowered his gaze and then caught Sam’s eye. He was about to say something to her when a low voice broke the silence.

“Catherine,” Jack said, his own voice sounding rough from lack of use. Over the past six days he’d spoken little to anyone, too lost in his own thoughts and fears of losing Daniel. He moved back to his chair and leaned on the large black leather seat as the room turned their attention onto him.

“Sorry Colonel?” Hammond asked, shooting a quick glance at Sam then back at Jack.

Jack cocked his head and looked around the table at the inquiring faces.

“She was as close to family as he had. She should know.” He swallowing hard on the last word then lowered himself back into his chair, his mouth down turned as he controlled his emotions.

When Sam saw that, tears stung at the back of her eyes and she shifted in her seat, turning her face away from the somber group at the table. She tried focusing on a mark on the distant wall, collecting her thoughts, demanding herself to ‘not’ get emotional - not here! All her hard work was in vain when she felt a warm hand on her shoulder and looked up into the dark eyes of her Jaffa friend. She kicked her feet under the table, angry with herself when the first hot tear ran down her cheek. Looking again into the small dark eyes, she saw she wasn’t crying alone. When she looked across the table, she realized that Jack was also biting back his tears. Rolling her eyes once more, she dug her fingernails into the palm of her hand, trying to focus on something else other than the clamping in her throat.

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September 25th – Early evening
Cave entrance
Px3-908

Daniel had fallen asleep. If he had not he would have surely moved earlier. When he woke his body was seized by the chilling winds whipping in from the mouth of the cave. He reluctantly cupped the head in his lap in order to move it, then startled when he felt Trepur come to in his hands.

“Trepur?” His voice was sharp with hope.

“Genkel?” Trepur’s voice was rough, faint and dry but it was the best sound Daniel had heard in a long time!

"Oh God! You're... you're all right? Tell me you're all right?" He beseeched his friend. His fears abated with Trepur's soft laugh.

"I am.. all.. right, Genkel. Yenstolf.."

"How can I relax? I thought you were dead!" he said, tears of happiness trickled down his dirty face and Trepur cupped the face lovingly as he shook his head at his worried companion.

"I am sorry to have feared you."

Daniel corrected him. "You frightened me. You didn't fear me.. *I* feared the damn beast!"

Trepur realized his mistake and nodded. He squeezed the face between his hands as he said, "The beast is dead. Come. We must reggen. We are in his juices..." He helped Daniel to his feet. "The orb is almost out. We must stay together.."

"What if there is another beast out there?"

"Do not fear, Genkel. No beast travels when the orb is out."

"Why?"

"They have not the orbs for the blacktime."

"They can't see in the dark?" Daniel said, and then he suddenly laughed. "I know how they feel!"

Trepur, unsure why his friend was so happy, smiled but said nothing as he helped Daniel to the water hole.

**September 25th – Late evening
The Flight Deck Bar and Bistro
Earth**

In the Flight Deck, the local bar that members of the Stargate Command frequented when they were not on duty or at home with their families, Sam Carter pushed her glass of beer aside and slipped out from a corner booth.

As she got to her feet she dragged some folded money from her back pocket, sorted a few bills from the pile and tossed them onto the table. Turning to go, she spotted a familiar form huddled over a beer a few booths away.

"Colonel," she said quietly as she stepped up to the booth Jack was in.

He looked up, his eyes glassy. "Major."

"We wondered where you went to," She said of his disappearance from the Briefing Room that afternoon as Hammond discussed the preparations for a Memorial Service.

In his typical laconic way, Jack mumbled, "Just doing a few reports, Carter," as he raised his glass to his lips and supped his beer, staring straight ahead and not at the woman standing at the end of the booth.

"Mind if I sit down," she said, without waiting for the answer. As expected, he grumbled, "Yes," but she didn't get up again. Instead she laid her arms on the table between them, studied her fingers a moment before saying, "I miss him too, Sir."

"Who?"

Sam stared at him, her blue eyes wide.

He looked reprimanded by the silent retort and nodded as he sighed out bitterly. "I know, Carter."

"And while I appreciate these counseling sessions they've given us.."

"Oh? You've been going?" Jack sniped, clearly letting her know that he hadn't been.

Sam swallowed nervously and leaned towards her commanding officer. "I've been thinking, Daniel wouldn't give up on us, Sir.."

He rubbed his tired, stinging eyes with a thumb and forefinger. "He's gone, Carter, let's leave it at that."

"He may well be alive. The place was like honeycomb.."

"I felt him slip through my damn fingers!" he said tightly through clenched teeth. The loudness of his voice brought some attention to their booth from people around them and Jack sighed again and went back to cradling the glass in his hand. He glared across the table at her and said, in the same strained voice, but decibels lower, "He's gone.."

She blinked back the mist threatening her eyes and looked down at her hands. This was in direct contrast to his reaction back at base so she figured he'd had a chance to think about things. "Yes, Sir."

"Believe me. If there was a chance, I'd be the first one out there, with a damn teaspoon to dig that place up," he said as he stared at the beer in his hand.

"I know, Sir," she mumbled quietly, her mouth drawn tightly.

"No, Carter, I don't think you do," he muttered as he raised the beer to his lips and sucked back the rest before slamming the empty glass onto the table. She looked at him.

"I know he meant a lot to you, Colonel," she said, barely noticing Jack's low, insistent, "means" as she blinked and diverted her eyes again to confess, "He meant a lot to me, too."

He stared back at her, not bothering to correct her a second time. Friendship. She'd lost a friend. Jack had lost much more than that! He didn't blame her in her innocence though. How could she know how he felt for Daniel? How sure was he of how he felt.. until now?

He growled and arched his body to retrieve some money from a front pocket. She watched him a moment then realized he was getting ready to leave. She pressed her hands onto the table and was about to make an excuse and go when he said to her, "Want to come back to my place?"

She looked at him a long moment then nodded. "I'd like that. Thanks."

As he stumbled from the booth Jack said, "Good. You drive. I've been here all damn afternoon."

"What about your car, Sir?"

Jack shook his head. "Didn't come in one. Knew.. better.." He belched and then pulled a face as if the contents of his stomach accompanied the belch. Sam struggled with him to her car outside, wondering if she was going to have the physical strength to get the large man home.

**September 25th – Late Evening
Water hole
Px3-908**

Trepur gathered up the leaves that he had been using as bedding for the past months and carried them to the water hole. He placed them in small piles at intervals along the edge of the stream and used a flint-like stone to start a fire.

"With the fire to protect us, no beast will come."

Daniel was in the middle of pulling his robes off over his head when he paused on Trepur's last comment. "I thought you said no beast came out at night."

Trepur smiled at the worry in his friend's voice and he straightened up and stepped towards him, assisting Daniel with removing the robe altogether. He tossed it aside, away from the flames, but with the blood on it it was impossible for Daniel to

wear them again before they could be cleaned at the water hole.

“Do not fear, Genkel,” Trepur said, putting what might have been a reassuring hand on to Daniel’s shoulder.

But the blind man tilted his head and rubbed his cheek against the hand as he said, “You’ll take care if me.”

Trepur’s hand moved to palm Daniel’s rough cheek. “I will guard you as though you were the Lord of the House.”

Daniel smiled as warmth seeped through his naked body, and tingled in his groin. He realized he had to move, or fear embarrassing himself. “In that case,” he said, injecting humor into his tone to ease his own arousal, “Your Lord wants you to help him bathe off the juices of the beast... please.”

Trepur grinned as he stepped back. In the light of the fires Daniel could barely make out the image of the man pulling his robes off over his head and tossing them aside. Daniel was surprised that Trepur’s naked body was so predominant despite his limited sight. The body seemed to glow in the firelight and as Trepur turned to hold his hand out to Daniel the silhouette showed a well formed shape.

The water was cold. Daniel shivered and Trepur found the raised flesh interesting.

“Genkel?” he said as he ran fingertips over Daniel’s goose fleshed chest.

“I’m cold,” Daniel stammered as he hugged his own body tightly.

“Cold?”

“Cold.. as in.. cold..” Daniel said, unsure how to explain the concept of cold as his body shivered uncontrollably. Trepur moved closer.

He cupped water in his hands and washed it over Daniel’s shoulders. “We should reggen and return to the cave. The darktime is no place to be. I will build a fire when we return.”

“Yes,” Daniel said, shivering still as he allowed his friend to wash away the smears of blood from his body. “I think that is exactly what I need, a fire... fire means.. heat.. warmth... Cold is... Cold is the opposite of that..”

“Opp-o-cit?”

Daniel laughed gently in mild frustration. “Let’s just bathe and get back to the fire.”

“Your garbs are ickschtog. The beast’s juices are upon them. I will need to reggen them until the orb comes back.”

“What will I wear?” Daniel asked, as he enjoyed the feeling of Trepur’s fingers massaging his skull to wash his hair. As he moved in the water he felt the warmth of the body behind him and craved for the heat.

“You have the garbs of your House. I reggen them. They await.”

“Oh,” Daniel said, as if forgetting that he’d ever been anywhere else other than here with Trepur all of his life.

“Come, Genkel, we must leave..” Trepur helped his friend to the edge of the waterhole and out of it. “Until we return to the cave you will wear this,” he said, passing to Daniel a thin piece of clothing.

“What is this?”

“Part of my garb. I have some as well. It is not enough for us, but it will do until the cave. Then I will leave these garbs out in the orb.”

Both men wore a part of the same outfit that Trepur had been wearing for days. Instead of the odor of his host upsetting Daniel, he found comfort in being shrouded in Trepur’s smell. He’d realized how much his new friend had come to mean to him and the unplanned kiss earlier proved to Daniel that he had growing feelings for Trepur. He wasn’t sure how Trepur felt though. He couldn’t recall the kiss too clearly.

As they walked back towards the cave, Trepur leading without a flame to light the way, his sure footing a comfort to the blind man, Daniel ventured onto the topic of the kiss. “Earlier.. when you were hurt by the beast..”

“I was not .. hurt. I am not sure what caused me to migg – perhaps it was the heat of the orb, it grows fiercer each cycle. Soon I will not be able to yuk, so we will need to gather food to prepare...”

“How long is it too hot to go out?”

“I knew it to be a good many cycles, at least cumqud cycles ...”

Daniel knew that word from a previous conversation they’d had. It meant twenty. Twenty days of heat too severe to go out in. Daniel wondered what they were meant to do trapped in the cave for twenty days. He returned his thoughts to the conversation at hand. “You may be right. Yukking in heat then the fight with the beast must have exhausted you..”

“Egg-sauce-ted?”

“Tired you out. Made you weary. You needed to migg to hum-coff.”

“I am not kustof..”

“No, no... I know you weren’t hurt..” Daniel said, wishing he knew the right words to use in this conversation. They’d drifted a long way from the conversation about the kiss, which Daniel wanted to talk about more.

Feelings of frustration bubbled within Daniel as he tried to find the best way to steer this conversation back onto the kiss. Soon he realized they were back at their cave and Trepur released his hand and moved away. The cave was black. Even without his poor eyesight Daniel was sure he wouldn’t be able to see a thing in there. He stepped back until he felt the wall with his extended hand then he sunk slowly to his bottom, keeping his feet tucked against him so that Trepur, who was moving comfortably around the cave, didn’t trip on him.

Daniel heard the sound of striking then a sudden flash of light caught his attention. He could now make out the sight of Trepur stoking the fire; the warm glow of the orange light illuminated the alien’s face so that it took on an orange hue in Daniel’s eyes. He still could not make out definitive shapes, just blobs of colors and was desperate to see again, so that he could look upon the face of the man he’d started to come to care so much about.

“Trepur..”

“Yes, Genkel?” came the soft reply from the other side of the cave. Daniel raised his hand and soon felt Trepur take it. Lowering their joined hands Daniel made Trepur sit beside him.

“I want to talk..”

“I must remove the beast or it will become plektart by next cycle.” Daniel sighed and nodded, realizing that Trepur was right. “We can .. talk.. when I am done,” Trepur promised as he got to his feet and made his way towards the dead beast in the mouth of their cave.

Daniel listened to the sound of Trepur for a while then he suddenly woke, unaware he’d fallen asleep.

“Genkel, you should not miggs that way. Come..” Strong hands and arms guided Daniel from where he leaned back against the cold rocky cave wall, and into the warm lap of his friend. Soon more warmth covered him as Trepur pulled a skin over Daniel’s body. Gentle caresses lulled the blind man back to sleep, and back to the dream of the handsome face, with the quirky smile.

<End of part 6>