

Title: Once More With Feeling

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Synopsis: Two Jacks, one Daniel. Honesty ensues.

Warnings: Warm Fuzzies.



Once More With Feeling

A slash story by Biblio

No one told me officially I couldn't keep in touch. When he dropped me off at the school, all I told the old man was I wouldn't keep in touch with *him*. Too goddamned weird. Is it my fault he took that to mean I was shaking them all off and getting with the MTV groove? It's what I should do. I know it. It's the only reason I bought into the whole school crap. Figured I couldn't get any further away from my life than the Little League.

My life. Big joke, cosmic humour right there. I'm him, he's me and this scrawny little butt is the copy so what's mine is *his*.

Shouldn't complain, though. The Air Force gave me a sweet deal. Emancipated Minor status and my own apartment. Pretty frickin' cool. Big man on campus, right there. The food is better, I'm acing my classes, Miss Lipman thinks I'm God in Civics, nothing hurts, I'm kicking ass in all sports known to man, and beating the chicks off with a stick.

It's insane.

No world to save. No big, honkin' space guns. No snakes. No geeks yakkety-yakking that technobabble at me 24/7. No rules, no regs, no guns. No car, no beer. No team. New friends.

Yeah. That.

I mean, what the hell else was I supposed to *do*, for cryin' out loud? I'm the Xerox. The old man is back, I'm O-U-T out. My command, my team, my friends - all his. His knees may hurt like a bitch but my life is his. Pardon me for dwelling on that one. I had to let it

all go, I had walk away. It had to be a clean break. No choice there and I'm not so dumb I don't know that I need to be different. I need to be me, not him. Got me a life sentence.

It's okay. I'm doing okay. I'm in the empty, no-brainer MTV groove and in my off time, watching CNN.

Just one thing.

I haven't moved from this spot in ten minutes, my skinny little ass planted against the wall where I can watch my own front door.

I ask him to come help me with my homework, for chrissake. It's so lame, he'll know it's not what I really needed to say.

I know he'll come.

He has to come.

I *miss* him.

I just got him back and the bastard Assguard and the old man who has my life made me walk away. Screw the stiff-upper lip thing.

The first tentative rap at my door, I have it open, he's there, looking down at me, not sure if he should smile and then he's fielding an armful of me. His whole body freezes and quivers, then his arms come around me, he holds me, his chin rests in my hair. I squeeze the crap out of him, shameless. I've got nothing to lose. It's already gone.

I want him.

I want Daniel.

"Jack," he murmurs, his voice as warm and gentle as his hug.

My Daniel.

Mine.

God, he feels good, slim and firm and muscular. A tall drink of water, legs that go on forever, perfect ass, my walking wet-dream. Literally. Those sheets spend more time in the Laundromat than they do on my bed. I forgot what fifteen *feels* like. Thirty years on, I don't expect to get ambushed by a sea of my own testosterone.

"Uh, Jack," Daniel mutters, straightening up and doing some more quivering. "Um."

Yeah, about that erection.

"I missed you."

Daniel's big blue eyes melt. Devastating eyes. Devastating man, beautiful, sexy, totally unaware. Mine.

"You don't have to say you missed me too," I say generously as he stumbles for some sort of response.

He actually brought books. That's so sweet. I drop down, help him scoop 'em up, take his free hand and pull him, blushing and slightly resistant, into the apartment. I can tell he has my erection on his mind. He should. I have all this experience. I know exactly what I'm doing and I'm *fifteen*. I'm the frickin' Energiser Bunny here, I can go all night. I can be the best sex Daniel Jackson never had.

I just need him to see past the admittedly cute exterior to the real *me*.

Right now he's cautiously looking around my apartment, trying to work out how to respond to me stalking him like some slathering half-starved wolverine ready to eat him alive.

"I wish you'd wear tighter jeans," I complain and Daniel instinctively looks down. He's dressed for hot 'n' heavy homework action, not me jumping his bones.

Doesn't help.

His black jeans are a little on the comfy side but that sweater, the turtleneck? Man, oh, man. Framing his perfect face and I could drown in those eyes.

"Tighter everything," I acknowledge fairly, blatantly eyeing him up, every edible inch of him. "I've wished that for years."

"Years?" Daniel bleats, falling into a chair by my table. I think his legs gave out.

"Years." As I sit, I'm smiling and even though his world is coming down around his ears, Daniel smiles back. He kind of loves me. That's what always held the old man back, even more than the regulations. He couldn't bear for Daniel to lose this soft look in his eyes when I - he - is the only one Daniel gets this look for. The only one to get in *close*.

I mourned Daniel for a year. I did my job, I went on, and on, and missed him more. The old man can't do anything with that. Won't. He and I, though, we're different. My choice.

"This is - um."

"Awkward?" I suggest charmingly. I'm on my best behaviour, horny and sappy and happy he's here.

"I was going to say insane."

"That's my boy," I drawl deliberately, grinning as he does that cute puzzled nose-scrunching thing. "Under all this - cuteness," I say expansively, gesturing modestly at myself, "I'm still me. The real deal." Just with better knees. And hormones. We need to talk about the hormones. Soon. I can make Daniel sweat. I can make him scream. All night. Every night. Every day.

"You're attracted to me?" It's possible Daniel could sound less convinced, if he really put his heart into it.

"The instantaneous erection not enough for ya?" I enquire interestedly.

"Jack has hugged me plenty of - well, a few times, I remember *that*, and he has -"

"Control."

Daniel blinks hard and nervously licks his lips. "Oh."

He does that again, I'm going in. Right over this table and into his lap. I'll cry if I have to.

"Oh, come on, Daniel. You knew I didn't have homework."

Daniel looks down at the books and sighs. I know he brought them in case it was hard for me, in case I couldn't open up, say what I needed to say to him. He is the sweetest guy in the world. I feel kind of shitty for knocking him off-balance like this from the get-go, but it's the only way. When he thinks of Jack, he thinks of the old man, not me, and my Daniel will never touch a child. So, I have to make him *see*. This body is just a shell and I'm me.

"I don't know what to say," Daniel admits, looking all wide-eyed and out of his depth.

"What would you say if I kissed you?"

Daniel leans forward and touches the table with one emphatic finger. "No," he says carefully, his eyes very direct.

I lean forward too. "Would you say no to the old man?"

"Jack?" he asks incredulously, looking like he wants to laugh. He chokes it down, trying not to hurt my poor innocent young feelings.

"Daniel, until a week or so ago, Jack was *me*."

Daniel does this strange little deprecating thing when people unexpectedly show an interest in him. He doesn't believe there are signals, then he thinks he's reading them wrong, then he does that dawning horrified realisation thing, then he panics a little and has to work out what to do. The Bambi look works for him. He's adorable.

I have no idea how he even survived high school. I realised my first rest-room stop these kids need Special Ops training going in. I've killed more people than there are in the school population and I'm what passes for mature and well-adjusted. The teachers love me, give me a sweet ride.

"Trust me, Daniel," I explain earnestly. "We *both* want to get you into bed."

Bed? Daniel mouths. I think he's trying to speak but there's no sound coming out.

"He learned to deal with it," I shrug. This is not about the old man. "But my hormones are fifteen."

"Fifteen, yes!" Daniel blurts out gratefully, achieving impressive, escalating volume. "I could get arrested for what you want to do to me!"

That makes me laugh. God, I could just see that, the cops looking at the two of us and trying to work out which one was the victim here.

"It's immoral, it's illegal." Daniel is building up a full head of alliteration.

"I'm still ten years older than you." Hell, I may only reach his chin, but I still feel like the cradle snatcher.

"You look like a child!"

"Aren't you the one who's been lecturing me for years on the need to see with better eyes than that?" I ask him gently as he impales himself on his own compassionate logic. "Are you going to make me suffer because of a perceptual problem you have?"

"You're over-simplifying," Daniel argues, frowning at me.

"Do I look like I care?"

"I won't tell you what you look like. Your ego does fine on its own, thanks. It's not getting any help from me," he retorts sharply.

"I'm at my sexual peak," I gloat smugly.

"Jack."

"Our lovemaking would be unbelievable. Trust me!"

"Jack!"

"You love me. I love you. Let's make love."

Daniel gets very red in the face. I think he's embarrassed I know he loves me. He's also pissed I'm using it against him. If he didn't have all these holes in his memory, he'd know how dirty I fight. The stakes are high. Daniel is everything to me.

"Tell me, Daniel, if it was the old man doing the asking?" I ask suavely. "What would you say to him?"

"Jack would never ask - he doesn't - I - I mean."

I wait a while but this is all Daniel apparently has to say. Stutter. I think he's in shock.

"Air Force regulations are a bitch," I comment chattily. "They've kept my yap shut for years."

Daniel's eyebrows soar towards his hairline. "Years?"

"Of course, I'm not in the Air Force now."

"No, you're in school. High school!"

"How old were you when you first had sex?"

"That's none of your business!"

"This time around, I'm kind of a late bloomer." I'm an arrogant little snot. That much hasn't changed. Daniel may be seeing a kid, but he's talking to *Jack*. I'm doing a good job of keeping him off-balance. "Ever been with a man?"

"Have you?" he fires back at me.

"Didn't I say the sex would be unbelievable?"

Daniel struggles for some kind of response to that. Anything. He's got nothing, he's helpless and knows it. He's all huge, wounded eyes and open mouth. Can't believe that I'm doing this to him.

"I've wanted you for *years*. I swear to god, I was a goner practically from the moment we met. I could barely keep my hands off you. It wasn't until you got fried -"

"Fried?"

"Nem's planet?"

"Nem?"

"Sushi?"

"What?"

"The creature from the Black Lagoon kidnapped you and fried our brains so we thought you were dead," I explain rapidly, taking some pity on his confusion. "I was kind of freaked and crying, beating up Hammond's car, wanting to retire and stuff." It really was that bad. I humiliated myself on camera and in front of most of the movers and shakers of the SGC. "On the upside, you did stagger out of the sea soaking wet and we got to appreciate the whole - clinging - thing." Daniel is stunned by the rapid flow of information, but I do kind of have a point. "The point being that I have never reacted to losing a man like that in my career. Never."

"And you've lost a lot?"

"Some," I respond evenly.

Daniel's sensitivity catches up with his sarcasm and he pales, stammering out an apology.

He's having a harder and harder time seeing the kid. This is good.

"Try to comprehend me," I ask.

"Talk slow," he retorts.

"I don't scare you at all, do I?"

"Honestly? You're kind of cute." He pats the air with his hand and what he means is short. Scrawny. I've been smouldering at him for years and this, he finds cute.

"I mean I never did," I say sharply, ignoring this provocation. The cheeky sonovabitch must have been talking to Carter. "Not even at my worst. You said it yourself. The first time through the gate was suicide."

This reminder jars Daniel horribly. "You remember?" he whispers.

"Everything."

He touches my hand compassionately and doesn't fight when I take hold of his. This is not funny anymore, not for him. The shock is fading as reality sinks in.

"I'm a goddamned Xerox, Daniel. I'm losing everything. Everything that made sense." Everything that made me - *me*. "I can't lose you too."

"You won't."

No song and dance, but it's a promise. He can be my friend.

"I still want you."

He shakes his head but his hand and his eyes are gentle.

"I'm not a child, no matter what I look like, Daniel."

"I'm not attracted to you."

There it is.

"Are you attracted to *him*?" I can't fight the surge of bitter, resentful rage.

"This is not about Jack."

"Answer the question. Are you?" I insist. "Because he would never come right out and ask you like I did. That's not what he - we - fantasised. Try a bottle of wine and a fire. You don't shrug off the arm he puts around you. You melt and your head is on his shoulder. He loves how you trust him. He loves you. You sit like that, drowsing, and then you stir, you look up at him sleepily and smile. He touches your face, can't resist doing that. He's staring at you and he wants you so badly, he can't help himself, he's leaning in. He kisses you and you make this noise, a soft little moan. It drives him out of his mind. Before you know it, you're sprawled back on the couch, he's on top of you, pinning you with his weight, his tongue is in your mouth. You know he's going to make love to you and you don't want to fight what he's making you feel."

"Stop!"

"We missed you," I say thickly. "God, how we missed you. You died and we mourned. We died with you." Daniel jerks with every word, hit too hard. "He loves you and he's scared all the time for you and he won't ever do it. He won't ever ask. But I'm not him, not now. I can't be. I have to find myself. I made the break, I walked away. I tried. I love you. We love you. We won't change. And I - I have to ask."

"I can't. I'm sorry. I can't!"

He's hurt. I'm really hurting him with his. He didn't know it was coming, not that I would want him this way, not that I would be this cruel. All he wanted was to help, to be here for me. He won't ever be ready to hear I sweat and shake for him, I dream of fucking his ass.

"In a couple of years, I'll even *look* legal." It's low and I can't help it. My back is against the wall.

"Jack, no," Daniel insists distressfully. He convulsively squeezes my fingers and then lets go.

"Daniel, it's me. It's *me*."

"No. You're another person now, Jack," Daniel reminds me. "You have to be. You know that."

"Don't tell me to let go."

"I won't do that," Daniel admonishes me quietly, hurt again. "I would never just leave you."

"You already did."

For a moment, I think he's going to cry, but he takes it. Doesn't even tell me it's unfair. I know it is, but it's how I feel. The old man too. He's so afraid of losing Daniel, the best part of himself.

"He needs you," I tell my Daniel in an odd, dead voice that doesn't sound like me, not any me I know. "You don't even know. It's like there's no one else around. His eyes are on you the whole time and he talks to you. It's all you."

Jesus, what am I doing? This is about me, right? My frustration. My loss. My needs. So why am I wasting my breath on *him*? It can't possibly be because it's the old man who Daniel really needs. This hasn't been about Daniel at all. I look at him, sitting quietly. Waiting. I just kicked seven kinds of shit out of him emotionally but he's not about to walk away from me. I'm, Christ, I'm ashamed. All the time I've known him, admired who he is, loved him for that, I've learned nothing. It's still about me. At least the old man can do this for Daniel, can think about him.

"Maybe you should go."

"Jack, I can't leave you like this. I won't."

Daniel's a good friend. A good man. My love. He's as lost as I am right now but the difference is, he's facing up to it. He walks his own path with no idea how hard this is on the old man, how bad he wants to help. Daniel is trying to be so strong, he's so folded in on himself, so private, the old man is afraid to touch. He respects Daniel's need to do this, to find himself again, but it cuts he's no longer inside those walls.

I guess I know what I need to do. It never was about me.

I smile at Daniel, who's practically sick with anxiety, and excuse myself. My cell phone is in my bedroom and I need to make a call. My fingers shake and my lips are numb as I punch in the number.

"O'Neill. The tone is coming right up. Be good to go."

"Don't bother picking up," I tell the machine tersely. "If you're there, put down the beer and get your ass into gear." I reel off my address. "Daniel is here. I told him. About us. How we feel. He looks like shit and he - he needs *you*." I'm hissing this and hating the old

man, hating myself. "I don't get to have him," I snarl, brutal and raw inside. The young voice comes out - whiny.

I hate it all.

I go back into the other room, make coffee, let Daniel talk to me as I splinter inside. I try my damndest to make it at least look like I'm hearing him. It's all I can do. We wind up with our butts planted against the counter in my tiny kitchen and he's so close I ache, wanting him.

The one reason I made that call is the old man feels this too, every minute of every day, and he can't walk away.

I have to.

The door slams open and Daniel straightens up with a jerk, stepping out protectively in front of me. The old man is there and I get a shock at how ugly I can be. He's angry and afraid, kid or not, he could tear me apart and my god, it shows. Daniel gets between us, braced for a fight, not expecting Jack to just grab him up and pull him away. Just that one killing look and it's like I'm not even here. All Jack cares about is Daniel.

I know. I love him too and all I can do is let Jack take Daniel away from me.

It's over. Left behind in silence, I lose. Everything.

I'll never see him again. The best part of me.

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"Jesus, you look like a ghost." Daniel hates me fussing even when he doesn't remember he hates me fussing but he didn't put up much of a fight when I hauled him out of there and he doesn't say a word now as I yank off my jacket and snug it round his shoulders. He's shivering in the cold night air.

"What'd the little shit say to you?" I demand urgently, holding the edges of the jacket together for him. I'm worried sick. Daniel's so pale and strained and he can't even look at me.

"Not much," Daniel mumbles. "He just tried to get me into bed."

"What?" I gasp, totally floored. I can't - I honestly can't believe it.

"Apparently, he's not in the Air Force now and that makes all the difference. Does it, Jack? Does it make a difference?"

One of the things I love about Daniel is he won't run from what scares him, even when what scares him is me. My heart freezes in my chest. I can't speak, but I can't look away. I think he can read the answer in my stone face because his flames and he staggers against me. I grab his shoulders and steady him.

"Shit," is all he says, but he does let me hold him for a moment or two before he shrugs me off. "Take me home," he orders.

Home for now is on base, a small room packed with what little is left of his life before he ascended. We can't talk about this there. I'm not sure I can talk about this at all. I guess that doesn't matter. Daniel does.

Abandoning the neat, nondescript car he signed out from the base in the vague certainty I'll take care of it, Daniel walks over to my truck. He's kind of shell-shocked and so adult about all of this it's depressing. When he pulls himself together he's going to let me down gently and be really nice about it all because that's who he is. The sweetest guy.

I'm sick to my stomach, too scared of losing him to even be angry any more at the kid. I just need to know how much damage he did, what I need to fix. At least he had the smarts to get me, he got this part right at least. I tell Daniel I'm taking him home, my home, and he doesn't protest. He just sits quietly as we drive along, staring brooding out the window as I look over at him from time to time.

"I don't want to leave him alone," Daniel says suddenly, painfully, as he begins to recognise the streets we're on, close to home. "I know I have to, I'm just making things worse." He's distressed about this.

"If he went back to high school, then he's taking it all the way," I offer. I didn't believe Mini-Me could do it and I guess I was right. He couldn't let go. Not Daniel. This was a lesson my copy needed to learn.

"Did you really miss me that much?"

Daniel's soft voice makes me shiver. Always. Even in his misery.

"Will he?"

"There's nothing you can do for him, Daniel." It's not quite what Daniel was asking, but it's the answer he needs to hear. "Don't tear yourself apart over him. He's a tough kid." He's me.

"You didn't answer my question, Jack."

He sounds as if he's afraid to hear the answer but I give it anyway. "I missed you," I admit gruffly, as if I hadn't shambled through an entire year like the walking dead, Daniel's absence more real to me than anything I was supposed to see or touch.

"I don't remember leaving you," Daniel says quietly. "I guess you blame me. What I know is you left me. A long time before I," he hesitates, finding this very difficult, "died."

"What do you want me to say?" I do blame him. I blame myself. Some nights, I feel like I killed him and when he left me, there was nothing I would say to keep him. I stood and let him go.

"That it wasn't just about sex and frustration."

We're pulling into my driveway and I say nothing while I park the truck. This hurts. I deserve it.

Daniel's head drops and he turns away, thinking I can't answer or I won't. I stop him, taking his shoulder as he opens the door.

"It was about loving you," I promise painfully. "And about not being able to do anything with that all." Silence falls then, heavy and stifling as I lock the truck and Daniel follows me into the house. As I close the door behind us, Daniel wanders down into the living room and when I go after him, I find him staring down into the fire. He seems to run out of steam then and just stands there as I slip the jacket from his shoulders. Before I can walk away, he puts his hands at my waist, stunning me. He's never done that before, never initiated or invited such intimacy.

"If I asked," Daniel whispers, "would you hold me?"

He doesn't need to ask. I've been afraid. That's why I stopped hugging him. He didn't want anyone to touch him and I - once I start, I touch too much. I engulf him, pull him to me, hold him tight, revelling in the feel of him, the solid reality of his presence here, with me, where he belongs. The moments stretch out but he doesn't pull away. I don't think this is a pity hug and I'm sure when Daniel lets me stroke his rumpled hair and then his back. I only want him to feel good, to let me take some of the weight and I exult when he allows it, his face buried against my shoulder and his arms tight around me.

"Do you want me?" Daniel is trembling. "Do you want to go to bed with me?"

"What I want is for you not to be hurt by anything that selfish little shit said or did tonight," I respond determinedly.

Daniel lifts his head. He looks terrified. Then he kisses me and we both jerk violently back in shock the instant our lips touch.

"Don't," I gulp, trembling violently. "I'm okay. I'm good. Just - don't." He can't. I don't know if I can control myself, god, I swear I don't.

"I'm not okay." He stretches up, his lips touch mine and I take his shoulders, hold him away from me. His eyes are huge and bruised in a grey face.

"You're confused," I tell him as gently as I'm able.

"Yes." He reaches between my legs, the stuttering stroke of his fingers slamming the blood down. Daniel gasps as I get hard, stumbling back as I lose it completely, grab his face and kiss him. I make this god-awful strangled noise as my tongue touches his and I drive down deep into him, plunging home. He's everything I dreamed. More. Shattered, I hold him. Maybe I'm holding him up. All I know is his mouth, the hot, sweet taste of him. I want him so badly. I could take him right here, push him down to the floor and love him.

Lose him.

I die when he kisses me back, shy and scared and shaking, his arms tight around my neck. I'm not coming on too strong, I'm not hurting him. Everything is right. I can't stop. I don't want to stop. I want Daniel, the sensuous rhythm of tongues stroking deep, the sway of our hips and the soft, incredulous sounds he makes, shock or excitement or both. I can't tell. He is so *alive*.

God, I love him. I love him to death.

"Daniel."

He gets all choked up when I say his name and I say it again. I want to hold him. I need that. I take his hand and lead him up the few stairs, around to my bedroom, promise him everything will be okay. He's trembling, braced for suggestions of sex, surprised and more than a little relieved when I dive into a drawer, pull us out some sweats and a couple of t-shirts.

"I just want you to stay," I explain, touching his face as he hovers by the bureau, holding the clothes I gave him. I want him safe.

"You don't - I mean, I thought," Daniel says hesitantly, watching my face and not the bed.

"Yes," I cut him off, pulling off my sweatshirt. "I want to make love. Badly."

"Really? Most people seem to want to do it well."

"What?"

"Never mind." Daniel starts to smile as I put on my Deputy Dawg T-shirt, some of his tension easing away. He lets me help him out of his thick, heavy sweater and into a USAF t-shirt. When I take hold of his belt, he swallows hard and quivers, flushing deeply as I slide down his zipper. "I promised," I whisper, letting him go. "This is more than sex and frustration." I don't think he can hear this enough.

I wander over and close the blinds, letting Daniel finish undressing in peace. It takes me a few seconds more to strip and change and join him at the foot of the bed as he folds his clothes and piles them neatly on my linen chest. This is not a choice I'll make for him. I

squeeze his shoulder and leave him to it, climbing gratefully into bed. I get stretched out and comfy, watching as Daniel sits on the extreme edge of the mattress and inserts himself diffidently under the covers. He takes some time smoothing them out, then folds his arms neatly over his chest.

"The kissing was good," he remarks in a wooden little voice. "I was enjoying that."

"Me too," I assure him, not minding he says this with no conviction at all. "I just had this feeling, call me crazy, but you grabbing my crotch out of the blue like that, I figured maybe you had stuff to say."

"I thought it was just me," Daniel says quietly. "Remembering more than actually happened, remembering wrong. It was just - too much." His gaze slides away from the ceiling to my face, then up again.

"Too much," I sigh. "You could say that."

"I mean about you. I don't remember enough to be feeling this much."

I slide over in the bed, reaching out to cup Daniel's face, making him jump. He blinks hard at me then takes his glasses off, laying them down with some ceremony on the bedside cabinet. It might have been a distraction, but if so, it doesn't work. I want to touch and I feel free to now, stroking Daniel's cheek and jaw the way I've needed to for a long time.

"You think having sex will help?" I ask Daniel understandingly.

"It seems right," Daniel says a little helplessly. "I want to be with you very much."

"You don't have many defences right now," I remind him, tracing the delicate arch of his eyebrows. "Are you sure you aren't mistaking friendship for attraction? We were always close."

"Close?" Daniel mulls this over in silence for a while, not seeming to mind having my hands on him. "Too close?"

"For guys not having sex, yes. Eventually even I worked that out."

"So, not close enough," Daniel decides, not mentioning he hadn't worked this out, not really. Not so he remembers.

"You want more now? You're in my bed, which is a first, and a great one, but I'm trying not to assume anything here."

Daniel's response is to slide his warm fingers over my cheek.

"You don't think having sex will only add to your confusion?"

"It might make sense."

"I like you being straight with me." Not that this is a stretch; I like most every Daniel thing.

"He told me everything," Daniel apologises in a stricken whisper. "I'm so sorry about that. I never meant-"

"Sssssh," I soothe, kissing Daniel softly on the mouth. "We're good."

"You - you," Daniel stumbles, takes a deep breath and tries again, "died with me? You love me *that* much?"

I cringe at the exposure of what is too intense to share, too dark, finding Daniel's utter disbelief he could mean this much to anyone is worse. "More," I grate, frowning.

"Oh." He doesn't know what to think, let alone say.

"Once more with feeling," I grumble, trying to let him off light. "Baring my soul, here."

"I'm confused," Daniel explains, with just a hint of a smile.

"That's a very convenient excuse and I love you enough I'm letting you get away with it."

"I'm stumbling through in the expectation that it will all make sense. I don't know who I am, not with any certainty. Who I'm supposed to be. I tried to explain, to Sam." He plucks nervously at the covers, very far away from me at this moment. "I don't understand it myself. I just feel I did something wrong and I don't know that it's in me-"

"It's in you." I interrupt, protectiveness surging. "You're a better man than me and part of what makes that true is you don't even see it. You don't see you. I don't know what happened with Oma Desala or the Others. I do know it happened because I asked you to cross a line and you crossed it for *me*. You knew what it could mean. I didn't know, but I asked you, and you did it anyway. You did nothing wrong, Daniel. That was me. I was the one who made you break the rules. All you did was try to help. Me, Carter, Skaara, Teal'c - the others. You tried to help us all. That's who you are. That's the man I see."

Daniel looks as if he's broken inside but I'm slowly getting used to that. He's been in this place before and he's strong, so much stronger than anyone I know. It doesn't stop me hurting with him or wanting to fight all his insecurities and this fathomless lack of faith in himself.

"You're all I trust, Jack. You're all that makes sense. I'm fighting with the rest," Daniel confesses tiredly, turning blindly into me. His arm finds a comfortable place, hugs around me.

I hold him too and we lie close, not saying anything for a while. It's enough I know Daniel needs me. I'm thinking maybe I know why he's finding it harder to let me in than the others, too. He feels more for me. I was almost past hope I would ever be in this place with Daniel. Almost.

"Jack? When two guys sleep together, do they usually, you know, just sleep?"

"The sarcasm I can live without," I retort briskly, grinning.

"This is not something I remember," Daniel observes dispassionately. "Being with a man," he elaborates unnecessarily. "I think I would. Remember. Pretty sure about that."

"I'm trying not to push you into anything here," I explain with extreme care. My ethics say no, but my highly motivated libido has Special Ops training.

"I appreciate that."

"Do you also appreciate how hot I find this whole inexperience thing?"

"No. You do?" Daniel looks at me interrogatively, then away. "Oh." He's blushing.

I suppose I should be grateful he didn't ask why.

"I'm at the limits of my control."

"I don't know what my limits are," Daniel says reflectively. "I'm still learning those. I do feel, though - um, I'm thinking about us. Together," he adds significantly.

"Making love?"

"That."

"What are we doing?" Like I'm *not* going to ask Daniel about any sexual fantasy featuring me.

"Well, we're not in front of the fire."

I try to respond to that and can't. Literally. I close my eyes in pain. This is so embarrassing. I'm so embarrassed. My pissant copy really did tell Daniel everything.

"I shut him up before he got into too much detail," Daniel confesses, shamefaced. "I was so horrified at the thought of the little tyke wanting to, um, you know?"

"I know," I retort grimly. Me too.

"He kept telling me the sex would be unbelievable."

I don't miss the speculative look accompanying this comment.

"If you're going to fish, you'll need bait," I hint broadly, curious to know if he'll bite.

Daniel nods, eases just that bit closer to me and starts to play with my hair.

I find this very nice and do nothing whatsoever which could be construed as cramping his style. He's quite liking all this and frankly, it's good for me too. He's driving me insane, talking the talk, but he's done that for years, and I will not rush him. "Tell me." I tilt up his face and tease his lips with mine. "What're we doing together? In your dream. What do you see?"

"I see you. You're touching me."

I can do that. There are plenty of ways I've never touched him before, subtle intimacies we've never shared. He watches me intently as I prop myself up on my elbow, smiling down at him as I splay my fingertips along the sharp ridge of his hip. It's not an innocent touch but he still has something of a comfort zone. It's so easy to slip my hand around to curve over his buttock, lifting him a little, kneading the taut firmness through dark, soft jersey.

Daniel bites his lip.

"Touching you like this?"

He closes his eyes, nods tightly.

"Like this?"

I run my hand down the length of his thigh, then nudge up between his legs. He gasps as I cup him, his breath hitching as I stroke and squeeze. I trace the outline of his cock through the thin fabric of clothes which have been next to my skin too, his balls resting heavy in my palm. It takes so little to arouse him, his hands grabbing at the sheets as he shudders and shifts beneath my rhythmic, rubbing hand.

"Is this what you wanted? Is this what you dreamed? Is this an old feeling, Daniel?" I murmur, stealing soft kisses. "Or new?"

He wraps his arms around my neck and pulls me down into a kiss, hooking his leg over mine to keep the pressure and friction against his groin. I take him into my mouth, sucking and biting on his tongue. If he knows what he's doing, what he wants, I won't ask more. I'll give him anything.

What Daniel wants is to kiss, slow, savouring, deep, drugging kisses, so tender and passionate, I could drown. I hold him tight, kiss him as hard and as long as I've wanted to, kiss him until he opens up to me. I know the exact moment he stops thinking, surrenders and *feels*. He arches into me, the breath sobbing in his throat. My name.

Drunk on what I do to him, I reach between his legs, massaging his cock compulsively, the fabric chafing him unbearably as he swells to aching hardness, moaning out his excitement.

He pleads with me to stop, to go on, he doesn't know. I'm killing him.

I'm shaking so badly as I ask to see him naked and all he can do is gulp and let me do what I want. I strip him with ruthless efficiency, then myself, then I freeze on my knees at his side and gape at his finely muscled beauty and ivory skin, the ripe, red cock jutting towards his smooth, sculpted belly.

Feeling I'm short-circuiting from the buzz in my head, I move fluidly to stretch myself out between his sprawled legs, hooking my arms beneath his thighs, clamping my hands over his hips as I take his cock in my mouth.

"*Jack!*" Daniel screams out as he bucks.

I have no finesse at all. I hold him still, I eat him, I swallow him whole, I lose it completely as his cock throbs and pulses over my greedy tongue. I want to howl, he tastes so bitter, he feels so good. Daniel has no defence against this; I own him. He's *mine*. His scrabbling fingers finding the headboard, gripping white-knuckle tight as I ecstatically suck him off. My tongue rolls over a fat vein on the underside of his cock and Daniel bucks once again. I pull back a little, drawing my teeth over his skin, reaching in with my fingers to rub him here in this sweet spot he has. Sucking voluptuously, I drive him insane. Buried deep in my throat, writhing desperately, he throws back his head and cries, great, tearing sobs as I pleasure him. He shudders with growing intensity, spasms and shoots down my throat. I gulp and choke and suck until he's dry, burying my face in his groin until the last orgasmic tremors die away.

"Oh, god!" I bellow triumphantly. "That was great!"

Only then do I look up to find Daniel brick red and panting, open-mouthed, melting-eyed, shocked beyond belief and quaking with reaction. He's the hottest thing I've ever seen and I think he knows I love him. When I scramble up the bed and snatch him to me, he discovers I'm hard as a rock, blushes, which is a feat in itself for him at this point in time, but still hugs me back.

"Sorry," I apologise guiltily, giving him a gentle kiss as I tuck and smooth the covers around us. "I just confused you a helluva lot more." This is a strictly rhetorical question. Daniel looks like he was hit by a truck. "I was at the limits of my control. I mean, it wasn't just some line I was spinning. I really lost it there."

"S'okay," Daniel wheezes in a thread of a voice.

He's so sweet, I absolutely, positively have to kiss him again.

"So, now we're back on track. You were saying?" I invite supportively.

He punches me in the arm. Then he blushes again. "I can't believe you did that," he says shyly, still fighting a bit for breath.

"Honestly?" I admit warily, well aware how bad I've just been. Daniel *really* didn't see that, you'll excuse the expression, coming. "I loved it." I'm biased as hell, but I think Daniel looks better. Stunned, but better. I just hold onto him, petting his hair and making soothing noises until he starts to breathe again and his eyes un-cross. I pet him some more and decide he's not just thoroughly sexually satisfied, but contented. He cuddles up with me, maybe a little diffidently for my liking, but he's here and he seems almost comfortable with our nudity, playing with my hair again, touching me with delicate, wondering fingers.

"I missed you too, Jack," he says suddenly.

"You were there for me."

"I hope -"

"You came through." I can't take his self-doubt, his constant questioning, not without wanting to make it all better for him, making it right.

"Sometimes, it feels to me that I left you. I can't hold those memories, though."

"Don't," I urge him. "That was a bad time." The worst. He was dying and even then, I couldn't tell him I loved him. I couldn't give him anything at all. He didn't leave me. I drove him away. I don't want him to remember all of those things, only this. The trust, the closeness. All the good things we missed. The rest is long behind us. "You don't want to be led by the hand. You need to do this yourself. Don't think I don't understand. It's just - it's hard, Daniel. To let you hurt. To watch you stumble." To let him fall.

"Is it worse to lose everything and not remember or is it worse to know?" he asks and I know he's thinking about the boy.

"Maybe some day you can tell me." By some miracle this is exactly the right thing to say. Daniel gets all wide-eyed and defenceless, but in a very good way. I smile and I don't tell him that for the boy, knowing is hell. I want to keep this mood, this moment, for us.

Daniel's hand skims my hip. "Can I - do - anything?" he enquires politely vis a vis the erection poking him in the stomach.

"I'd rather wait, thank you," I respond with equal politeness.

"I'm happy to help," he assures me with adorable earnestness, then blinks hard. "Wait for what?"

"For you to rest up." I kiss him fondly and he kisses me back. "What I have in mind takes two."

Daniel surprises me again with a slow, gentle smile. "I like to be close to you. I find I need it." He touches my face and I take his hand and kiss the palm. "I need you. The more I know me, Jack, the more I need you."

I guess I know he loves me too.

The rest will come.

**FINIS**