

# THE GETTING OF WISDOM

## A SLASH STORY BY BIBLIO



**Title:** The Getting Of Wisdom  
**Author:** Biblio  
**Rating:** NC-17  
**Category:** Humour. Romance.  
**Season/Spoilers:** Season 8: Threads, Moebius. Season 9: minor for Avalon.  
**Synopsis:** Daniel gets a swim coach and Jack gets hit by a big, honkin' clue bus steered by one *very* pissed Jaffa.  
**Warnings:** Daniel takes his swim coach \*home\*...  
**Notes:** Gracious thanks to Mellendramatic for beta reading.  
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Jack had time to think curiosity killed before his brain exploded, his heart slammed out of his throat and he wheezed what felt like his last breath. He should haul ass out of here, he absolutely should, but dead men don't walk.

Of course, being dead was only the start of his problems. He was also all kinds of horrified.

His eyes were pinned to a narrow, slanting gap in crisp white Venetian blinds at a familiar window. Even if he was alive, he couldn't have moved. He couldn't tear himself from the inconceivable sight of powerful muscles flexing in a rhythmically pumping ass. A hard, sculpted, supermodel of an ass.

Jack didn't know the ass but he knew the hands urging it harder, faster. He knew the long legs lifting to wrap tight around a strong, labouring back. He knew the flushed, gorgeous face of the man beneath, the arching throat and straining shoulders.

Daniel was having sex. He was having hot, passionate, *magnificent* sex with a man who was very obviously in to him, a man Jack didn't know at all, and he was loving every pounding, screaming second.

"That should be me," Jack moaned, dying again.



"O'Neill?" Teal'c enquired cautiously. "Are you unwell?"

He was probably fooled into thinking this by the way Jack was slumped face down and motionless on his dining table.

"Nah. Just dead."

The silence of the Jaffa suggested someone's sense of irony needed adjustment.

"Don't worry," Jack mumbled vague reassurance into the table. "I'm getting the hang of it now."

"Where may I procure alcohol for you?" Teal'c asked grimly.

"Kinsey drank me out of the good stuff and I finished the crap already." Jack rolled an empty bottle in the direction all the noise was coming from.

"I see your conversation with Daniel Jackson did not go well." A chair scraped back and creaked under a body with about the same granite mass as Pike's Peak.

"Didn't go at all."

"Were you not able to discuss with Daniel Jackson the possibility of your professional

advancement and relocation to Washington in order to once again take the place of General Hammond?"

"You know, you're even more pompous and pedantic than Daniel is," Jack complained pettishly.

"Did you not see Daniel Jackson?"

"Oh, I saw him." Even Jack could hear the hysteria bubbling. He sounded like he could cry him a river. "I got a real eyeful, if you catch my drift."

"I do not."

"Being dead won't stop me kicking your ass," Jack threatened, coming back from the dead long enough to flip Teal'c the bird.

"On the contrary," Teal'c argued politely. "It might improve your chances."

"Daniel," Jack enunciated with icy, incredulous precision, "was not alone. He was with someone."

"I believe that is the accepted definition of not alone."

"*With* someone!" Jack hollered at his table. "As in, *with* them!"

"I believe we have established that Daniel Jackson was not alone."

"Daniel Jackson was not alone in the biblical sense," Jack said bitterly.

"He was in the presence of God?"

Jack's head snapped up. "He was having sex!"

Teal'c's poker face didn't flicker, the enigmatic bastard. "Then he was in the presence of Allan Lanfear," he divulged with Buddha-like serenity.

"Whaa?" Jack bleated as his table pitched, rolled and tried to finish off what little was left of his stinking corpse.

"Dr. Allan Lanfear," Teal'c explained obligingly. "He is a visiting instructor at the United States Air Force Academy."

"Whaa?"

"I believe it is through your offices that Daniel Jackson met Dr. Lanfear," Teal'c said thoughtfully.

"I have a gun." The thought of doing violence was very comforting. "At this point, I'm willing to use it on either one of us."

"Daniel Jackson was consigned to the expert tutelage of Dr. Lanfear in order to improve his tactical effectiveness and survival skills in marine combat situations."

This almost made a hideous kind of sense. The last fizzing neurons of Jack's ballistic brain fired over a sea of paperwork. "He's the swim coach?" he hazarded, reviving as he formulated the threat. "This guy Lanfear? He's Daniel's swim coach?"

Teal'c smiled benignly.

"Walter," Jack whispered hoarsely, selecting his first target. "I'm going to kill *Walter*."



Jack was prostrate on his couch, beyond help or consolation.

Not that Teal'c was offering. It was becoming increasingly apparent he thought Jack's emotional wounds were not only self-inflicted, but he was richly deserving of everything he got.

"You know this guy!" Jack accused, in some scary, seething state of mind beyond outrage. "I tell you Daniel is having sex, you tell me the sonovabitch's name."

"I supervised a number of the early training sessions conducted by Dr. Lanfear," Teal'c said placidly. "I was pleased to approve his training methods and to observe for myself how quickly he was able to gain Daniel Jackson's trust."

"And I'm guessing you didn't have a problem with him using that trust to get in Daniel's Speedos," Jack said sarcastically.

"Daniel Jackson has confided in me his great liking for Dr. Lanfear," Teal'c replied repressively, not getting drawn into the much more important issue of who had access to Daniel's Speedos.

"Just because Daniel likes someone, that doesn't mean you let him sleep with them," Jack objected angrily. "Daniel likes practically everyone. For reasons that escape me at present, he even likes you."

"Dr. Lanfear likes me also," Teal'c informed Jack with some satisfaction. "He was in fact grateful for the concern I expressed over Daniel Jackson's wellbeing."

"You went to kill him, right?" Jack noted with grudging professional interest. "Right after Daniel got done with confiding the whole liking thing."

"Dr. Lanfear believed so," Teal'c admitted smugly.

"Why'd you let him live?" Jack sighed. "It just makes more work for me."

"He was able to convince me of the honesty of his intentions towards my friend."

Thinking about that supermodel ass in full pumpin' action, Jack could only gape at Teal'c's definition of honest.

"He wished to show Daniel Jackson a good time," Teal'c elaborated.

"I may be forced to kill you right after I kill the competition," Jack snarled, goaded beyond endurance.

Teal'c just looked at him.

"I didn't mean that the way it sounded," Jack muttered uncomfortably, avoiding his eyes.

"Then what did you mean?"

"Oh, you know what I mean," Jack said impatiently. "I'm having the same reaction you had when you heard Daniel was gettin' jiggy with it. The only difference is *I* intend to follow through."

"It is not your concern, O'Neill."

"It's *Daniel!*" Jack sat up to glare at him, furious his homey didn't have his back while some lecher was getting every inch of Daniel.

"And are you not planning to leave him behind when you accept your promotion to head of Homeworld Security?"

"No! Yes!" Jack didn't know. He hadn't exactly thought it through. Except – okay. Okay. He'd figured Daniel would think the Smithsonian was really cool. He cranked up the glare in Teal'c's direction. "Oh, leave me alone," he said sullenly.

Teal'c stood up, his expression stony. "You must speak with Daniel Jackson," he ordered implacably.



"Hi."

The pleasant voice right by his ear made Jack jump a mile, banging his knee painfully off the steering wheel. He swung around in his seat to find a chiselled, perspiring hunk in very short shorts and running shoes resting against the side of his truck, eyeing his binoculars.

"You must be Jack," the hunk said with amused certainty as Jack got out of the truck and loomed menacingly at him. "I'm Allan, in case you don't have the house wired for sound yet." Allan squinted along the street towards Daniel's pristine front yard. "Good spot for stalking," he approved. "Daniel said you were a pro."

Since the pro in question just got caught by a move that would've embarrassed him in junior high checking out chicks, he wasn't going near that assessment.

"You've got your work cut out for you, Jack," Allan informed him critically. "You're going to need my help."

"Excuse me?" That sound they both heard was Jack's jaw hitting the floor.

"With Daniel." Allan loped around the front of the truck and bounded in the passenger side.

"I'm armed, you know," Jack confided chattily, more than willing to show as well as tell.

"And you're dangerous either way," Allan commented knowledgeably. "Better looking than I imagined too. The hair...that silver fox thing really works for you." His smile was a dazzling Colgate commercial. "I'm gay, you know."

Having seen him in action sliding all over Daniel, Jack barely suppressed a shudder. "That's not in question."

"Must be the only thing that isn't. You're buried so deep in the closet you can't even see the light of day."

"I'm not gay!"

"Then how come you're in love with Daniel?" Allan fastened his seatbelt and looked expectant. "You going to buy me coffee or what? I prefer to kick your ass verbally but I'm willing to take it out into the street."

"A minute ago you were helping me."

"I plan to. I have to believe you're not the consummate asshole you appear to be or Daniel wouldn't think the world of you the way he does."

"He does?"

"I wouldn't worry about it. He's used to disappointment."

"Why *are* you helping me?"

"Because I don't want Daniel fucking off to god knows where looking for the lost city of Atlantis," Allan said flatly.

"He *told* you that?" Jack demanded, wondering if the world was ever going to firm up under his feet again.

"Give us both some credit," Allan replied coldly. "Daniel doesn't talk and I don't ask. He reads, though. He reads obsessively. Lately, he likes to read curled up on the couch with me. I see what he reads and I have a PhD in being a jock."

Jack climbed back into the truck and started it.

Allan smiled and patted Jack's thigh interestedly. "Don't sweat it," he advised. "Teal'c liked me too."

"I don't like you," Jack sniffed. "I just haven't killed you yet."

"Take me to Panera Bread," Allan instructed. "Daniel likes those cinnamon things." He glanced across at Jack's hands, clenched on the steering wheel. "You hate when I talk about him," he observed with satisfaction. "You hate that I know him as much as you hate me sleeping with him."

Jack ground his teeth and fumed for a couple of miles.

"I'm not so sure he knows you at all," Allan said slowly, watching Jack drive. "He's heard some stuff about you from someone he trusts and cares for. Someone he believed."

"What stuff?"

"Inside." Allan nodded towards the near empty parking lot of Panera Bread and kept Jack seething until they were tucked away in a corner with steaming coffee and French toast bagels. "I mentioned liking guys, right? For me, the happy ending is guy gets guy."

"I'll be more than happy to get you if you don't spit it out," Jack ground out.

"Just trying to establish my credentials." Allan shrugged carelessly. "I'm not into girls. I don't hate them, but they don't do anything for me."

"So help me!"

"I don't like that Froot Loop Samantha Carter. I think she's bad news."

"Carter?"

"Colonel National Treasure herself. Isn't that what you call her?"

"I..." Jack had called her that one time. He couldn't remember when or why, only that he had.

"Don't get me wrong, Jack. I don't think the woman is evil. I just think she's a self-centred, arrogant bitch who believes with all her heart she's the good guy. She also believes you dumped your girlfriend to promise undying love to her."

"My...girlfriend." There was another tectonic shift under Jack's Nikes.

"The hot chick from the CIA."

"You know a helluva lot for a swim coach," Jack said evenly.

"I had lunch with her," Allan explained guilelessly as he dug into his bagel. "With her and Daniel. She seemed almost as interested in him as he was in her. She was real discreet but she didn't need to say a whole helluva lot, you know? It's obvious to everyone but Daniel - and Carter - you have issues, General."

"One big one in particular." Jack recalled the petty detail of getting dumped with painful clarity.

"If you're going to use some chick as a beard, try to let her know that going in, okay?" Allan advised disapprovingly.

"That's not what happened."

"Next you'll be telling me you didn't promise you'd always be there for Sammie Dearest."

"I didn't. At least, I did, but I didn't mean it like that." Her father was dying!

"You meant as a friend," Allan agreed understandingly. "A friend she has to respect, obey and call sir."

"Exactly."

"I think what Carter heard was more like love, honour and obey." Allan smiled unpleasantly at Jack's pain. "You really screwed the pooch on that one. It didn't occur to you at any time to just pony up and *deal* with her delusions?"

"Why am I listening to you?"

"Because I have Daniel and you want him," Allan replied fluently. "And because you know I'm the only one who can help you get him back."

Being dead would've come in handy right about now, because Jack sure as hell wasn't ready to hear this laid out for him so bluntly. "Carter's not so bad as you make out," he said, and didn't know why. "She's not."

"Maybe not, Jack. Maybe not. But because I'm not the one who's been signing off on her performance evaluations and promoting her ass for the past eight years, because I only care about Daniel, I have the luxury of being biased. And I think she only sees the world in how it affects her." Allan looked curiously at Jack. "Are you really so blind you can't see that when you fart, Carter hears violins?"

A muffled snort made them look up. Stifling giggles, a youthful employee tremulously wiped down a nearby table. "I love that!" she admitted with a broad, delighted grin as she piled trash on a tray and headed on to her next table. "That's the best description of a bunny boiler I ever heard."

Jack put his head in his hands.

"I think it was right around the time Daniel heard about the girlfriend *and* the undying love thing that he finally got the message, gave up on you and went to bed with me," Allan relentlessly twisted the knife. "Personally, I have to thank you for that."

"Does he know about the job offer?"

"The exciting move to D.C.?"

Jack groaned.

"The future Mrs. General O'Neill filled him in. That's why she's shipping out with Cassandra to some top secret testing facility in the desert, out of your chain of command. Probably picking out china patterns right now."

"I wish I was dead."

"Piss off that big guy Teal'c any more than you have, and your prayers will likely be answered. He lays the blame square at your door for Daniel wanting to run off and lick his wounds some place out back of beyond."

"I'm not too bright, am I?" Jack said slowly.

"Is that a rhetorical question?"

"You keep telling me what's really going on here, I keep letting it slip by."

"Oh, you mean the Daniel being madly in love with you and totally committed to you until you finally broke his heart thing?"

"Who are you?" Jack asked incredulously. "And just what is Daniel to you?"

"I'm Daniel's friend. I look out for him. All you need to know about me is that I'm the guy who showed him how to have a good time. And I mean that literally. Fun used to just be a word he could spell."

"I tried."

"Not hard enough," Allan retorted, unmoved. "Now you tell me something, General." This didn't sound like an invitation. "What's it going to take to get you out of that closet you're buried alive in?"



Jack had a gun. He was planning to take Walter, Carter and Teal'c with him. Daniel got to live just because and Lanfear – well, he was still undecided about Allan Lanfear. Apart from the fact his pecs were so pumped and perfect that bullets would probably bounce right off, Jack could see for himself how good he was with Daniel.

Currently, Jack was hiding out in plain sight in a seat poolside, watching Allan put his hands on Daniel Jackson in a way Jack had never dared to for all manner of complicated reasons. He saw a good teacher; he saw Daniel trusted the guy.

It annoyed him intensely to admit it, but he was pretty sure he did too.

This was all as Lanfear had said. No hearts and flowers, no lifelong commitment or red-hot romance. Just two guys looking amazing in Speedos who'd become friends and had taken that friendship into bed and the Speedos off without regrets or expectations.

Lanfear wasn't permanent staff at the Academy. Daniel had known that going in. Nothing more had been demanded of him than he let down his walls a little and have a good time.

Jack could have taken Daniel to bed any time these past years. Anything he'd had to say, Daniel would've listened. Now Daniel had not only given up on the idea of Jack doing anything for him, he was leaving him, heading out to another galaxy impossibly out of Jack's reach.

There was no one to blame for this but Jack. He'd cut all the ties, not Daniel. He couldn't even argue Daniel was wrong to have hopes of him, because he'd gone out of his way to

be the man Daniel turned to, he'd worked for that hard-won trust and admiration, for affection. He'd wanted Daniel to love him because of all the good it did him.

Of course, he never really thought where all that love might lead Daniel or how deep you could hurt a difficult man who trusted you.

He'd led Daniel on as much as he'd led Carter on. Probably the only difference between the two of them was Daniel was used to disappointment. Eventually, Jack kicked him enough times he stayed down while Carter was as sure she'd get Jack as she'd got every other thing she wanted in life. The world was at her feet and Jack O'Neill helped put it there.

So here he was. Bottom of the ninth and Daniel was pitching for the other team. Jack had no choice but to come up swinging.



When Jack walked into Daniel's office, he found him sorting through books. It wasn't hard to figure out he was planning what to take. Daedalus was preparing for her return trip to the Pegasus Galaxy and Daniel couldn't stand to be left behind again, not for a fourth time. Packing was his statement of intent: he might not make Atlantis this trip, but he *would* make it.

"Jack," Daniel acknowledged with a pleasant, distracted smile.

"Packing for Atlantis?" Jack enquired equally pleasantly, coming over to lean against the lab bench.

"Here to talk me out of it?" Daniel picked up the books he'd discarded and turned around to put them back on the shelves.

"Here to tell you I'm thinking of coming along," Jack announced with impressive casualness. Hey, he wasn't here to make the Jaffa happy. He had his own nuts in the vice.

Daniel needed to sit down. Hard. The chair was just a fortuitous coincidence. He sat with his arms full of books, gaping feebly up at Jack. Every now and again his lips would start to move, but nothing came out.

Guiltily, Jack got him a glass of water and took his books from him. When he'd stuffed them neatly in the gap on the shelf, he dusted off his hands and hovered in what he hoped came off as a supportive fashion. As opposed to shitting himself, which was actually the case.

"Whaa?" Daniel bleated eventually.

Jack patted him gently on the shoulder. He felt about the same way.

"It's where you belong," he pointed out in a low, embarrassed tone. "God knows you've worked for it. So, maybe you should have it. Finally."

"I should?" Daniel blinked, shook all over like a damp dog and tried to pull himself together. "What happened to over your dead body?"

This would no doubt be arranged as soon as Teal'c heard the glad tidings of Jack's joy.

"I'm more worried about your dead body," he said cheerily. "That's why I'm shipping out with you. Someone has to keep an eye on you."

"But Dr. Weir is in charge of the Atlantis project," Daniel objected, staunchly hanging on to his defensiveness. "It's a civilian scientific mission and she's the one who made it happen."

"Not any more," Jack contradicted brutally. "Everything changed when we learned about the enemies they've made us out there. Weir isn't equipped to fight a war. If she was, we wouldn't have the Wraith knocking on Atlantis' door."

"You're planning to take command?"

"It's where all the action is. And you know me," Jack added jokingly. "Always looking to get some action."

Daniel looked at him very oddly.

Jack cleared his throat and decided everyone would be safer if he went around to the other side of the lab bench.

"Seriously, Daniel."

Daniel visibly braced himself for the other shoe to drop.

Jack hurried on. "What more is there for me to do here? We've taken out the Goa'uld, Anubis, the super soldiers *and* the Replicators. Now the Asgard have a chance to rebuild and pay back some of what they owe us by mopping up the last few no-name, low on the totem snakes."

"There's no one left to fight."

"Except you," Jack joked.

Daniel closed his eyes and tilted his head, trying to think about all of this. It was possible Jack was scaring him.

"Come on, Daniel," Jack urged. "Who's better suited to Atlantis than us? You keep telling me no one knows more about the Ancients than you do and no one has more experience with making their technology work than I do."

"Major Sheppard might disagree with that."

"Major Sheppard can bite me," Jack said dismissively. "I never intended for him to wind up in command out there. His days of hot-dogging it through the gate are numbered either way. If I don't take on Atlantis and the Wraith, then Steven Caldwell and Daedalus will."

"I, er, you'll have to excuse me if I'm a little stunned by all of this, Jack," Daniel opened his eyes and stared searchingly at Jack. "What about Sam? And Teal'c?"

"Carter is transferring to Area 51 to head up R&D," Jack replied promptly. "She's looking to spend a little quality time with Cassandra. And the big guy belongs on Dakara leading the Jaffa council with Bra'tac. He's got a peace to win."

"So...there's nothing keeping you here?" Daniel asked haltingly, forgetting everything he knew about body language as he stuffed his clenched fists under his armpits and tried to act casual. "Is that what you're telling me?"

Jack summoned up what he hoped was a nice, charming smile that wouldn't scare Daniel even more. "Pretty much."

"The promotion, the move to Washington?" Daniel asked in a manner suggesting the answer couldn't possibly matter to *him*. "That was never a real consideration?"

"I missed the chair Hammond stole from me," Jack brushed it off lightly.

Daniel's defensive face softened into a shy, answering smile.

"We're headed out to the Pegasus Galaxy with Caldwell tomorrow," Jack advised Daniel, grinning as this hit made it clean out of the park. "This time you won't have to watch Daedalus take off without you. Promise." He smiled as Daniel's face lit up. He might not have a supermodel ass, but he had himself a huge, honkin' spaceship headed out for a home run. "Better say your goodbyes."

Jack didn't want what he was doing to be mistaken for altruism by anyone but Daniel, who was fairly pleased with him right now. Major, *major* brownie points were being earned where the archaeologist of the species was concerned.

The Jaffa, the national treasure and the swim coach were on their own. Carter and Lanfear had both boned Daniel in their own uniquely individual ways and as for Teal'c, it was a case of Jack being cruel to be kind. Teal'c wanted to lead the free Jaffa nation but he also

wanted to snap his fingers and have Jack, Daniel and a tame SGC come running.

The replacement Jack had in mind would do many things for Earth's Jaffa allies, but running wasn't one of them. Hank Landry preferred to shoot to score.



"He's leaving?" Sam demanded, reeling in angry astonishment. "I need to talk to him," she declared, jumping up from her stool.

"He went home to pack up his Simpsons DVDs," Daniel said quietly. "I think he's planning to talk to you and Teal'c about it tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" She shook her head. "I don't believe this. I thought we'd have more time before he left for Washington. Talk through how it's going to work for us, how we take things forward from here."

"Um, Sam," Daniel awkwardly interrupted her fretting. "Maybe I wasn't being very clear."

Mentally out of the door already, she tossed him an impatient, get-on-with-it look.

"Jack isn't leaving for Washington." This was terribly difficult to say when he knew the hopes she'd had of Jack, of building a future together. He didn't know what else to do, or who else would talk to her if he didn't. So he steeled himself and went on. "He's leaving on the Daedalus with me. He's taking command of Atlantis."

"Atlantis?" Sam whispered, clutching the edge of her lab bench for support.

"He thinks that's where he's needed."

"He's needed here."

"I'm sorry," Daniel said gently.

"I don't understand," Sam argued rapidly. "Teal'c was sure, he was *certain* the general wouldn't let you leave. Now you're telling me he's going with you?"

"I - not exactly *with* me," Daniel denied, trying not to let Sam's incomprehension get to him. It didn't seem to have crossed her mind that Jack might care about him. "I'm one of the reasons he's going, sure, but not the only reason. Not the - the whole reason."

"That's what he told you?" Sam asked in quite another tone, an arrested expression on her face. "That he was going for your sake?"

"I'm not the whole reason," Daniel said again, meeting her sharp eyes steadily.

Sam took a deep breath. "Then I'm going too. You're going to need me."

"Dr. McKay is already assigned to the mission, Sam," Daniel said miserably, wondering how much longer he could dance around the truth, that Jack was expecting Sam to go to Area 51 and seemed perfectly fine about it. "And you're, er, you're not an expert in Ancient technology."

"If I didn't know better, I'd think you were trying to talk me out of it, Daniel," Sam said in surprise.

"You know better. Or you should," Daniel snapped, losing some of his patience. "You're supposed to be taking command at Area 51 because Cassandra needs you. If you love her, how can you walk away from her?"

He wished it unsaid as soon as he saw Sam's face change, as she made the correlation he hadn't intended and asked herself the same questions Daniel was grappling with.

If Jack loved Sam, how *could* he walk away from her?

Sam had so convinced herself Jack loved her, she was even less prepared for this than Daniel was. She was no more capable of accepting she was the one to be left behind than Daniel was able to accept he wouldn't be.

When Sam sat, Daniel pulled up the stool opposite and waited with her while she tried to make sense of it.

"Am I a fool, Daniel?" she asked at last, blinking away quick tears.

"No. I don't think you are." There were plenty of people who thought Daniel was the fool. Sometimes, he was among them.

"We've been doing this dance for years," Sam said dreamily, staring at Daniel's face in a way that made him acutely uncomfortable. "I've been watching the general...and he's been watching you."

"Sam!" Daniel protested.

"It's true," she snapped. "I've seen the way he looks at you sometimes. I've seen the way his eyes will always find you, no matter where we are or who else is there. I've seen how he gets when anyone – or anything – takes your attention from him. I just – I let gender get in the way," she admitted frostily. "I saw a man I respect and admire looking at another man and I couldn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it."

"Would Jack be any less worthy of your respect and admiration if he *was* looking?" Daniel

snapped back, arguing the principle. It was hard to feel any sort of gratification, any kind of hope about Sam's interpretation of Jack's behaviour towards each of them when he was so disappointed in her rigidity.

"I've been told I'm beautiful," Sam said suddenly, her gaze still fixed on Daniel. "But the face I wear is one I paint on. With you, what we see is what we get. You grew up on us, Daniel. The skinny kid with allergies turned out to be a gorgeous Greek god."

"Sam, we weren't in competition," Daniel disclaimed, staggered at her description of him. He'd never done anything to attract Jack except be himself as hard as he could. Be his friend.

"No," Sam said thoughtfully. "I see now that we weren't."



"Jesus, Daniel, what happened to you!" Allan exclaimed when Daniel tottered into his kitchen. "You look like you got hit by a truck."

"Well, I feel worse."

Allan put down the saucepan and came over to give him a hug.

"This would all be so much more comforting and supportive if you'd take your hands off my ass," Daniel commented wryly.

"We've got time before dinner," Allan coaxed with a lewdly unsubtle roll of his hips.

"Maybe not," Daniel apologised. "I have packing to do."

Allan stepped back to hold him at arm's length. "Packing?" he asked cautiously.

"That trip I was talking about?"

"Uh-huh?" Allan drawled distrustfully.

"I'm taking it sooner than expected," Daniel confessed in a rush. "In fact, my, er, my plane leaves tomorrow."

"Really."

"And, er, Jack...you remember Jack?" Daniel took a deep breath and tried to project confidence. "Jack is coming with me."

"Damn!" Allan was genuinely taken aback for a second and then he looked deeply admiring. "That man moves fast," he twinkled.

"Allan?" Daniel asked suspiciously.

Allan put up innocent hands and turned back to his saucepan. "To me, Jack is just the name you moan when you come, remember?"

"Once!" Daniel argued indignantly, scowling. "One time! And you can't claim hurt feelings now, not when you almost fell out of bed laughing."

"Okay, okay." Allan put up his spoon in surrender. "He was at the pool today, drooling over your almost naked, dripping body."

"He was?"

"Drooling? Maybe slavering is more accurate."

"Jack is not..."

"Jack is," Allan interrupted firmly. "He definitely is."

"You don't even know what I was going to say."

"I can only read your Speedos, not your mind." Allan planted a swift kiss on Daniel's cheek and handed him tomatoes to slice.

"Maybe I wouldn't have reacted the way I did if you hadn't put your hand down them," Daniel argued hotly.

"I'm gay, you know," Allan said cheerfully. "Some guy has a hard-on with my name on it, you can bet your ass I won't just smile and hope it goes away."

"You chivalrously offered to take care of it for me, if I recall correctly." Daniel shot Allan a hard look. "You just made sure you got your hand on it first."

"You have the sexiest whimper on the face of the Earth," Allan smiled beatifically. "Now tell me. If Jack is coming with you on your, er, trip with you, does that mean he's finally ready to climb out of the closet?"

"Sam certainly seems to think so," Daniel sighed.

"You have had a busy day."

Allan poured him a generous glass of medicinal red wine, let him take a stiff drink, then drew him into his arms for a thorough kissing. Daniel gladly relaxed into the embrace,

enjoying the uncomplicated warmth and friendship.

"I'm glad your Jack finally came through for you," Allan promised gently. "It'll make those long, hard nights all alone in Oregon so much warmer knowing you're gettin' some."

To his horror, Daniel blushed.

"Jack hasn't said..." he demurred hastily. "He hasn't even *hinted* that's the reason he's coming with me."

"Trust me, if General Jack is blowing town and leaving Super Sam sobbing in his dust," Allan countered dryly. "Coming with you is the *only* reason he's going along."

"Everything has to be about sex for you, doesn't it?" Daniel said irritably.

"I mentioned the gay thing, right?" Allan enquired.

"Will you quit trying to live down to a stereotype you know I don't have? You are not so one-dimensional." Daniel glared at him, justifiably aggravated. "And please don't call Sam that stupid name. I hate when you do that."

"But it fits her so well, honey."

"You're as bad as *he* is!"

"Thanks. I think." Allan chopped red salad onions thoughtfully. "If he's almost as smart as me, does it mean I have to stop calling him Jackass?"

"What did I do to bring you down on my life?" Daniel mourned.

"You came when I stuck my hand down your Speedos."

Daniel looked around at the salad stuff spread neatly over the kitchen counters and thought for a while about Speedos. "We have time before dinner," he decided.

"We do," Allan agreed with alacrity. "Want to go work up an appetite?" He came up behind Daniel, grinding against his ass as they stumbled into the bedroom. "I like you like this," he grinned as Daniel yanked the t-shirt over his head before he could get to the buttons on Daniel's shirt.

"Like what?"

"Horny."

Allan pulled Daniel down on the bed on top of him, working his hands down under the waistband of his linen pants to take firm hold of the situation.

"You've changed a lot, you know," Allan told him proudly. "All to the good. You used to be tied up in so many knots about all this, wanting sex and scared of wanting all at the same time." He ran his tongue lasciviously over Daniel's lower lip. "I'm sorry I'm not him," he said softly.

"I never pretended you were."

"You're too nice for me, you know that?"

"I'm trying not to take offence."

"I don't suppose we could call Jack over so he could give this a shot?" Allan asked hopefully. "I don't have to join in or anything. I could just watch you two going at it."

"Will you shut up? Just forget Jack *and* your thwarted threesome fantasies. Please," Daniel instructed impatiently. "I don't know if Jack is in the building, let alone the closet." He had no idea how he was going to find out or if he should even attempt it.

"I'd be happier if I knew he wasn't outside the building," Allan grinned, snatching a weird fleeting look at the window before rolling Daniel under him and making with the long, slow slide of chest, belly and cock, the powerful, grating roll of his hips, the driving, intimate friction he knew Daniel liked best. To touch the whole of their bodies was much more satisfying to him than when they made love with just their hands or their mouths.

"What do I have to do to get some sex around here?" Daniel complained, grinding his hips demandingly against Allan's.

"Breathe."



"Teal'c," Jack greeted his most visibly looming visitor brightly. "And Carter too. The two of you. Here at my house together. What a surprise."

"Not as big a surprise as your posting to the Pegasus Galaxy, Sir," Carter retorted humourlessly.

Jack stood back to wave them down into his living room. "Beer?" he offered hospitably as his guests stood around hating him.

"I do not require refreshment," Teal'c rumbled.

"What are you doing, Sir?" Carter pleaded, her hands twisting nervously.

He bit down the facetious answer and tried not to bullshit her, although it didn't come easy. "Something I need to."

"Something you need to? Or something Daniel needs to?" she asked intensely, missing the interrogative look Teal'c directed at her.

"That's quite enough, Colonel Carter," Jack said warningly, stressing her rank.

"No, Sir, I don't think so," Carter argued, squaring up to him for once. "You promised you'd always be here for me."

"And I'll still be here for you. I'll just be in another galaxy."

"You were ready to let Daniel go," Carter persisted, looking horribly upset. "What changed?"

Jack, who'd had plenty of time to put two and two together and make Teal'c, looked measurably at the big guy and invited Carter to take it up with him. He was going to get some beers. When he came back, at least he found the two of them sitting down. They still looked like they wanted to go for his throat, but they were sitting.

"Isn't this nice?" he remarked, sinking down into his favourite chair and putting his feet on the table. "I'm taking my telescope," he said lightly. "And my fishing gear."

"Your Simpsons DVDs?" Carter suggested, trying to smile.

"Teal'c fill you in?"

"I have not."

"See, as near as I can figure it, what happened is this." Jack settled back with his beer impeccably balanced on a cushion. "Teal'c didn't want me to take the job in Washington and he didn't want Daniel going off to find himself in Atlantis."

Carter looked to Teal'c for verification and he bowed his head.

"So he sent me over to Daniel's place, thinking Daniel would talk me out of going to Washington at the same time I wouldn't let Daniel go haring off to the Pegasus Galaxy if I was staying put," Jack explained pithily. "At least this is what I thought Teal'c was thinking when he sent me over there. Now, pay close attention, Carter, 'cause this is the clever part."

She was starting to look dazed.

"What Teal'c was *really* thinking was if he sent me over to Daniel's place and I found

Daniel in bed with his significant other, I would completely *freak*, and no one would be going any place, except maybe the corpse of the significant other."

"Daniel is seeing someone?" Carter, with her customary selective hearing where Jack was concerned, was starting to think she was seeing the light at the end of a very dark tunnel. Unfortunately for her, it was only the train he was driving.

"Teal'c decided to crucify me for fun and sent me *back* to Daniel's place," Jack added with a flourish, starting to enjoy the drama way more than he should. "Which is where I met the significant other and took him out for coffee."

Teal'c's poker face was suggestive of faint admiration.

"Him?" Carter's eyebrows met her hairline.

"Great guy!" Jack said expansively. "He told me a shit-load of stuff my best friend won't."

Carter was not only lost, she was starting to lose it.

Train was coming.

"You want to know what's changed?" Jack asked her mildly, wishing it wouldn't take putting her down this hard to make her see what had always been going on with them. He'd kill or die for her, but man, that was all.

"I want to know." She thought she was sure.

"I saw Daniel in bed with this guy and I thought: that should be me."

Carter looked away from Jack and then she got up and walked deliberately out of his house, her face set.

"First time she actually heard what I was saying to her," Jack sighed, knowing he should have tried harder to warn her off. He thought that Lanfear would read this not so much as Jack ponying up to take responsibility as starting a stampede. Then he grinned evilly at Teal'c. "Surprised?" he purred.

"It was not my intention that either Daniel Jackson or you would depart from Stargate Command, General O'Neill," Teal'c replied stonily.

"Life's a bitch that way."

"Are you certain that this is what you wish to do?"

"Daniel's happy I'm coming along. That's certain enough."

"This is your home," Teal'c suggested, looking around him.

"I used to think so," Jack said indifferently.

"Tell me, O'Neill," Teal'c urged, his dark eyes doubtful. He needed to be convinced this was the right thing for Jack - and Daniel - to do. "Is this one event so powerful it can truly change the course of your life?"

"Let you in on a little secret of mine." Jack made a big deal of leaning forward and looking important until he had Teal'c's full and focused attention. "I'm not that complicated." He winked broadly. "The way I look at it is this: I may be giving up a pond, but I'm gaining an ocean."

Teal'c was amazed, if ultimately unconvinced, by his maturity.

Jack jumped to his feet. "I'll miss you," he said gruffly.

Teal'c stood and reached out to grip Jack's forearm ceremoniously. "As I will miss you, my brother," he replied formally.

"Kiss Ishta for me."

"Kiss DanielJackson for me."

"Gotta love that whacky Jaffa humour."

"You are aware that DanielJackson's relationship with Allan Lanfear has greatly altered him?" Teal'c asked gravely.

"I like the changes," Jack promised.

"You are no longer angry with him," Teal'c realised, visibly startled.

"I was never angry with him, big guy, not about this. I had my wake-up call, that's all."

"If you are certain," Teal'c tried again to give Jack a graceful out.

"I keep telling you." Jack smiled. "I'm not that complicated."

Teal'c returned the smile.

"Now get out of here and figure out how you're going to embarrass Daniel before I take him away from all this and show him that good time you're so keen on him having."

Teal'c's smile widened.

"I think one time you touched his shoulder or something?" Jack hinted pleasurably. "He almost had a heart attack."

"Indeed."

"You're letting me down if both his feet don't leave the floor."



"Sam? Are you okay? What time is it?"

"It's late," she said quietly.

Daniel opened his door all the way and came out onto the porch when she stayed huddled against the wall of his house.

"And no. No, I'm not okay." Sam came to him then, gathering him into a convulsive, urgent embrace. "I lost you once," she said fiercely. "It was one of the hardest things I've ever been through. I'm not prepared to lose you again."

"Sam," he hushed her and she tightened her arms around his neck, drawing him down to kiss him sweetly on the cheek.

"I love you, Daniel. One day I'll be by to visit you, I promise. That's all I came to say."

"That's all?"

She was already pulling away from him, trying to smile.

"That and...I'll miss you."

He caught the tips of her fingers, held on to her, and she took his hand for a moment.

"I'm sorry," she apologised wearily. "I realised tonight for the first time the general never saw me and I never heard him. I thought you came between us when in reality it was me who came between you."

"Won't you come in? Talk to me?" Daniel begged, distressed for her.

"What's the point?" Sam let go of his hand. "I was right about the three of us. It never was a competition. But I'm still your friend and I wanted you to know that."

Daniel would have followed as she went to her car, but he was hooked firmly around the waist.

"Wow, that was big of her." Allan was completely unimpressed.

"You just can't give her any credit, can you?" Daniel snapped, angry with him for his insensitivity.

"Oh, come on, Daniel," Allan chided, drawing him towards the house. "Her precious general tore her a new one tonight and she ran right to you to cry on your shoulder about it."

"As a friend," Daniel insisted. "And she was right to do it."

"This is the *last* place she should have come tonight. It's not possible for you to be your own sweet self and a gracious winner in this situation, honey," Allan cautioned him wisely. "Not when her fantasy man is set on screwing you and not her."

"May I remind you the last person Jack slept with was a *very* attractive woman?"

"She thinks he wants to screw you too," Allan replied informatively as he kicked the door shut behind them. "I checked."

"Can't we get back to the part where I'll miss you and, out of respect, you'll wait at least five minutes after I'm gone before you replace me?" Daniel begged Allan plaintively.

"So long as we don't get back to the part where you try to convince me fish are more fun than dogs."

"What's that thing you're always saying I am? My so-called type? The rare and coveted..."

"Hot gay nerd!" Allan crowed jubilantly, bouncing Daniel onto the bed.

"You see a dog anyplace around here?"

Allan was struck by this. "You mean I can use your fish to get guys?"

"If clubbing them over the head and dragging them back to your cave doesn't work, sure."

"And speaking of Minnesota Man," Allan segued unkindly. "Take my advice, Daniel. I know you're crazy about Jack, but keep your hard hat on around him for a while. A good long while."

"Let's get this straight, okay?" Daniel said patiently. "I'm happy Jack is taking this trip with me. I trust him to watch my back just like he trusts me to watch his. He's a talented soldier, Allan. No one could look out for me better than Jack will. The other part of this is that we're friends. We've been friends for years now."

"The two of you are close," Allan said mildly.

"We are close. I admit that." Daniel rubbed Allan's shoulders. "But I don't believe Jack has any kind of sexual or romantic interest in me. Not after eight, nine years of straightforward platonic friendship." He looked seriously at Allan, asking for his belief. "That's the reason I'm here with you. I finally had to accept that Jack is straight. He was never going to return my feelings and I was a fool to..."

Allan hushed him with a hard kiss. "No," he contradicted. "You're no fool. What you are is too nice and too understanding for your own good. You gave Jack all the rope he needed to hang himself."

Daniel kind of gasped at the ruthless directness of this.

"He's in love with you," Allan promised Daniel faithfully while he was still reeling. "And I honestly have no idea how your confident A-type heterosexual pal will deal with the reality of loving and wanting sex with another man. Jack *is* going to make a pass at you. It's only a question of when and how." Tenderly, he took Daniel's face between his hands. "All I'm saying is give him time to adjust to feeling all of this for you. Give yourself time."

"You think it means something? Jack going with me?"

"I think it means everything. I think it means for the first time Jack truly understands he has a chance with you if he's man enough to take it. He's taking this trip with you, and that's a huge statement of intent right there."

"How do you know all this?" Daniel wondered.

"I know guys," Allan said deprecatingly. "It's a gay thing."

Daniel hugged him. "I'm glad I met you," he declared. "And I am going to miss you."

"I'm going to miss all the evil, perverted things I didn't get to do to you."

"Stop," Daniel said witheringly. "All this sentimentality - you're embarrassing me."

"I can embarrass you more," Allan announced with relish. "I'm planning to ask Jack if he'll sell me his truck."

"Don't hold back on my account. His house has a bigger yard than mine too."



"I can't believe this is happening!" Daniel crowed, almost dancing with joy as Daedalus

powered up her engines.

Jack cleared his throat meaningfully in Teal'c's direction. Time for the big guy to give Daniel something to remember him by.

Daniel swung around, hardly feeling the weight of his pack, which was bulging with the twenty or so volumes he considered essential hand luggage. He stuck out his hand to shake Teal'c's. "Lead your people wisely," he asked gravely. "They deserve to enjoy their freedom, not fear it."

"I fear my brethren cannot yet comprehend that before we can build a truly free Jaffa nation, we must first end the pursuit of personal power. There are those who would raise themselves up as the Goa'uld once did before they would cede that power to another."

"I don't think that's *quite* how democracy is intended to work, Teal'c," Daniel smiled ruefully. "It's supposed to be about equality and fair representation, about empowerment of all the members of the electorate, not oppression of their..."

"Daniel!" Jack interrupted forcefully. "We're going to miss our ride."

"You'll let us know if you need us?" Daniel hovered sentimentally over Teal'c.

"Of that you may be certain," Teal'c assured him.

"I'm going to miss you," Daniel told Teal'c simply.

"And I, you," Teal'c replied with thrilling sincerity.

It was all so dignified, Jack wanted to yuck.

Teal'c, apparently over his snit at being left alone to rule the newly constituted universe, came through for Jack. Big time. He engulfed Daniel in a manly embrace that reminded Jack of nothing so much as a bug on a windshield and lovingly assured him they were brothers.

This sent Daniel scuttling towards the ship bang on schedule.

Proudly watching his young friend accelerate, Teal'c bid a final fond farewell to his revered leader.

"If the next words you utter are 'Jaffa, kree,' I will kill you where you stand, O'Neill."



"Are you busy?" Daniel asked Jack, hovering expectantly in the corridor outside his quarters. "If you're busy I can come back."

"As a matter of fact, I can ignore these reports more easily with you here than I can on my own," Jack said with a grin, reaching to take Daniel's arm and draw him inside. "Grab a seat and tell me if your quarters are bigger than my sardine can."

"Bigger?" Daniel looked around him vaguely and then planted his butt on the edge of the only seat available, which was Jack's bunk. "You have your own toilet," he observed crisply. "The rest of us have to get in a very long line. Does that answer your question?"

"Cool." Cheering up, Jack sat back down behind his small, stolidly functional desk and looked hospitable.

"I, er, I wanted..." Daniel trailed off, pulling a face.

"Wanted to ask me what the hell I'm doing here?" Jack supplied helpfully.

"Pretty much," Daniel agreed in a rush of relief.

"The reasons I gave you..."

"Were obviously enough to convince the Air Force and the president to let you take off for Atlantis."

"In a very short space of time, too," Jack admitted casually enough.

"See, that's my point." Daniel wagged a finger at Jack. "It all looks good and it all sounds good. It's all so plausible..."

"It must stink?" Jack clarified.

"I'd like to know the real reason." Daniel's fists weren't stuffed under his armpits this time; they were making dents in the rounded steel edge of Jack's bunk.

"I came for you," Jack said simply.

Daniel nodded sagely. This is no way masked his incomprehension.

"I'm going to Atlantis because that's where you want to be," Jack tried again.

Daniel nodded again. He was, if anything, slightly more confused than before.

"It's all about you."

"Me." This time Daniel actually caught himself nodding and shot Jack a deprecating look.

"We used to be tight," Jack explained as gently as possible. "I know lately, for all kinds of complicated reasons, we've kind of stopped working on that whole friendship thing we have. We've...drifted." He didn't have a clue if he was saying too much or not enough, but he plunged on anyway, thinking Daniel should hear good things from him. "I would look out for you; you would talk my ear off, get in my way and annoy me. We were tight."

"That seems a long time ago," Daniel tentatively offered a hint he knew, if not where Jack was going, at least where they'd both been.

"I'd like to be that...*tight*...with you again."

Honest to God, this would be easier if Jack just came right out with it and said he loved him. Just being *nice* took inordinate effort.

"You want me to talk your ear off?" Daniel brightened up mischievously. "As a matter of fact, that's not a problem," he promised eagerly. "Did you know the Asgard Hermod is aboard? I can't wait to talk to him! I want to confirm he's the Hermod we know from Norse mythology...Hermod the Brave."

"Hermod the Bitchy from what I hear," Jack interrupted as soon as he could get a word in edgeways. "He's not exactly brimming over with goodwill to man." Then he saw Daniel's wide, wondering eyes. "What'd I do now?" he asked suspiciously.

"I can't believe you didn't call him Haemorrhoid," Daniel marvelled.

Yes. Well. Jack coughed shiftily and shuffled the piles of crap on his desk in a desultory fashion. Being in love wasn't doing *anything* for his limited powers of communication. "My jokes are getting old," he grouched, to cover. "I need new material."

Daniel got up and came over to perch gingerly on the corner of the desk, quite close. Then he put a careful hand on Jack's shoulder. "I'm glad," he told the bulkhead stiffly.

"Dunno why." Jack relaxed, deciding he was doing okay here, making some progress. "You never laughed at my jokes anyway."

Where he went from here was another story entirely. He was looking forward to making things up to Daniel; he was even looking forward to making out with him. Unfortunately, he had no workable ideas how to get from J to D, especially when it had to be via the L-word.

Wanting sex with Daniel didn't in any way guarantee he'd get it. In fact, the way Jack's luck was holding, it would actively work against him. How was he even supposed to bring it up? It wasn't what you could call a naturally occurring topic in conversation between the two of them. In fact, looking back to the dim and distant past, Jack's last

comment to Daniel on the subject of him having sex was 'ewww!' Not that he was wrong, per se. Daniel *was* making little snake babies at the time.

The way he looked at it, what he was facing here wasn't so much a learning curve as a stiff climb up a sheer glass wall with spikes at the top for laughs.

"Jack?" Daniel nudged him from his bemused reverie. "I should get back. I've got a ton of work reviewing the Ancients' database Weir's team transmitted to the SGC and less than three weeks to do it." He was smiling a little as he said this, not making a big thing of having to remove Jack's hand from his thigh before he could go.



After five days of solitary confinement, courtesy of Daniel's distracted, monosyllabic grunts and omnipresent laptop, Jack's brain farted.

He marched into Daniel's quarters looking dangerous and told him his boyfriend was a nice guy.

Daniel was so floored, he almost shorted out his laptop.

Mission accomplished, Jack marched out again.

He made it several yards down the corridor before Daniel came barrelling out behind him, grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, hauled him back inside and slammed the door.

"I have arthritis, you know," Jack complained almost straight-faced as Daniel got between him and the door.

"I *knew* you were up to something!" Daniel declared, vigorously embracing Jack's opening of hostilities. "I knew *he* was up to something! What did he say to you?" he demanded vengefully. "And when did he say it?"

"I'm not here because of Allan Lanfear," Jack stated emphatically for the record. "At least not directly. I'm here because of *you*. I would never have let you in on the fact I met Lanfear if I wasn't feeling as capable as a one-legged man in an ass-kicking contest."

Both Daniel's eyebrows shot up.

"I couldn't think what else to do. I have no idea how I'm supposed to come on to you," Jack complained defensively. "Not *you*. Not after *nine* years."

"I'd hoped with more subtlety than the gay guy," Daniel sniffed, giving away more than he'd maybe intended.

"Lanfear is direct, I'll give him that," Jack seconded feelingly, gleefully chalking up another victory for direct action.

"You know Allan wasn't really my, er, my boyfriend, don't you?" Daniel asked slowly, apparently noticing, and liking, how close he and Jack were standing. "I mean, we weren't involved in a romantic sense."

"You weren't casual either," Jack asserted with certainty. "He *was* your lover."

"We were friends." Daniel admitted readily, surprising Jack by being so unselfconscious.

"Friends with benefits?" Jack suggested understandingly.

"I guess you could put it that way."

"I got involved with a woman a while back," Jack said more confidently, starting to see his way clear. "We were friends with benefits too."

Daniel tilted his head and looked all big eyed and encouraging.

"She thought I had issues and dumped me," Jack confessed pathetically.

"Allan knew I had issues and he got pissed when I wouldn't let him sleep with you too."

Jack snorted at this. "Sonovabitch!" he growled, trying not to show he was flattered. He came a step closer and tried to talk out some of the serious stuff making him feel lost in space. "Was he good to you?" Was Jack wrong to listen to Lanfear, to trust him about Daniel?

"He never hit on my friends in front of me," Daniel promised solemnly, crossing his heart. He slipped past Jack and sat down on his bunk, hitching back to settle against the wall and hug his knees. When he looked up at Jack, his eyes were bright and clear.

Jack sat very close by him.

"Allan was good to me and he was good for me," Daniel assured him, smiling a little. "I never had a relationship like that before, Jack. I never knew I was capable."

"Of having fun?" Jack grinned. "He told me."

"That was Allan's mission in life, to get me to loosen up and put down the books. Take a few risks with myself."

"I'm glad he succeeded."

Daniel looked nonplussed, but in a good way. "You're surprising me in all kinds of ways, Jack." He sounded pleased.

"I'm not jealous," Jack said anyway. He thought he should be clear on this. That Daniel should be clear. "That's not what this is about."

"Well, if you were looking to get my attention by coming with me to Atlantis, you've succeeded admirably. Colour me stunned."

"I was looking to do something for you, something that mattered. I think you needed to know I'm serious about you."

Daniel tried to say something in response to this, but could only let out a stuttering sigh. His face burned as he reached across to put an uncertain hand on Jack's arm.

"It's okay," Jack said at once, turning to slip his arm around Daniel's shoulders. "I never thought I'd be saying these things to you either."

A weight was lifting for Daniel; not the easiest thing for him to deal with or for Jack to help him. Getting good things he wanted was a little outside his experience.

"I don't expect you can jump right out of Lanfear's bed and into mine," Jack acknowledged openly if not exactly easily, thinking he should get over as much of this difficult ground as he could while Daniel was letting him off so ludicrously lightly with it all. "I know you mean it when you tell me that you and Lanfear were just friends, that he's not someone you have to get over. I also know how loyal you are and I figure he meant something if you could trust him enough to sleep with him."

"Your mature insights are scaring the crap out of me, I want you to know that," Daniel rallied bravely.

"Cool."

"There were always three of us in that relationship, Jack," Daniel confessed with an odd mix of certainty and hesitation.

Jack thought hesitation was honest.

"Allan knew my feelings for you, I think even before things got physical between us. He couldn't comprehend me wasting away – as he put it - locked up alone in my bookish ivory tower pining and keeping myself pure for you."

"Me either," Jack admitted frankly. He looked around at Daniel. "I'm slow. I had no idea I could get you, that I stood any kind of chance with you. I could not see that possibility, I could *not* go there, and I don't know why. I've been thinking about nothing else for days now and I still don't know. The best I can come up with is that it was some sort of defence

mechanism kicking in, stopping me screwing up both our lives instead of just my own." He smiled at the warm play of emotion over Daniel's attentive face. "I feel I let you down."

"No!" Daniel argued hotly. "Don't talk crap, Jack!"

"Nice." Jack smiled and gave him a gentle nudge in the ribs.

"Allan thought you let me down too, but I never did," Daniel explained seriously. "I didn't blame you any more than I blamed myself. I just thought, with the type of men we are, with what we've been through? Whatever we felt for each other, whatever we wanted, it just wasn't meant to be."

"I'd like to look at it that way," Jack smiled softly. "Let the issue of blame go, I mean. I will say I don't regret being here, not when it means you can tell me you have feelings for me. Feel free to elaborate on that, by the way," he hinted broadly, winking. "I'd like to stun you some more with my mature insight."

"I've been thinking over what you said to me, you know," Daniel replied, taking Jack at his word. "About us not working so hard at this friendship thing recently. Maybe that's true, I don't know, but it doesn't mean the foundation of our relationship isn't as solid as it's always been." Daniel looked down at his knees, faintly embarrassed because he was getting all mushy and emotional. "I like to think that we're friends despite ourselves, that we couldn't *not* be friends. I sort of see us as a double-negative, only together we make a positive."

"You've changed, you know," Jack acknowledged gratefully. "I'm glad if it means you're not angry."

"I could say the same."

"I was only mad with myself, a little with the world. Never with you." Jack shook his head wryly. "Not even so much with him."

"Allan?"

"You and him, together? You kicked me upside the head. It's not complicated, Daniel, not for me. I had to get my act together, that's all."

"When Allan made it clear he wanted a physical relationship with me, I think my feelings were pretty close to yours," Daniel confided mildly. "It was like my life was laid down on rails and all I could see was what was straight ahead of me. I didn't appreciate how I was locked down, repeating the same patterns, the same errors, until Allan had helped me break clear, helped me open up to possibilities I never even saw before." He exchanged a long, serious look with Jack. "I can't regret my friendship with Allan or where it took me."

"Why should you?" Jack asked, surprised. Daniel's loyalty was a given. He wasn't about

to start questioning it now. "I only regret I didn't get my act together sooner than this."

"Don't worry about it, Jack," Daniel said soothingly, relaxing into a teasing look. "I know you're only saying all this stuff to get in my pants."

"It's true!"

"We're both being very mature about this."

"Kind of depressing, isn't it? All talk and not getting any action."

"Get out there and scare the crew," Daniel advised kindly. "You'll feel better."

"Tell me you packed your Speedos, I'll feel on top of the world."

Jack guessed getting physical with Daniel wasn't going to be a slam dunk. Not when they were hampered by all these inconveniently complicated feelings for one another. They were at ease in each other's space and he took that as a positive, but he wasn't the only one finding touch laden with all this awkwardly telegraphed extra meaning.

Fortunately, sex was the only cure for what ailed them.

"We should hang out," he decided positively. "Make out."

Daniel shrugged a shoulder. He was down with that. "Sure."

And there it was, the easiest pass of Jack's career.



"Dr. Weir was very confident she had the support of the President and our allies for her continuing leadership of the Atlantis project," Colonel Caldwell commented as he handed Jack and Daniel cups of an undrinkable, muddy beverage masquerading as coffee.

"She wasn't wrong in that assessment," Jack agreed neutrally.

Caldwell sat at his desk, not choosing to hide his laser-like assessment of Jack. "If she has as much support as she intimated, then how did she lose command to you, Sir?" he enquired forthrightly.

"Jack has more support," Daniel interjected, shuddering over his first sip of coffee. He was such a purist. "*Much* more. He's saved the world repeatedly."

"That never gets old," Jack said happily. Sure, Weir had solid support from the politicians

in her old stomping grounds back home, but so far as the Joint Chiefs and their alien allies were concerned, Jack was de man. It wasn't only in poker that an ace beat out the queen.

"You have a valid point, though," Daniel admitted a trifle reluctantly to the curious Caldwell. "I don't think Dr. Weir would have lost leadership of the Atlantis project to anyone but Jack. His record in defeating not only the Goa'uld but the Replicators speaks for itself. Loudly."

"You personally don't have any problem being under military command, Dr. Jackson?" Caldwell asked.

If Jack got his way, Daniel would be having a problem under him later tonight. A *big* problem.

"I'm open," Daniel replied pleasantly.

This was what Jack was hoping, yes.

"Like I said, Jack's record speaks for itself," Daniel asserted with serene conviction, not choosing to share that Jack's singular talent was for being pretty much a pushover where he was concerned.

If this wasn't the case, Jack wouldn't have spent two desperate, celibate days in his cabin being brought up to what Daniel considered speed on the Ancients, all without so much as a peck on the cheek or even a handshake. This was what happened when Jack tried to be sensitive and understanding about feelings and stuff. Daniel seemed to think Jack offering him time to work things out meant he could *take* time. Consequently, the only thing Jack got to hold was the laptop. One time.

Jack had spent most of his grudgingly forced labour thinking about Daniel sleeping with Allan Lanfear, about what they did, how they were together. Not in a hinky, perverted way – more of a pleasant, speculative reverie about what Daniel liked, what Jack might do for him when they made love. He would never admit to it, of course, but he felt a certain sense of relief Daniel had done this before. It was going to make some possibly slightly questionable indiscretions from his own distant past a lot less colourful.

Daniel being a slut – well, it *worked* for Jack.

"General?" Caldwell's flat, pedestrian voice broke in. "Are you okay?"

Jack frowned at him.

"You seem distracted," Caldwell excused his presumption.

Fairly certain he was the cause of this, Daniel glanced modestly down at his booted feet. "Jack hates sci-fi, Colonel," he said with some amusement, covering for Jack. "He's always

prided himself on that. I can't begin to tell you how much it annoys him he has to live it."

Caldwell looked as if he almost understood this. "It's because of SG-1's accomplishments, not least in securing the Asgard as our allies, that astonishing advances like Daedalus have been possible, gentlemen," he credited them graciously.

"Knowing that it's largely self-inflicted doesn't help," Daniel stated, a little impatient Caldwell was completely missing the point.

Jack could have told Daniel that Caldwell was nothing more or less than a classic product of his environment. Uptight, aggressive, ambitious but not dumb, and not a coward either. Jack understood Caldwell and every solid, straight-arrow, by-the-book career military officer just like him. What he didn't understand was why he was cursed not to share their lack of imagination. It was some odd quirk in his nature that made him buck the system, stick it to the Man and listen when Daniel Jackson started talking.

He couldn't explain why it had to be this way for him and in the meantime, he was blaming Daniel.

"It's late," Daniel apologised inclusively to Jack and Colonel Caldwell, already getting to his feet.

It was 2100 hours.

"I should..." Blithely ignoring their surprise, Daniel put his cup down on the corner of Caldwell's desk and began to sidle purposefully towards the door. "You know."

Weasel out?

"Good to know you have the same limitations as the rest of us, Dr. Jackson," Caldwell replied, showing surprising signs of unbending as Daniel abandoned ship. "You've been pushing yourself pretty hard since you came aboard, burning the midnight oil and all. It's tough on the crew who can't keep up, you know?"

"No." Daniel hesitated, his hand poised on the door. "Sorry," he apologised, although he looked unsure what for. "I didn't realise anyone was paying attention."

Caldwell smiled suddenly, his stern face relaxing. "You don't get out much, do you?" He shook his head at Daniel, quite amused. "You're famous, Dr. Jackson. Everyone knows who you are. And I do mean everyone. The man who opened the Stargate, found the Asgard and the Ancients as well as Atlantis, the man who made all of this..." He gestured proudly around at his big, butt ugly ship. "Possible."

"Oh," Daniel responded inadequately, looking to Jack to bail him out. Flattery unnerved him, mostly because he didn't have that high an opinion of himself and frankly suspected anyone who did.

"Famous?" Jack queried. This was maybe, possibly overstating the case a tad.

"So, all the times I've walked through the hallways on Daedalus and people have looked away when I caught their eye?" Daniel queried uncertainly, realising he was on his own. "I just want to be clear that's not paranoia on my part, that's really happening?"

It wasn't happening to Jack.

"You'll have to forgive our curiosity, Dr. Jackson," Caldwell smiled with surprising charm. "And speaking of curiosity, I'd like to talk to you if I may? Some time when you're not so tired."

Daniel looked enquiring.

"I have some questions," the colonel said earnestly. "About the Ancients and also about your ascension."

Sadly, this was more than enough to reel in Daniel. *No one* took the bait more easily.

When Daniel let go of the door and started to eye the chair he'd just vacated, Jack decided he was tired too, briskly took a rain-check on whatever it was the colonel had dragged them here for in the first place – he didn't recall – and hustled Daniel smartly out the door.

"That might have been interesting," Daniel objected as he was escorted kindly but firmly away.

"Highly unlikely," Jack countered dampeningly. "But this *will* be interesting."

"What?"

"*This*."

Jack looked significantly at Daniel.

Daniel looked blankly at Jack.

"This is what I get for trying to be nice," Jack sighed gustily, steering Daniel towards his quarters down the hallway.

"Nice? Nice to who? And when?" Daniel wanted to know, looking like butter wouldn't melt as Jack secured his cabin door safely behind them.

"I just want you to know you richly deserve everything you're about to get," Jack promised faithfully, closing in on him purposefully.

That sound was the other shoe dropping.

Daniel promptly made for cover behind the desk, snorting indignantly when Jack caught him roughly around the waist and pinned him against it. Muscling deliciously against his firm, finely curved ass and long legs, Jack captured Daniel's wrists and drew him back into a strong embrace. As Jack's fingers tangled emphatically with his, Daniel tilted back his head to rest easily against Jack's shoulder and closed his eyes, his lips curving in a smile.

"Is it terrible to want to bend you over this desk and do you here and now?" Jack asked in a low voice, rubbing his cheek restlessly over Daniel's. He rocked his hips in a slow bump and grind Daniel's ass perfectly counter-pointed.

"Overly optimistic," Daniel confirmed mildly, rubbing himself gently all over Jack. "I take it you've decided I've had ample time to get past any inconveniently lingering feelings of loyalty to Allan?"

"I gave you plenty of rope," Jack explained crisply, "And you're hanging me with it."

"Your egocentrism never ceases to amaze," Daniel remarked with reluctant fondness.

"Big enough for the both of us," Jack joked distractedly, mostly aware of the maddening friction of hip and ass and the way the blood was sliding down. Being held this close to him, Daniel had to feel how hard he was making Jack but he kept on rubbing, rubbing. Impulsively, Jack freed Daniel's hands to reach down between his legs and explore the hardness there.

"You really don't have a problem with my sleeping with Allan, do you?" Daniel faltered on a shuddering gasp, trapping Jack's hands delightfully between his thighs.

"Only if it keeps you from sleeping with me now," Jack answered with complete honesty, loving the way Daniel swelled against his cupping hand. "Look, all I know is if you could sleep with him, with a friend, then you could sleep with me. That possibility was open. I don't know or care about anything else. It's only about your feelings for me and mine for you."

"I don't need to tell you how it is for *us*," Daniel murmured with low-voiced certainty.

There was love between them.

"I'm absolutely clear on that," Jack promised faithfully as Daniel turned to take his face between unsteady hands. He needed to look at Jack a long time before he came close, let their lips touch. It felt right and good, totally right for them. It felt easy. It seemed to Jack he knew the taste of Daniel and the feel of him before their arms wound tight and they opened their mouths to deepen the kiss.

They knew each other so well.

It was incredible.

An uncomplicated, gliding dance of tongues took them down onto the narrow bed to kiss out their hearts in peace. Hot, liquid, flowing, their mouths moved together, their restless hands all over each other. When Jack nudged Daniel onto his back, he only wrapped a leg over Jack's ass to hold him tighter and kiss him all the harder.

It was Daniel who stripped away Jack's enveloping jacket to pull at his T-shirt until he bared skin, Jack who fumbled at zippers and tugged tight folds of fabric over slim, angular hips. It took both of them, feet and hands, to free themselves from confinement and finally find each other, hip to hip, belly on belly, muscle and bone.

Jack knew this. He'd seen this or something like this through a window. He looked for Daniel's flushed, ecstatic face, looked and found more.

He guessed he found himself in Daniel's darkening eyes and passionate mouth.

He wanted more.

And then more.

He knew nothing but the sure, loving touch of trembling fingers, the erotic slip of warm skin and soft tongues, the pounding of cocks and the ache low in his belly and balls.

As he pushed inside him, he knew Daniel was his world.

He could give...anything.

Daniel gasped aloud at the first thrust, the first slide of skin into him, grabbing hard enough at Jack's back to leave bruises when he thrust again. Jack followed his lead, rocking artfully into clenching muscle until he felt Daniel bear down on his cock to take him in. With Daniel's strong hands and arching hips urging him on, he began to bury himself with short, sharp thrusts until Daniel's body unexpectedly gave and he slid home with a deep moan of pleasure.

"Good?" he whispered, lowering himself to his elbows so he could touch his face to Daniel's.

"Good," Daniel agreed as he reached up to brush his fingertips delicately over Jack's lips. "And I'm quite interested in what comes next."

"Hopefully you!" Jack snorted.

Daniel's quick answering grin faded into a shy, emotional look. "I can't tell you what you feel like to me," he breathed.

Jack heard him. *Really* heard him. And then he saw just how different this truly was for Daniel, completely confounded at having Jack inside him. And because Jack had no plan other than to give him whatever he wanted and to have him hear and feel and see what he needed, he didn't hesitate now.

He pulled a little way out of Daniel then pushed slowly back into him, giving him all the time there was. The pace he had to find was his own; the power of his arms and back, the roll of his hips, the steady drive up from his knees. Smooth as silk, he made love to Daniel, thrusting slow and deep, as gentle as it was possible for him to be with his throbbing cock sheathed to the balls in gripping heat.

Rocked beneath him, Daniel closed his eyes, moaning out in pleasure he hadn't expected. Shuddering with desire, he held on to Jack's shoulders and then dug urgent heels into his ass, needing his cock deeper and harder, just *there*. Daniel was far gone, carried along by Jack's passion for him, ecstatically riding the unhurried, impaling slide of slick skin and heat inside him.

Jack gave it to him deeper and harder, on and on, until his heart burst and Daniel held him with wrenching tenderness as he came. When the worst of his tremors had passed, Jack eased himself from Daniel, rolled with him into a close, comfortable embrace, stroking his hair and his face.

Daniel was fascinated, even humbled, to see Jack's hands shake. It had never happened before. He began to smile then, lingering uncertainties melting from him as he understood making love was as powerful an experience for Jack as it was for him. It meant as much.

"You gave up everything I thought was important to you to be with me," Daniel suggested diffidently, rubbing the sweat from Jack's back.

"Got everything I need, thanks," Jack contradicted lazily, smiling when Daniel did because he could make him purely happy.

"No TV, no sports, no beer or movies. No life as you know it," Daniel persisted.

"No coffee, no chocolate, no books or journals or papers. No life as you know it," Jack retorted. Theatrically, he looked around at the grey metallic walls closing in on them. "Still here," he said lightly.

"There are compensations," Daniel suggested.

"This is the biggest one, right here," Jack said with satisfaction, firmly taking Daniel's ass in his hands. "I may not get the Simpsons until the new season is out on DVD, but I get you."

Daniel gave himself a bemused little shake. "You keep saying the right things," he said plaintively. "You're making me feel like my glass is half-full." He sounded distinctly

accusing about this.

Jack beamed at him.

"Did we really need to go to these extremes?" Daniel wondered, stroking Jack's chest encouragingly. "Leave behind everyone and everything just to find each other?"

"Yes," Jack said baldly. "It's like you explained to me a few days ago – both our lives seeming to be laid down on rails, taking us further and further apart. I wasn't happy commanding the SGC but I didn't see I had any choice in it with Hammond out of the picture. I can't begin to tell you why I was even considering the Washington posting. Taking on the Pentagon? In person? I must have been out of my mind."

"You didn't see another choice," Daniel said quietly.

"Precisely!" Jack agreed gratefully. "And I was getting ready to tell you that when I saw Allan Lanfear. I was so locked in to those mistakes and errors I was making over and over again – like you said – I had to take my head out of my ass long enough to *see* there was a place in your life for Lanfear to even *imagine* there was a place for me."

"All the time," Daniel sighed, moving his face closer to Jack's.

"I know it now," Jack sighed too, sharing a gentle kiss as they tightened their hold on each other. "This was a no-brainer, Daniel. I swear. Took me all of two seconds to figure out what to do when I finally saw I had a chance with you. Atlantis is your dream but Washington – for me, that was only ever a nightmare. I never wanted it. In fact, when I stopped and took a look at my life, all I wanted was you. Take you from that equation, I couldn't even see the point."

"You do understand I want Atlantis so badly because it's the culmination of everything I've worked for?" Daniel asked a little anxiously. "It's the first real answer I've found to the questions I've been asking ever since we found Ernest Littlefield and the repository of knowledge on Heliopolis. I promise you, Jack, it was never about getting away from you."

"I wouldn't have blamed you if it had been," Jack said frankly. "I didn't give you much to hold on to, did I?"

"I want to forget all of those things," Daniel confided painfully, opening himself up to some deep emotion. "I want to see this as a beginning for us, not an ending. To be about choices we make together, not old mistakes we try to get past. Maybe I'm selfish, or maybe I'm just naïve, but I don't want anything to bring us down."

"Want to keep that glass half-full?" Jack quirked a smile at Daniel.

"I like the feeling," Daniel admitted diffidently. He held Jack's gaze and went a little deeper. "I would have loved Atlantis, Jack. I would have opened myself up to all its

possibilities, let it take me." His face stilled. "I would always have needed you to be a part of it, to be with me, because I can't feel as much when you're not there. Atlantis would only have been about the work – amazing, fulfilling and only ever a part of my life, not the whole." He tried to smile. "I wouldn't have been whole."

And what the *hell* could Jack say to that? "I would've got myself a sweet deal on cable."

"I, er, I feel the pain of your martyrdom." Daniel started to relax, to almost be glad Jack was hearing what he had to share with him.

Jack went with it. "And that comfy chair Hammond stole from me."

"It was his chair to begin with."

"I thought we weren't looking back or pointing fingers anymore?" Jack reminded him sternly. "And can you quit it with the interruptions? I'm trying to tell you something important here."

"There's more to life than cable?"

"Apparently so," Jack admitted bravely, graciously accepting Daniel's supportive hug. "I guess I'll have to make do with an ocean view, fishing and you."

"I'm in love with you," Daniel confided suddenly, very much needing to.

Jack smiled, pulled him in even closer than before, where he could feel his heart, and they kissed again. "Me too."

They were ready to make these promises. There was love between them.

And because of it, there was no need to exorcise the ghost of Allan Lanfear. There was no competition, nothing left to fear. It was exactly as Daniel had said. Lanfear was his friend and he was good to him, and Jack surely had cause to be grateful.

He chuckled softly, realising something about himself.

"What?" Daniel lit up responsively.

"Damned if I'm not wising up."

FINIS