

PART 7

September 28th – Late morning
Colonel Jack O'Neill's house
Earth

The front door of Jack's house was large and thick. Still he heard the soft knock against it and went to answer it.

"I wasn't sure you were home," Janet said to the disheveled man before her.

"First clue might have been my honking big truck in the drive."

Janet ignored the tone and entered the house, uninvited by the man that now walked off down the hall way again. She turned and

closed the door, blocking out the autumn day masquerading itself with beautiful spring temperature. Jack's house felt cold in

comparison to the world outside and Janet couldn't help but wonder if that was more to do with his grief than the temperature of

the house itself.

Jack soon returned, wiping his hands on a small towel. He dropped it over the back of a dining chair as he asked, "What can I do

for you, Doc?"

"You haven't answered your pages."

Cocking his head, Jack said, "I'm on leave – apparently. Two days this time, I believe."

"What if it had been an emergency on the base?"

Derisively Jack snorted as he shook his disheveled head. "I know the codes, Doc. What do you want?"

She eyed him skeptically. "I'm sure you know why I'm here."

Snarkily, he said, "Collecting for the Doctor's Ball this year? Sorry, fresh out of cash at the moment-" He patted his hip.

Janet rolled her eyes. "Jack, don't do this. We're friends."

The colonel's mouth turned down in a disbelieving smile. "You're a Major in the US Air Force and I'm a Colonel. We work together.

That makes us colleagues, not friends.”

“You’re practically a father to Cassie, Jack! How can you say that?”

The older man shook his head as he turned away. He seemed to gather himself before turning back towards the diminutive

woman. “I’m sorry..”

“You’re going through a bad time, I understand,” she said in her best compassionate voice. “A member of your team has gone

missing and you feel responsible.” He rolled his eyes but she pressed on. “However, missing counseling sessions...”

“Oh, here we go!” He threw his hands in the air and paced.

“Jack! Part of your psychological assessment rests on you passing certain tests following the loss of a member of your team. You

know that. I know you know that!”

He shrugged as he shook his head. He couldn’t look any less interested.

She gave a hearty sigh then said, “Given your recent behavior..” Their eyes met. Hammond had obviously allowed Jack his

tantrum but had ordered the Doctor to clear him before duty. As if reading his mind, Janet said, “I can’t clear you fit for duty unless

Doctor MacKenzie tells me your psych tests are okay.”

Rubbing his thumb and fingers into his eyes, Jack growled then snapped, “Dammit, Janet, I don’t care, okay!” His face was flushed

and he seemed to tower over the tiny woman. They were caught in a moment in time, him looming over her, his anger and

frustration etched deeply in the lines of his face. Suddenly he stepped back, shook his head and muttered, “I... just ... don’t care!”

Frasier watched him walk away from her then heard the bedroom door slam shut. She inhaled a deep breath to calm her emotions

before she shook herself out of her sad state and left the house, determined to come back later when Jack was less upset.

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September 28th – mid Afternoon
Cave
Px3-908

Daniel woke with a start, his mind filled with the face of the beast and the memory of hands desperately reaching for him. Though

he never saw the beast, his imagination certainly made up for it. His heart hammered against his ribs as he tried to control his

breathing.

“Genkel!” Trepur scuffled to the side of his distressed friend. “Genkel, what is wrong?”

“It’s.. a nightmare,” Daniel said, his voice hoarse as he sucked in air to fill his lungs.

“Night mare?”

Rambling, Daniel stammered, “Bad dream... I dreamt the beast got me..”

“The beast is ickschtog.”

“Yes, I know!” He said harshly then screwed his face up as he realized how hard he was being on Trepur. “I .. just.. dreamt that it

was after me, and I was falling and someone was trying to reach for me but they couldn’t and.....”

Trepur patted the distressed man to soothe him. “You are safe. Yenstolf, Genkel.” He caressed Daniel’s face gently.

Shakily, Daniel nodded slightly. “I’ll try to relax,” he agreed as he rubbed his fingers into his eyes, feeling, for the first time, no pain

when he did so. He tried to focus on the cave but it was dark and he wasn’t sure if his eyes were bad again, or if the fire had gone

out. “Trepur, is there a fire?” He waved his hand towards the middle of the cave.

“There is not. Do you wish me to..?”

“No, no, it’s okay,” Daniel said softly then reached his hand out to locate his friend. Trepur quickly took hold of the searching hand

and held it firmly.

"I am here. Yerstolf. No beast will harm you."

Daniel swallowed and settled back amongst the animal skins. Trepur guided his head into his lap and caressed the dark golden

hair as he said, "I will watch over you. Yerstolf." He continued to caress Daniel until the deeper breathing indicated that the

stranger had fallen asleep. Brushing his thumb down the spongy sideburns, Trepur smiled down at the peaceful face as he

whispered softly, "My Genkel."

**September 29th – Early Morning
SGC
Earth**

As the gate whirled open Jack adjusted his helmet. He looked at Carter beside him, who returned a hopeful smile. Above them, in

the Briefing Room Hammond and Doctor Frasier waited by the window and watched the three remaining members of SG-1 prepare

to step through to Px3-908.

"Just remind me again-" Hammond said from the corner of his mouth to the woman beside him.

Frasier smiled. "This is a good idea, General. Colonel O'Neill is determined that Daniel is out there and he won't rest properly until

he is allowed to see the.. truth for himself ..."

Hammond looked at her. Even she couldn't bring herself to say that Daniel was truly gone. He nodded sharply and returned his

gaze on the shimmering vortex just as Jack stepped through it. Janet flinched.

"That's certainly going to hurt on the other side," she said, speaking of Jack's ribs.

"Well, so long as it heals his other ailments," Hammond said as he turned from the room and went back to his office. Frasier looked

down as the wormhole disengaged, raised her brows and sighed as if she wasn't sure that this would heal Jack of his insistence

that his friend was still alive on Px3-908.

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September 29th – Early Morning
Sandy Plains
Px3-908

As soon as the team stepped through the gate they were amazed at the intensity of the heat.

“Holy..” Sam said, brushing her sleeve across her forehead after only taking a few steps.

“It would appear that the sun here had grown hotter..” Teal said.

“Actually, it’s not really hotter, per se,” Sam started to explain, “It’s just that the trajectory that it’s orbiting this planet on brings it

closer to the surface...” She winced as she looked up at the bright orange ball of flame in the sky. “Very close..”

Jack hadn’t spoken, and still didn’t as he stepped away from the dais and onto the scorching sand. He could feel the heat rise up

through the soles of his boots but ignored it as he marched determinedly towards the spot that Daniel had disappeared into. Carter

and Teal’s exchanged glances before taking off after the colonel.

By the time the trio reached the ridge that had been the last place Daniel had stood on all three were soaked in perspiration. Only a

part of the equipment that had been damaged during the search for Daniel protruded through a mound of sand, indicating that

more sand had fallen on that spot within the past eleven days.

“I hate to say it, Sir,” Sam said, breathless from the dry heat. “But if Daniel did survive the falls, it’s highly unlikely he’s been able to

sustain himself in this heat for too long.”

The colonel glared at her silently before marching up over the crest of the next dune. Sam rolled her eyes, aware she’d said the

wrong thing then she followed Jack over the dune.

The three of them stood on top of a high sand dune and could see the sandy plain

stretch out before them for miles. There seemed

to be nothing for miles other than dunes that grew larger in the distance. Teal'c turned to the man beside him. "As much as I wish it

were not so, O'Neill, I do believe Daniel Jackson is gone."

Jack blinked but his gaze didn't stir from the horizon. After a moment he said, "You said this world was like honeycomb, didn't you

Carter?"

"Yes, Sir," she said, swiping sweat from her brow again.

"That means caves, doesn't it?" Jack asked, flatly.

Carter sensed she knew where this was going. "Yes, Sir," she said, her mouth turned down as she didn't like to give the colonel

false hope. "But I can't see any caves, can you?"

Jack pulled some binoculars from his pack and scoured the horizon. "What if we're standing on one, right now?" he asked. She

turned her mouth down again as she shook her head and shrugged. "Or what if, over the next horizon, we discover a mouth to

one?"

Again Carter gave him no hope. "Then again, maybe all that's over that crest is more sand."

Jack eyed her up and down for a moment then put his binoculars away. He strode off towards the next sand dune, higher than the

one they were already on. Carter sighed in exasperation.

Stepping in beside her, Teal'c said, "He will never give up on Daniel Jackson."

Sam watched the diminishing body. "I'd say he's got a bit of a guilt trip happening at the moment."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning they'd had a massive fight the morning before the mission. Daniel told me. He wouldn't say what the cause was-" she

paused a moment before twisting to look at the man beside her. "Did you notice

how strained they were together?”

Teal’c arched his brow. “I did not.”

Sam made a small sound in the back of her throat then said, “Well, I know he and Daniel had been fighting more, especially since the mission to P4x-901.”

Teal’c arched his brow. That was three missions ago, almost two weeks before Daniel’s disappearance. “And you do not know the cause, MajorCarter?”

“No,” she said, watching as Jack struggled up the side of the massive dune, falling back more than making progress. Having one

arm bandaged up was impairing his ability to climb the slippery slope. “But I’d lay dollars to donuts that it’s what’s making this too

hard to accept for the colonel.”

“Do you believe DanielJackson is dead?” Teal’c asked solemnly.

Carter winced. “It’s been eleven days, Teal’c. In this heat...?” she raised her wet face towards the sun. She didn’t have to point out

that he had no food and limited water.

Teal’c bowed his head sadly. “As do I.”

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September 29th – Early Morning
Waterhole
Px3-908

Daniel splashed water at his good friend as they frolicked in the waterhole together.

“Are your orbs hum-coffed?” Trepur asked, watching as Daniel stopped and carefully bathed his eyes with the fresh water.

“They’re certainly better,” the young man said, blinking as he raised his face again. He smiled. “I can almost see you.”

“It will be a time of celebrating when your orbs are clear once more.”

“Yeah-” Daniel said as he reached for his friend. Trepur immediately took his hand

in his and pulled the human through the water

with his strong arm. They laughed as their bodies butted together. "Ouch," Daniel grunted through a smile.

"When your orbs are clear I will take to yukking with me," the alien announced, as if it was some kind of treat to look forward to.

"Oh, I can't wait for that," Daniel mused, then laughed as Trepur's fingers tickled his cool skin. "But how will I live in the shadow of

the yukking champion?"

Trepur laughed. "You think I do not miklaf your kemlah.."

Through a grin, Daniel said, "Oh I think you understand my language.. and teasing.. perfectly!"

"*Yes*, Genkel!" Trepur said before scooping up water into his hands and throwing it into Daniel's face. The young man spluttered

as he fell back into the pool, creating a wave to wash over Trepur and the side of the waterhole, then he laughed heartily as he

struggled to his feet, determined to douse Trepur this time.

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September 29th – Mid morning
Sandy Plains
Px3-908

Carter stepped up beside the colonel, who'd failed to climb the last dune and was a breathless heap at the base of it, his booted feet

sunk deep into the shifting sand. She squatted and passed him her water bottle. He took it without words, downed a large

mouthful then struggled to his feet, pushing off her attempt to assist him.

"Carter," he said, taking one last look at the massive sheer dune that had beaten him. "Dial us up."

Sam nodded, saddened to leave the place once again and the final hope of finding Daniel alive, but grateful to be getting out of the

burning sun.

Teal'c waited for Jack to catch up before falling into step beside him. "I am sorry,

O'Neill," was all the Jaffa said.

The gray head bobbed solemnly. "Yeah, me too, buddy," he said, turning as he walked to look back at the dune that had defeated

him. His eyes moved to the man beside him. "It doesn't seem real."

"It is, indeed, real, O'Neill. Daniel Jackson perished on this world eleven days ago."

Jack looked deeply into the dark eyes. He hoped Daniel had perished immediately. His dreams showed him dying a slow, painful

death while calling out to him to help him. After a moment Jack gave another solemn nod then turned all the way around again and

strode towards the Stargate, many miles from where they were.

On the other side of the sheer dune, way way down in a valley of shifted sand, two tiny figures moved across the scorching earth

on their way to their hidden cave, miles beneath the very spot Jack had just been standing on.

<End of Part 7>