

Title: Suspense

Author: Biblio

Rating: NC-17

Pairing: Jack and Daniel

Category: First Time. Humour. Romance.

Series: Starting Points

Season/Spoilers: Season 4. Set shortly before "The Curse."

Synopsis: It takes an interloper with designs on Daniel to finally get Jack to make his move.

Warnings: None.



# Suspense

## Starting Points Part One

### A slash story by Biblio

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JACK

I'm glaring at tall, dead and gorgeous. The high-flying bastard may be breathing and walking around but he's dead just the same. It's only a matter of time.

I've waited years for this, for the time to be right. For Daniel to be free. To know his feelings for me aren't about dependence. To know he's crossed the line from friendship to love. I'm ready to coax him that bit further, from love...to being *in* love.

I'm double-damned if I'm going to let all that soul-burning patience and uncharacteristic selflessness go to *shit* because Lt Colonel Alex...as in "Just call me Alex, Daniel."...Devoe is planning to seduce my dear and only love right out from under me.

A position he's only been in figuratively of course, no matter how insistent Mister Happy gets to the contrary.

Whatever. Devoe gets to enjoy the fruits of my labours over his dead body. He doesn't get to have Danny just because he can give Danny the *only* thing I can't. An interested and informed audience.

I'm watching my Danny blossom like a rose under all this gentle, perfectly judged

attention and eloquence. Sweet innocent that he is, it hasn't crossed his mind Just Call Me Alex is way more interested in his body than his mind. And he's plenty interested in that, too.

Danny thinks I like the occasional bracing cold shower, never connecting it with his occasional presence right there in the showers next to me. Which kind of sums up exactly why he needs somebody like me to be his best bud. It's to protect him from people like me. People like Devoe.

The thing burning me up inside is...Daniel is straight. I know it, and Devoe sure as hell knows it, 'cause he ain't. He might not be looking for a picket fence and 2.4 dogs, but the acid in my gut tells me he isn't looking for an easy lay either. Daniel's not easy. Quite the opposite. He's a difficult, sweet, complex, brilliant, clueless, wilful, shy, stubborn-as-all-hell little S.O.B with a heart of gold and an incandescent soul.

I love him to death.

Devoe knows it, too. Took him about a nanosecond in the gateroom to read us, clue into the whole damn thing, write me off as a bad joke and *want* Danny. All for himself. I won't pretend even to myself this guy isn't *serious* competition. I've seen his file: his record and his rank, for his age, speak for themselves. He's another one of those way smarter than me, know it all new breeds, got a masters in medieval literature of all things. Smart *and* sensitive, as well as...hell, he looks kinda like that new doc in ER. The one from Transylvania or wherever. He put the moves on Danny from word one, spinning a web around my boy so subtly only I could see it.

Less than a week later, he knows what I mean to Danny. Devoe hates me. I hate him more.

I can't kill Devoe just for offering to drive Danny home, even though any court in the land would take one good look at the beauty and innocence personified that is Danny and acquit instantly on the grounds of justifiable homicide.

I want to, God, how I *want* to kill him, but I can't. So I'll have to take Danny out of the equation instead. This is a desperate situation. It calls for extreme measures.

We can go for some food if you like? Yeah. Right. Like you haven't already made reservations some place with candles and violins, you bastard.

I say brightly, "Sounds good to me. We can take in a steak at O'Malley's."

Danny lights up. Bless him, he thinks his best friend and his new friend are gettin' along like a house on fire.

Somebody better call 911.

And it looks like I'm not the only one entertaining malice aforethought. Devoe gives me a long, steady, not to say homicidal, stare. It tells me, you had your chance and you blew it, old man. Get outta my way or I'm coming through you.

Right back atcha. I'm still the Alpha Male of this particular tribe, so bring it on. Devoe isn't cocky, just convinced he can sweep me aside and put me out with the trash. Which makes my inevitable victory all the sweeter.

All I have to do is hang in there through a steak dinner without crushing Danny's hopes me and you know who can get along. As he's clearly got his heart set on it and I hate to disappoint him unnecessarily. Let him hang onto a sweet, impossible dream for a while longer. At least until I've seen off the master of the universe.

Then I just have to get Danny out of O'Malley's and into the Explorer with me.

I'll take him home. I'll look pathetic and say I need to talk and he'll blow off you know who in a heartbeat. It's sorta true. Mr Happy does have a lot to say, stuff that's been bottled up inside for way too long. My heterosexuality being a mere technicality and all.

The weather is going to get nasty. Very nasty. All I'll have to do is fumble with the keys long enough to get us both soaked to the skin. Of course, we can't sit around in wet clothes.

It's my house, so I get the only clean sweats. Danny can take his pick. Skin. Which would suit us both perfectly. Or the jammies my mother bought me. Why she bought them is one of those immutable mysteries of life, right up there with why toast always crash lands butter side down. The jammies are navy blue and soft and fluffy. If there is *any* friggin' justice in the universe, with any luck they'll fall right off him.

I tell them smoothly, "I just have to make a call. Meet you topside in ten minutes."

I rush out of Danny's office and race to mine. Just enough time to stop the guys rewiring my kitchen from reconnecting me to the mains. A quick call takes care of it, along with another few hundred bucks on my tab. Worth every cent.

Danny. Jammies. A warm fire. Candlelight.

Sounds like a plan.

I'm going to make a man of him.

I'm not going to risk being late topside, because something tells me Devoe will distract Daniel with talk of Beowulf or some such, lure him into his car and take off without a backward glance.

I head off to the gear-up room and change, checking out my reflection anxiously. This morning I was embarrassed because my Laundry Situation had reached such epidemic proportions my only clean shirt had to be hidden under a sweater. Even I haven't got the balls to walk into the SGC at 04.30 wearing a cream silk shirt under a leather jacket. The gossip would hit the commissary before I hit the gear-up room.

Now I feel kinda smug I've hit the bottom of the laundry basket. I think I'll do. Black chinos, cream silk shirt, black leather jacket. Not exactly sex on a stick like you know who, the SOB has pecs you could ski down, but I do look classy. If I do say so myself.

I give myself a little nod of approval and haul ass to the elevator. I'm trying not to think if Danny has never found me attractive before, a years' old silk shirt is not going to give him any kind of epiphany now.

Daniel doesn't think about himself often enough to care about clothes. He started our acquaintance in a duffle coat, and those checked shirts just get worse...and worse. I cringe every time I see him in civvies. He's getting to own some nice meet 'n' greet the galaxy come funeral suits, but his casual clothes leave everything to be desired.

I would love to take him shopping and kit him out as he deserves but it's impossible. I haven't come up with a single plausible reason for Colonel O'Neill to tenderly escort Dr. Jackson on a tour around the finer clothing establishments in Colorado Springs. And believe me, I've tried. I've been a perfect gentleman where Danny's concerned, but I'm only human. Those dressing rooms are communal. Why wait outside when I could advise and offer a little hands on assistance inside?

I leave security in my slipstream and then I'm in the lot, heading for the Explorer. I spot Devoe right next to it, leaning against a sports car. It's a Ferrari, a classic model, classic colour, Racing Green. A 250 GTE from the early 60s, I think. Devoe has good taste in cars as well as perfect taste in men. I hate him just that bit more. Next to the Ferrari, the Explorer looks pedestrian and lumbering. Kinda like its one careful owner.

Devoe looks good in black, too. He's got one of those perfect swimmer physiques, displayed to best advantage in skin tight black jeans and T-shirt. He's only a couple of years older than Daniel and Christ but it shows. My heart is sinking.

It almost climbs out of my throat when a familiar, breathless voice apologises in a rush for being late and I turn to see Danny for the first time.

My jaw drops. As does Colonel Perfection's. Danny's been shopping all by himself, it would seem.

He's wearing these dark olive combat pants and a sleeveless jacket, some kinda smooth, sheened material. They look great, but it's the sweater that's doing it for me 'n' you know who. It's a dove grey, ribbed turtleneck. Against that soft grey, Danny's wondrous blue

eyes are simply devastating. Neither of us can tear our eyes from his beautiful face. He's stunning. He's also the only one here who doesn't know it.

When I get in tomorrow I'm gonna check the security tapes. I bet he turned every head on the base.

Danny completes our enslavement by the simple expedient of removing his glasses and smiling. He's happy, he's smiling, he's utterly ravishing. I think my tongue is hanging out. I think I'm not alone in that.

He fiddles with the arm of his glasses and mutters distractedly, "I think I've got a screw loose."

I'm so besotted I just let that go by me without a word.

He becomes aware of the silence and glances up, nose adorably scrunched up in confusion. He looks from me to Devoe and back again. Then his face clears and he mutters shyly, "Sam. I told her I needed new stuff and she *insisted* on coming with me. My wardrobe is now full of weird things like this but she said I'd hurt her feelings if I didn't wear it, so..." A little shrug tells us he's stuck with it even if he looks ridiculous.

I call down blessings on my 2IC's head, then tell him in a thankfully almost normal, squeak free voice, "K-Mart does a duffle coat, would go nice with that."

It's an old joke that makes him grin, lighting his eyes up. His eyes are, in point of fact, pellucid. That's a word I had to look up in Webster's after I heard it in the hall one day, after Danny trailed by with his nose buried in a book. From the marines. Pellucid is exactly the right superlative for Daniel's eyes. The blue does glow with a gentle radiance. Especially against this sweater. Devoe is clearly weak-kneed from a solid dose of the eyes but doesn't get the joke so that's one for our side.

When neither of us makes a move, Danny looks a little puzzled. He shoots us both a glance saying he's explained away Fashion Accessorised Daniel, so why are we waiting, guys?

Drop your gaze a foot or so Danny, you'll see just why. In glorious Technicolor, wide-screen...

He waits a beat but we ain't budging so long as he's looking at us like *that*. He ventures another shy smile, "Anyone up for Italian instead of steaks?"

Given the Danny-induced testosterone levels, if he expressed a preference for cucumber sandwiches and Earl Grey tea, he'd get them. With the crusts trimmed off, sprigs of parsley on top and a bone china cup 'n' saucer.

I can see from the smirk on Devoe's face he *had* made reservations. They had always been going Italian. Hope you booked a big enough table, asshole. There's three of us on this date and *you're* the fifth wheel.

Danny is headed automatically to the passenger side of the Explorer when Devoe shows why he's a high flyer, and a devious bastard to boot, as he says in an oh-so-casual voice, "So, Daniel, you ever get an opportunity to handle the illuminated manuscripts in the British Museum?"

Daniel freezes and turns back, "Handle? No. I've admired them, of course. It's a priceless collection. Are you saying you've had the privilege?"

I can see he's hooked, he's walking back over to the Ferrari wanting to hear all about it. Devoe has this look of fatuous pleasure I want to smack right off his face as he opens the door and settles Danny in. Devoe tells me grudgingly, "Leonardo's."

The last thing I hear from Danny before the door slams shut on the driver's side is something about the Magna Carta.

I'm left forlorn as they merrily drive away in full literary flow. Devoe just had to be a museum junkie, didn't he? I'm forced to declare a draw. One for his side.

Bastard. Did I mention I hate him?

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DANIEL

I find myself in the unusual position of being the absolute centre of attention. Jack and Alex are watching every single move I make. They have both been watching me intently since I joined them in the parking lot at Cheyenne Mountain.

I'm well known for my supposedly intuitive logic and lateral thinking, but I don't have to be a Daniel Jackson to figure out I'm on a date. Because I am Daniel Jackson, however, it's just, well, it's just I have difficulty believing it. That I'm on a date.

With Jack.

With Alex.

With Jack *and* Alex.

A *date*. A double date! Okay, okay, Jackson. Hysteria is setting in. Think about this calmly.

Fact one. This is a *very* nice Italian restaurant. Expensive, exclusive, hip enough not to mind our casual clothes, you come and go as you please between bar and table. An intimate corner table in our case. Candlelight. Red roses everywhere. Romantic music.

Conclusion: we had a reservation. I'm on a date with Alex, was pretty much always going to be going on a date with him. Would've been nice of him to clue me in.

Fact two. Jack is wearing that splendid black leather jacket of his with a lovely cream silk shirt, teamed with an attitude towards Alex that could start a small war. I've never seen Jack in silk before. Or this possessive before. It's an eye opener. I've always thought Jack was handsome, in an abstract sort of way. I don't have a picture of him in my locker or anything, but I've, well, I've noticed him. From time to time. Usually when he's been in his dress blues. He's authoritative. Distinguished. Charismatic. Roguish, charming, then soulful by turns. In his dress blues he's...well, in the interests of accuracy, I'd have to say absolutely the correct description is...not to put too fine a point on it...I'll own up. He's drop-dead gorgeous. The way Jack looks in that uniform has a lot to do with me upgrading my own formal wear. The sartorial contrast was just too painful. Jack is the most alive person I've ever known, and in leather and silk he is positively exuding sex appeal and invitation to sweet sin. There's a certain directional component to the invitation. Toward me.

Conclusion: I'm on a date with Jack. In point of fact, it's possible I may have been dating Jack for some years. I'm Jack's Friday Night Boy. I may have to *kill* him for not clueing me in.

Fact three: Alex has known me less than a week and yet here we are on a real, live date. Alex has done this before so I am fairly confident he knows I have not. He would have mentioned this was a date otherwise.

Conclusion: Alex has designs on my virginity.

Fact four: Jack has known me for over four years and yet here we are on a real, live date. I'm presuming Jack has never done this before, and I know he knows I have not. We appear to have been going steady for over three years and my virgo is still very much intacto.

Conclusion: Jack has allowed me to preserve my virginity because he has designs on my heart and soul.

I am profoundly grateful Jack never asked me to choose between him and the love I still felt for Sha'uri long after all hope was gone. He's never allowed his feelings for me to interfere with our ever-deepening friendship. A friendship I still believe is important to him, he wouldn't have worked so hard at it otherwise. Or been so reluctant to risk it. Even so, I may have to kill my best friend for being so damn chivalrous.

I am no longer surprised at the mood he has been in these past few months. I don't know how long Jack has been in love with me, or how long he has wanted me, but he's close to meltdown now from sheer frustration.

I realise I am making a rather large assumption here, that Jack does, in fact, desire me. Like any good scientist I require a little empirical evidence before my theory becomes a proof. So I'm ordering asparagus while my two swains are still at the bar. Neither of them appeared willing to leave me alone with the other so they reached an impasse and went together.

To be fair, I am hungry and I think I'm going to need all my strength for when Jack gets me home. I have no doubt whatsoever that he has three million ideas for getting me out of here with him, up to and including throwing me over his shoulder and carrying me out bodily.

I'm quite new to all this, so while I'm still not sure what I feel about it all, let alone what I want, I have to admit the idea has a certain appeal. The appeal grows significantly when Jack returns with the drinks. I asked for red wine and I've got...cranberry juice?

I can feel the heat blooming in my cheeks. Incredible though it may seem, Jack is bound and determined to get me home and ravish me. I spell it out to myself, just in case I'm still not getting it. Jack wants to have sex with me. S-E-X. More accurately, he wants me to have sex with him, which is why I guess I'll be teetotaling for the whole of the evening. If I drink at all, he won't lay a finger on me. He has an innate sense of honour and a profound, if occasionally eccentric, need to do the right thing. He would kill anybody who got me drunk to get me into bed and he would die before he did it himself. He'd never stoop that low.

I'm feeling ridiculously shy, hoping desperately it doesn't show as I say sarcastically, "At least you got the colour right, Jack. I'll write it down for you next time, shall I? You can get one of the grown-ups at the bar to read it out for you."

Alex sniggers and I feel a little sorry for him. He heard the put-down, but he doesn't see some of the tension easing from Jack's shoulders or the sudden softness in his eyes as he cuffs me gently round the head. Both Jack and I have standards to maintain, but that was me, letting him know I'm still here, still with him.

I realise I have made my decision, and it is an irrevocable one. If Jack wants me, he shall have me. He loves me, more than I deserve, to take such care for me. If he's going to put himself through all of this for my sake, he's going to need some moral support. It can't be easy being in love with a man as clueless as myself.

I have an apology to make to Jack. I pride myself on thinking outside the box. I've failed miserably to do so in respect of my own feelings. I *love* Jack. I've loved him for a long time now. As a friend, I naively thought. It's true enough, but it's so very far from being the whole truth. I realise now I've also been attracted to him.

It's a simple enough equation. Jack + dress blues = Daniel weak kneed and drooling. See? I can do the math so easily when the obvious solution is sitting here next to me, devilishly handsome in leather and silk. I'm glad I'm sitting down. I don't think my knees can take much more excitement.

Concentrate, Jackson. Let's try to extrapolate a little further. Work this one out for yourself. Love + physical attraction = Daniel is in love with Jack.

I'm in love with Jack. Hello? I'm just working this out now? How sad is that? Maybe Jack should kill *me*.

I'm in love with a man who knows me better than anyone has ever known me in my life, yet here he is, after all we've been through, apparently in love with me too. When has that ever happened to me? When have I ever been this lucky? Never. Not ever.

I'm terrified and exhilarated all at the same time. I can hardly believe this is happening to *me*. Me of all people. Please, oh, please, don't let me mess this up. Don't let me be reading this wrong. Let me have Jack. For once in my life, let me get what I want and let me *keep* it. I'm not greedy. Just this one time. Just Jack.

I'm ready to throw caution to the winds figuratively, and myself at Jack literally, when I have a brilliant inspiration. Jack feels threatened by Alex. It's classic Alpha Male versus Young Buck for the right to...er...the right to mate. Jack has everything to lose here. Every instinct I have is telling me not to prematurely capitulate.

I'm not having MY colonel suffering from insecurities, wondering if I'm settling for second best just because we have history. Also, there is that slight vulnerability about the age gap. Jack shed about 10 years in as many seconds when I didn't make a fuss about the wine come cranberry juice. Plus, a suffering Jack is a sharing Jack. He likes to spread the load. In his own unique way. I recall a few colourfully apocalyptic confrontations over the past few months. My, how he spreads the load.

I'm going to Cor-Ai Jack. He can go through the trial but the verdict is a foregone conclusion. I'm all the judge he requires. If he needs to be all hunter-gatherer and primal on me, if he needs to beat Alex to win me, I shall let him. For his own sake. I...I love him too. He's...Jack.

I don't feel sorry for Alex. He's been nice to me and I'd hate to think it was all just an act to get me into bed. He's well read and interesting. I'd like to go on being friends if it doesn't hurt Jack. If it does...adios Alex. I wouldn't miss him. He just doesn't have an emotional investment in me nor I in him.

Oh good, my asparagus is arriving. There is an art to eating asparagus neatly, but given I am on a date with two men at the same time, and therefore a slut of no uncommon order, I'm going all out for graphic phallic symbolism.

Bite me, Jack.

Please?

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JACK

I'm mesmerised. Danny is going down on his asparagus. Really. There's no other way to describe the toe-curling eroticism of it. His tongue flicks out and swipes the butter-weeping tip, swirls around it, then he's gently nibbling up the shaft. A bite, a little murmur of pleasure, then he's curling his tongue, suckling the dripping shaft back into his mouth and we go through the whole languid torment again. And again.

I will not be leaping up to get the next round of drinks in. Or the round after that. Danny is generating so much heat I may spontaneously combust. Devoe doesn't look in much better shape.

Danny is innocence personified, smiling sweetly at both of us as he savours the very last mouthful. I don't think...at least I hope...I'm not imagining the extra warmth in his eyes whenever they meet mine.

Conversation has been desultory, mostly because we've all been fully occupied with the asparagus. It was exciting while it lasted but I'm glad the ordeal is over. The most excitable part of me needs some time to calm down otherwise I'm gonna have to get tough and apply an ice pack or something. I need the breathing space.

Danny will no doubt have a nice vegetarian lasagne. It's something I often make him when he looks up at me with those pleading 'feed me, Jack' eyes. I can cook. Danny can't. He's always disappointed if I order take-out on Friday's. I love to feed him. He can live on caffeine for days, but once you sit him down he can really pack the food away.

Service is pretty good here. I like the free and easy atmosphere. We'll come here again, just the two of us. Once Danny is officially mine and I'm allowed to show him off. Quite a few people in the restaurant have been sneaking envious peeks at us. Well, mostly at Danny and Devoe. They look spectacular together. I'm figuring the other guests - the disapproving ones - are guessing the relationship at this table is a tad sophisticated for Colorado Springs. A part of me is flattered by the assumption I could have either Daniel or Devoe, let alone both of them.

I allow an easy, self-confident smile to spread across my face. Keep 'em guessing. Keep Devoe guessing too. I've got too much life experience, let alone combat experience, to allow him to rattle me. I can play nice as long as I have to.

I do have to. Daniel is looking...demure, I guess. Like he's got some sweet little secret he's not letting the rest of the world in on. He's impossible to resist. I find myself wanting

to make dinner as pleasant as possible, for his sake. I still want to disembowel Devoe, of course, but I guess I'll give getting along the old college try.

I didn't make colonel without learning a thing or three about tactics. There's a large part of my psyche that always works the angles. Too large a part for me to just switch off when it's inconvenient. Like now. I automatically took the seat giving good line of sight on the entrance to the north, and on the west facing windows. Devoe took the seat giving him good line of sight on the east facing windows and on the other point of vulnerability, the kitchen. Danny is safely sandwiched between us with his back to the wall. We're between him and any potential danger. He has no idea about that. He picked his seat because he's an inveterate people watcher who gets a lot of innocent, vicarious enjoyment out of the vagaries of mankind. Plus it would be just plain rude to sit with his back to people. I know Daniel well. *Very well.*

That embarrassingly calculating part of me is pointedly telling the primal Alpha Male part of me that an upset Danny is *not* a sharing Danny. If I ruin his nice dinner he may very likely ruin my night. Our night. I take the path of least resistance and go for a feint. A show of weakness to deceive my enemy. I might not make it, and if Devoe doesn't stop licking his lips every single fucking time he looks at Danny I *won't* make it, but I am gonna try to be nice to Devoe if it kills him.

If the better man is to win, it will be all to the good for Danny to *see* me being the better man.

The main course arrives. I'm having my steak, but now it's a steak smothered in red wine and tomatoes. I like good food too, that's why I learned to cook as well as I do. The lasagne arrives but it's the carnivore version and it's for Devoe. Daniel has ordered...

Oysters?

Jeez, Danny! The part of me just beginning to calm down is now thoroughly over-excited again, beyond the help of even a vigorously applied ice pack.

Of all the times for Daniel to branch out into seafood!

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**DANIEL**

My oysters have arrived. I wonder if Jack is picking up on the trend here?

Aphrodisiacs, Jack!

The asparagus yielded excellent results. From both of them, unfortunately. I'm very glad Jack is here. It's not like Alex is making me nervous or anything. Not like that all. It's just I'm finding my new role as a sex object a little trying when the men doing the objectification are making it so damn obvious. I'm adrift on a sea of testosterone.

Jack's class shines through here as in so many other ways. He's gallantly trying to find common ground with Alex while every instinct he has is probably screaming 'do it, O'Neill, they'll never find the body'. He's started on a round of humorous Air Force billet from hell stories.

I'm proud of Jack, proud to be his friend when he's being as generous as this.

I catch his eye and smile again, as warmly as I can, before I investigate my seafood. It looks and is spectacular, a medley of intense colours, scents, tastes and textures. The sauce is a subtle backdrop, dry white wine and fresh cream, garlic roughly chopped to keep its sweetness. And of course, the oysters. They've been steamed and shucked, then set back into the polished half shell for effect. My sense of smell isn't always the greatest, but the brine and parmesan scent is making my mouth water.

I pick up one of the polished half shells and lift it to my lips. I'm *very* conscious of my audience. If the damn thing skids straight down my chin it will serve me right. I'm not known for my exquisite grace and co-ordination to begin with, but without my glasses this must surely be tempting fate. As I tilt the shell, I pray to any god who might be listening and willing to put in the fix for an archaeologist not noted for his seductive powers. Miraculously, the oyster slips sweetly down thanks to the olive oil it's nestling in. Someone must have been listening.

I swipe my lip with my tongue just in case and look up hopefully at Jack, justifiably proud of my accomplishment. He looks dazed, his cheeks flushed, eyes glittering with...er...with...can't really argue the point...with desire. I sneak a peek up through my lashes across at Alex. Ah. I'm getting it in stereo.

I can feel the heat bloom in my cheeks again, simply can't look down quickly enough at the utterly fascinating food on my plate. I've extrapolated from my own admittedly brief foray into the arena of allurements and come to a conclusion about scarlet women. I think they are so called not because they have fallen from the ways of the righteous, but because they blush so damn much.

I'm pathetically glad the candlelight is sparing the worst of my blushes. I don't want Jack to have any excuse to be a gentleman when we get home. He's been protecting me from his needs for so long I think it's become entrenched. If he sees just how nervous I am about the physical stuff he'll...I won't have him thinking I'm some vulnerable *kid* who doesn't know what he wants. I won't let that happen. I don't want him treating me like I'll break.

If I'm honest, I'm strongly drawn to driving my colonel so crazy there's no doubt in his mind he is *my* colonel. Oh, and while he's in the mood, I'm secure enough in my masculinity the prospect of him throwing me over his shoulder and carrying me off to bed to have his wicked way with me is just what this Doctor ordered. I don't think I spent nearly enough time playing when I was a boy. Jack's masculinity is carved in tablets of

stone. He has nothing whatsoever to prove, so something tells me he would find the idea of me wanting playtime now very appealing. So long as I want to play with him.

As I tackle another oyster, hoping it goes down as smoothly as the first, I peek up and meet Jack's warm, wicked eyes. I'm very reassured by what I see. I think I'm getting the hang of this.

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JACK

I don't know what it is Daniel sees when he happens to be in front of a mirror but I'd cheerfully bet every dime of my paycheck it's not what the rest of us see. He's totally oblivious to his own beauty, to the impact it has on other people. He also has a genuine, passionate interest in people, a way of focusing his attention on you so completely it makes you feel like you're the only person in the world. When you speak to him, Daniel *listens*. He never just waits for you to shut up so he can talk again. When he does talk, he says what he means and he means what he says. He's oblivious to just how rare that is too. It's a potent, charming and totally innocent combination that's won him many admirers and a whole raft of protectors.

I'm smiling at the sight of him, all lit up and flushed with his triumph. He's thrilled to bits because he's managing to eat his oysters instead of wearing them. Is it any wonder I'm crazy about him?

Daniel hasn't the least idea in the world he's a flirt. A shocking flirt at times. He's melted hearts of stone all around the galaxy. Mine being right at the top of the list. I will never forget our run in with the bounty hunter, Aris Boch. I swear to God, Daniel *batted* his eyes right at the SOB as he said we were sorry and was the deal still on the table? Boch had a wall to wall grin and he actually laughed before good sense prevailed and he gave us the 'how can I trust you now', routine.

He's melting Devoe's heart right now. Devoe picked up immediately on several years of personal history played out in as many seconds in that little exchange of looks between Danny and me. He sighs. I guess he's clueing in he won't come between us as friends. My heart bleeds.

Devoe drags his eyes from Daniel's beaming face and turns to me. For the first time I see understanding, and maybe a tinge of respect. He's clueing in on just how vulnerable Daniel can be, on just how many insidious little insecurities he carries around with him. He's finally starting to realise maybe my restraint with Daniel has nothing to do with me, and everything to do with Daniel.

I realise that doesn't change a thing between me and the sonovabitch. Constant exposure to Daniel's winning ways only makes you want to win him more. The more Devoe sees of Daniel, the better he likes what he sees, the more he *wants* what he sees.

Up yours, Devoe! Get your own. You want an archaeologist, you've got a whole team to play with. 'Course, no one on SG-11 looks *anything* like my Danny, but that's your look out. Doctor Jackson is spoken for.

One of the things I've learned about my Danny is he's a purist. No imitations accepted. That thought cheers me up and I can't help the smirk I direct at Devoe. *I'm* still the original and best.

My Danny looks at the world and sees with different eyes from all the rest of us. He judges our world not against what it is now, but what it will tell some archaeologist a couple thousand years from now. He's not impressed. You don't know what suffering *is* until you've tried, unavailingly, for the fifteenth time, to tune out Dr Jackson's lecture on the impact of US pop culture on global ethnology, with particular reference to Coca Cola and the Happy Meal. And you should *never* get him started on faux Tudor architecture for the suburban home. Not if you want to live. Sometimes even watching the History Channel with Daniel can be like wandering innocently into oncoming traffic.

On the up side, if I'm prepared to sacrifice my hockey game, an indignant Daniel is also an adorably entertaining and irresistibly cute Daniel. He finds it almost impossible to get angry, at least with people anyhow, but he does indignation very well. With the application of sufficient provocation, he actually bounces. I found that out on a mission a couple of years back. I like the cute little bouncy thing and I'm *good* at provocation. I can see it in the comfort of my own home whenever I please.

I have nothing whatsoever to contribute to the ongoing, mind numbing discussion of the glories of the Lindisfarne Gospels, their role in the pantheon of illuminated manuscripts or Anglo Saxon linguistics. The only reason I'm tolerating it is Daniel is basically my date, and therefore entitled to all the slack I can cut him for the duration. I'll make him pay for it later.

I figure it's about time Devoe learns the downside to having the hots for a genius. I'm passionately in love with said genius and he drives me nuts most days. Life with Daniel will never be boring, I can say that with certainty. He has a lot of enthusiasm and he loves to share with anyone who will listen.

It's time to push a few Daniel buttons and see just how far and how fast he can tow Devoe out of his depth. I don't even pretend to be an intellectual but on my worst day I'm still a pretty decent tactician. I ask Devoe his opinion of Wallis Budge. I'm pretty sure he won't know much more than I do, but he'll try to bluff his way through anyhow.

I'm an evil bastard when I set my mind to it. Years with Daniel have taught me to respond instantaneously to any mention of Budge with the variation of my choice on the basic theme 'that clueless bastard, don't know why they keep reprinting him'. Always sends Daniel away happy. Of course, to the uninitiated bluffer, Wallis Budge is *the* authority on Egyptian hieroglyphs. I settle back and happily await the inevitable fireworks.

Then I have to dive forward and smack Daniel smartly on the back as astonished affront makes him inhale a prawn.

The resulting anti Budge diatribe, once Daniel has his breath back, is protracted and terrifyingly erudite. Daniel can be appallingly fluent. I'm sorely tempted to laugh, but Daniel would probably be hurt, while Devoe would probably want to take this outside. I decide discretion is the better part of humour and blithely eat my delicious steak, making encouraging 'what he said' noises to Daniel's occasional appeals to me for corroboration.

Daniel is also making emphatic use of the cutlery to illustrate various key points in his thesis. I do laugh as a slightly too emphatic stab of his fork sends a scallop flying in a perfect arc across the table into the floral arrangement. His confusion is completed as a smiling waiter steps up and promptly removes the offending scallop with a flourish, carrying it away on his tray. After a short, bewildered silence, Daniel scowls at me as if it's my fault. Devoe, frankly, is grateful for the distraction. Daniel's had him on the ropes for the last five minutes or so.

I scowl at Daniel as he apologises for getting a tad carried away. To Devoe. He smiles sweetly. At Devoe. Devoe smiles right back at him.

I'm still scowling when the smiling waiter comes back to remove the detritus of the main course. Daniel waves away the dessert menu somewhat regretfully. I guess he's not ready to risk ice cream so soon after ballistic seafood.

I scowl even more when I realise the waiter is also regretful. He only cheers up when Daniel allows himself to be persuaded to peruse the coffee menu. I can see the place has gone up several notches in Daniel's estimation. Caffeine is his main food group. He beams at the waiter and the waiter beams right back. Devoe and me are now wearing identical scowls. Does everyone with a pulse want my archaeologist? Asked and answered, I guess.

I need to visit the men's room and Devoe reads my body language and follows me. He's right. I'm just in the mood to haul him out of his seat by the scruff of the neck rather than leave him alone with Daniel. We're going down to the wire and I'm still only 90% certain Daniel is coming home with me, Budge or no Budge.

We walk far enough apart to make it crystal clear to the rest of the patrons although we may be headed towards the same destination, we are not going there together. And certainly not for the nefarious purpose Daniel's little asparagus display earlier might have led them to believe.

When we get back, Daniel is sitting with an assortment of coffee cups. He's gloating over one of those tiny kick ass espressos so thick the cup is probably optional. Mine is in a tall glass. I guess he ordered me Irish coffee. It's already starting to cool so I take a big gulp

and it's nearly all she wrote for Mama O'Neill's boy. It burns a trail straight down. Jeezus!

In light of Daniel's wide eyed concern I manage to wheeze out, "A little heavy on the Irish."

How much whiskey did they put in this thing? The first mouthful is enough to put me way over the limit...an evil grin gets away from me as I join the dots and instantly make an appeal to Daniel's responsible, law abiding conscience.

"You mind driving me home, Daniel? What with the beers I've already had..."

Daniel says immediately, "Sure. I'm glad you asked. It's not worth taking the risk, Jack."

*Gotcha!*

I turn triumphantly to Devoe as I pleurably sip my 120 proof coffee. His face falls. He has sense enough to know he's been beaten. I'm hoping he's thinking war, not battle. I'm not going through this shit again.

~~~~~

DANIEL

I cannot believe what I'm hearing.

"You left your keys back at the base? You're just working this out *now*?"

Okay. Okay. I know that sounds distinctly accusatory. I know I'm glaring. Jack's stricken face is *so* not melting my heart. Cold hands, cold heart. Cold everything. The heavens opened during the drive home and now it's raining so hard the drops are bouncing back up off the pavement. Naturally, he didn't work out the keys were missing until we were actually *at* the door. In the rain.

I wasn't very confident of my physical appeal to start with, but now, when we're both soaked to the skin...I'm miserably conscious I resemble nothing so much as a six foot drowned rat. I'm sure Jack will find me totally resistible. I have to face facts. So far, he's got a perfect track record in resisting my so-called charms. I can't help the sigh that wells up out of my depths.

Jack looks even more guilty, tries his pockets one more time, comes up empty. Again. Then he mutters something about the back seat and plunges off towards the Explorer. I huddle into the miniscule shelter offered in the doorway and wait with iron patience while he conducts a frenzied search of the debris on the back seat. He emerges with a cry of triumph, waving the keys at me.

Too little, too late, Jack.

He sidles past me, keeping a respectful distance as he opens the door. He ushers me in with a flourish. As I stalk past him, I think he realises I'm nowhere near forgiving him. His face falls. Good. I'm mad as hell and, worse, the lengthy wait has encouraged my nervousness to begin the slow escalation into sheer terror.

I hover near the door, dripping. Glaring. I daren't move because my fumble at the light switch yielded no visible results. It's pitch dark.

"Hit the switch, Danny."

"The light is on."

My flat little comment falls into a pool of thoughtful silence.

"Oh. Guess the kitchen guys haven't finished. Don't worry. Just stay put. I've got some candles."

Stay put? Talk about pointless advice. I'm not budging. The only place a normal person can wander round safely in the dark is their own place. If I try it here I'll probably end up in a concussed heap on the coffee table after plummeting down the stairs.

I while away the time by trying to wring some of the excess moisture out of my sweater. It's useless. The damn thing has absorbed so much water it probably weighs more than I do. I give in, wrench off my jacket and throw it down on the floor. The mood I'm in, if I was twenty years younger I'd stamp on it.

I get a good grip on the bottom of the sweater and start to ease it up. I have to peel it away from my clammy skin and of course I hear Jack coming back just as I have most of it over my face. Then it won't budge. I'm swearing in a variety of languages and wrestling with it as I become aware of him standing close to me. It's unnerving, I can't see him and he isn't speaking. I can hear him breathing though.

It's bloody typical. Why can I never just be charming and graceful?

My voice is muffled in swathes of wet wool as I have to beg plaintively, "Jack."

He doesn't exactly rush to my assistance. In fact, he doesn't move at all until I hear a pained yelp and a word he doesn't normally use around me. I guess he got burnt by dripping candle wax.

"Serves you right." I say vengefully.

There's a bit of a clatter as he bangs down whatever he's using to hold the candle and a moment later I can feel his body heat. His hands gently remove mine from the sweater and then he manages to get his thumbs under the recalcitrant neck, stretching it. I feel the warmth of his skin against my throat as he glides the wool up over my chin.

I say, "I can take it from here," but he pays no attention. I emerge, blinking and very ruffled, into a now candle lit world. We're standing close enough to kiss but...well, we don't. My self-confidence slips another notch or two as Jack hands me my sweater and steps back out of my personal space.

"I'm going to light the fire. You're shivering."

Cold, nerves, desire. My nerves are thrumming like a plucked string. Jack seems happy to have some distance between us as he makes himself busy at the fireplace. I start to distribute the candles strategically around the room. I'm trying for a romantic ambience but most of the candles are propped up precariously in an assortment of pragmatic mugs and glasses. I have to be careful where I put them, don't want to set fire to anything accidentally if a candle topples out of its makeshift holder.

I glance at Jack repeatedly but I never catch him looking at me. I have to admit defeat. The sight of my damp, half naked body clearly isn't doing enough for Jack to make him want to come over here and do something about it with me. I ask him, a little sadly, "Point me at the clean sweats, will you?"

"Ah."

I don't think it's my imagination. Jack definitely flinched when I said that. He mumbles something about the laundry piling up and can't meet my eye.

I say impatiently, "Anything will do, so long as it's clean."

He gives me an odd look. "Anything?"

I shrug. Maybe a hair shirt. That would fit my mood.

"Bedroom. Help yourself to anything you find in the dresser."

~~~~~

JACK

I don't know, I honestly don't know how I kept my hands off him. How I'm keeping them off him. My heart nearly stopped when I came out of the kitchen and laid eyes on *acres* of smooth, glistening, honey coloured skin. I'd have tackled him to the ground and kissed his face off if the damned candle hadn't picked that exact moment to drip molten wax all over me and bring me to my senses.

I have to exert every ounce of self-control. Easy stages, Jack. Easy stages. I can't just leap from A, my best friend kindly driving me home, to Z, bone melting sex. Not in the first two minutes. Got to work Daniel up to it, get him to meet me somewhere in the vicinity of L.

While Daniel is safely occupied, I dash off to the laundry room and shuck my wet clothes. It's going to take Daniel at least two full circuits of my dresser and the wardrobe before he accepts the jammies really are his only option. At least they're still in the cellophane. The bottom half at least. I'm pretty sure I cut up the top half to clean the windows during a previous laundry crisis.

I have to accept I'm shameless with anticipation. I can't wait to see what Daniel looks like in those jammies or how mad he is he has to wear them.

I hear a distant slam and haul ass back to the living room where I dive onto the sofa and try to act like none of this was deliberate. Daniel stalks into the room, favouring his right foot a little, and stands over by the fire where I can fully appreciate the view. He looks decidedly stormy and truly scrumptious. There are so many wonderful sights screaming for my attention I hardly know where to begin. Bare toes win out but it's a close run thing. Daniel's bare feet are so endearing, the merest glimpse of them could melt the hardest of hearts.

I'm thinking Devoe's heart is pretty stoney right now. Not only did I get the guy, I added insult to injury and left the loser to pick up the tab.

I've got a grin spreading from ear to ear. I can feel it but can't seem to stop it, even though I know it will annoy Daniel. It just keeps getting away from me as I stare and stare and drink him in.

The only thing marring my mood is Danny is holding the jammies up. I frown a little. Am I getting fat?

The most excitable part of me is getting thoroughly out of hand again as Danny decides the only place he's comfortable is right there by the fire. He limps a couple of steps and flops down on the hearthrug. He settles himself and stretches out his legs. Then he flexes his foot and winces a little. I'm totally mesmerised as he keeps arching his foot, then curling up his toes, then arching again.

I don't even realise my head is following every movement until he gives me a sneaky look and says "If you can see it's hurting, why don't you..."

I'm sure he's got more to say but I'm on my knees with his foot cradled tenderly in my hands before he can get the rest of the words out. I think I may have come off as a tad too enthusiastic, so I say as grudgingly as I can manage, "I guess a foot massage wouldn't hurt. Can't have you on the sick list, can we? Janet would never let me hear the end of it."

Daniel leans back on his elbows, just as grudgingly allowing me to massage his foot. I ask where it hurts and he looks straight over my head as he mutters, "Everywhere."

He must have hurt it stumbling around in the dark in my bedroom. I'm too smug right now to feel guilty. This is my first time up close and personal with a part of Daniel I have long coveted. I massage every perfect inch with firm, sure strokes, taking my time. In fact, I'm making a real production number of it, but so long as Daniel isn't objecting I'm happy to go on and on and on. I decide the other foot is crying out for attention and before I know it, it's in my hands and I'm stroking that one instead. Daniel is lying flat with an arm tucked behind his head and an arm thrown across his eyes. He's breathing quite hard. As for me, the firelight, being this close to him, having him so relaxed...it's lulling me. Now I'm not so much massaging, more...caressing. Not so much firm, more...languid. My touch gets more and more gentle until it seems the most natural thing in the world to just use my lips instead and I trail my tongue along the elegant curve of his instep.

He goes absolutely still. So do I. Shit. Crap. Perfect, O'Neill. Just perfect. Way to play it cool. You just *had* to kiss the foot before you kissed the lips. Now he thinks he's got some repressed nutcase foot fetishist on his...hands.

I'm across the room in a heartbeat. I was prepared for some difficult questions when I made my first move on Daniel. Like, how long had I been feeling this way anyway, and why the hell hadn't I let him in on it? At some point there would have to be, it's just a wild stab in the dark here, Jack, but I'm guessing you've done some of this stuff before. What took you so long to do it with me? I was ready to explain stuff like that. Now I've got to get past downright weird shading into possibly perverted.

I am totally out of my depth on this one.

~~~~~

DANIEL

Hey!

What the...? Where'd he go?

"Jack?"

I open my eyes and he's nowhere to be seen. I know he can cover some ground but this is ridiculous. He must have taken off at a dead run. I snap bolt upright.

"Jack!"

Where the hell did he go, and what the hell do I have to DO? I've just laid myself out in front of him, offered myself up on a plate, given him exactly what he wanted. I admit, I'm a little surprised by which part of me he wanted, but still, I put my best foot forward. My reward? He takes one tiny nibble from the palpably not very tempting dish of the day and bolts. Just as I'm starting to get all warm and...and *willing*.

Thanks. Way to inspire me with confidence, Jack. The sonovabitch hasn't even kissed me yet!

Damn. I can't remember which leg I'm supposed to be limping with. I have to think about it for so long I've given him plenty of time to get himself nicely settled at the dining table.

When I limp rapidly up the stairs and join him I see he's made himself useful. He's got a very large whiskey and a very small screwdriver. He's tightening up that loose screw for me. He hands my glasses to me without a word, without making eye contact.

As I put them on I'm so mad I can't bring myself to speak. What is this? Colonels don't make passes at guys who wear glasses?

My heart is sinking. I'm starting to wonder if I've been misreading the signals. Tonight wasn't just about Jack being dog in the manger, was it?

I rally slightly. Jack licked my foot. He *licked* my foot. That's a definite signal. It might just mean he has a thing about feet in general and mine were just convenient. I'd much rather it was only MY feet he has a thing for. Me he has a thing for. Maybe, with sufficient encouragement, I can get him to lick something else?

I cast about desperately for a suitably encouraging signal even Jack can't miss. Or ignore. My repertoire is severely limited in this respect. Short of throwing myself at him bodily the only thing I can come up with is throwing Alex to the wolves. I decide to pour some oil on Jack's internal fires.

I say softly, compellingly, "Jack."

He looks up reluctantly but still won't meet my eyes. He says softly, "Yeah."

"I...I need your advice. I don't know what to do."

He braces himself as I say quietly, "In the cold light of day I'll have to deal with the fact an Air Force colonel kissed me tonight. First time it's ever happened. I mean, I've known *you* for years, and you've *never* kissed me."

His shoulders hunch and he resorts to some Dutch courage. I let him take a few sips before I go innocently on, "So what should I do tomorrow, Jack? About this colonel who kissed me?" I guess he needs all the help he can get because he drains the glass in one gulp and opens his mouth to answer me as I go on in dulcet tones, "Kissed me right on the...lips."

I gleefully watch as this sinks in. Jack's jaw drops, then he stiffens alarmingly, slams the glass down and howls, "I'll fucking kill the bastard!"

Not so much flames as a pyroclastic eruption.

Jack freezes and goes very red in the face. He can't tear his eyes away from mine and he can't think of a single thing to say. His mouth just keeps opening and closing without any recognisable words coming out.

I decide, the hell with it. Faint heart never won fair colonel.

I pull my glasses off and send them skidding dramatically away as I take the path of least resistance to Jack. Straight across the table top. I reach down and grab him by the neck of his sweatshirt and drag him forcefully up to meet me as I kiss him madly, clinging to his lips like a limpet for a few of the most terrifying moments of my life.

I release him just as abruptly as I grabbed him. He drops limply back into his chair. I'm breathing hard, trying not to mind how stunned he looks, praying I haven't just humiliated myself beyond all possibility of recovery. I scowl down at him and say provocatively, "Too subtle for you?"

Help me out, Jack, for God's sake! I'm dyin' here...

"Well, for once...no."

Then his face lights up and he's growling at me, bounding to his feet, yanking me straight off the table and into his willing, waiting arms. I have no time for anything but a startled yelp, then I'm cradled on his lap like he owns me. His hand is on my butt and his tongue is slipping down my throat easier than those oysters did.

He's *wild* for me, kissing me like he will never have enough of me. I go from willing to wanting to desperate all in the space of a few seconds, carried away on the floodtide. This first time, I can't do anything but hold on, kiss him back as best he'll let me as I try to ride out the force of his passion.

He doesn't back off until the breath sobs in my throat and only then does he come up for air, crushing me to his chest. I'm bound by arms of steel, cradled as gently as any child, secure in my absolute trust of him.

Loved.

I have to be the one to say it. The lightest of touches sets me free. His hands stay on me as I stand and then sit astride him, so we're face to face. I settle my arms around his neck, as his arms reach eagerly back around me and hug me closer. His face is alight, his eyes as warm and unguarded as I've ever seen them, an irrepressible smile tugging the corners of his mouth as he leans in for another kiss.

"I love you." I manage to gasp it out as his lips close purposefully on mine. I'm lost once he touches me, his tenderness telling me he loves me too, how much and how long he's

needed to have me here with him like this. We kiss and kiss, tongues curling sweetly, exploring gently, roaming over the roughness of teeth and soft, sensitive palettes. A moment or two to catch our breath and we dive in again. And again.

When he can finally bear to let *me* go, I'm wrapped around him and I'm not letting *him* go anytime soon. My legs are hooked comfortably around the back of the chair, which he seems to thoroughly approve of.

I have a huge smile. I guess I look pretty dopey but he doesn't seem to mind. He gives me the sweetest of smiles right back as he strokes the hair back from my temple. Then his hands start to wander down. I can't understand why he's never worn these jammies. He can't resist stroking them, especially the bits filled with my butt and my thighs.

I have something on my mind. I say enviously, "Y'know, if I'd tried a move like that, we'd have ended up flat on our asses."

He looks smug and tells me meaningfully, "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

I'm beginning to wonder where we go from here when he shows me an entirely new move, slipping his hand down under the jammies and onto my butt. I jump a little, I can't help it. Skin on skin, his on mine, it's so...intimate. I start to fret he's going to stop this right here when his eyes search mine. My smile slips. He can't possibly miss how turned on I am, I couldn't be any closer to him unless I was in those sweats with him. I hope he doesn't mistake first time nerves for...for reluctance. I want him to touch me, I want to tell him so but the words won't come. They're stuck in my throat along with my heart.

He says quietly, not a hint of reproach in his voice, "Don't worry, Daniel. We don't have to make love just because I want to. I've waited this long, I can wait a while longer, until you're ready. Until you want me too."

Make love? Isn't that what we're...? Oh.

I gulp and then, of course, I'm blushing again. Okay. Okay. I won't be asking Jack why he's held back so long. Might turn out to have something to do with my appallingly clueless naïveté. None of this should be coming as a complete shock to me. No wonder Jack goes from nought to over-protective in sixty seconds.

Jack gives me one final little caress and then regretfully removes his hand. I nuzzle into that same hand as he cups my face gently. Then I take it, kiss the palm and put it firmly back on my butt.

Where I would quite like it to stay until I say otherwise, Jack, thanks all the same.

I wiggle my butt encouragingly. I'm not taking any chances.

I say sternly, "I'm not making love with a mother-hen."

~~~~~

JACK

I'm trying desperately not to let on how disappointed I am Danny isn't ready for more than a little kissing and cuddling when my brain finally engages and what he actually means sinks in. Sometimes Danny has a little trouble making the jump from the abstract to the concrete. Sometimes I can be a tad overpro...all right already!...psychotically over-protective where my boy is concerned.

This little misunderstanding is classic for both of us.

I brighten up considerably, and, as always, my tactical response is flawless. My hand slips enthusiastically back under the jammies and curves possessively around one very pert, satiny buttock. Daniel sighs with pleasure.

I decide if I'm going to shock him, I might as well go the whole hog.

My other hand explores the inviting hardness I feel pressing up against me. Daniel's eyes widen as he feels me avidly stroking him through the butter-soft jammies. They get even wider when I slip my hand under the material and take the heated, velvety length of him in my hand.

His beautiful mouth forms a perfect 'O' of astonishment and I kiss him deeply again, keeping up a gentle, rhythmic stroking the whole time. He doesn't know what to do with himself. His hips rock compulsively against my hand one moment, he's forcing himself to be still the next. Kissing me desperately all the while.

I think about how terribly long it's been since my Danny was touched with love and respect. Yet he's holding himself back now because he doesn't want to be selfish.

I want to bring him this pleasure, for his sake as well for mine. I want to make love to him so badly it's burning me up inside. This overwhelming passion I feel for him has to be tempered by his inexperience. I know the more relaxed I can get him to feel now, the more pleasure he'll get from our lovemaking.

I whisper an appeal, "Let go for me, Danny. For me? Please."

I feel a terrible shiver go right through him, then he gives in to his need and my desire. I kiss him lovingly, an arm supporting him as he thrusts into my hand, tentatively at first, then with increasing urgency. I know he won't last long at this rate, but I won't hold him back. I match the pace he sets, treasuring every moment of his surrender to pleasure, to me. Suddenly his back arches, he groans into my mouth and I catch him as he convulses and falls for me. I hold him tight, tell him over and over how much he is loved, needed, wanted.

"You're home now, Daniel. Home with me, where you belong."

He couldn't be any sweeter if he tried. He smiles tremulously and murmurs, "You *are* home to me, Jack."

I flush with pleasure and try to cover it, saying gruffly, "Don't think you can wheedle your way round *me* with sweet talk, Daniel Jackson. I'm wise to your tricks."

He and I both know he's got me wrapped round his little finger, but he allows me my self-delusion. He lifts his face for another kiss, and I'm more than happy to take the most luscious mouth I've ever had the privilege of tasting. Kissing Daniel could so easily become a full time occupation.

I've wiped my hand surreptitiously on my sweatshirt. When he's ready to let go I ease him back to pull it over my head and drop it to the floor.

Daniel gets an eyeful of the O'Neill welcome wagon. I'm touched he so obviously likes what he sees. He perks up visibly, post-orgasmic shyness forgotten as he decides to thoroughly investigate this unfamiliar terrain. He's blowing thoughtfully on a nipple when I finally manage to peel him gently off me and lower his hand to a concrete reminder there are two of us to play this game.

He blushes rosily and eyes me speculatively as I say firmly, "Bed." I'm not sure my knees can take much more. He's no featherweight and I'm too...mature...to have sex on a chair.

He stands up to give me some room for manoeuvre, but keeps shooting me little glances from eyes filled with mischief. He's got something on his mind.

I suddenly notice he's not limping anymore. Either I've got healing hands or...

"What's on your mind, Daniel?" I ask him cheerfully.

He hangs his head and looks shy. He's reluctant to say but when I push him it all comes out in a rush.

"I was just wondering, you don't have to if you don't want, I mean, it just kept coming into my mind in the restaurant. I thought you actually might at one point...I find the thought very appealing...so will you? Please?"

The restaurant?

"What's on your mind, Daniel?" I ask him again, with obvious patience this time.

He mentally replays what he just asked me and blurts out, "Carry me."

I give him such a blank look he feels compelled to add, "To bed."

I shift my gaze downwards and say sympathetically, "Foot still hurting, is it?"

He has the grace to hang his head but a moment later he's all bright eyes and eagerness. I can no more resist a playful Daniel than I can resist breathing. I'm glad I haven't mentioned my knees or his weight.

I step smartly forward and sling him up over my shoulder, settle his weight and stride off towards my bedroom. I can hear him chuckling and decide now is the perfect time to raise a few points. The restaurant, hmm?

"Asparagus, Daniel?"

Silence.

"Oysters, Daniel?"

More silence.

"Toes, Daniel?"

The silence, if anything, intensifies.

"Colonels kissing you, Daniel?"

He says smugly, "Well, it took some work, but you did. And how!"

"I meant *Devoe* kissing you, as you very well know. Don't play the innocent..."

He chuckles again as I shove the bedroom door open, "I never mentioned Alex at all. That was just your interpretation. You never hear of open questions, Jack? Designed to elicit an honest opinion. No?"

I smile fondly. The little shit. I was honest alright. I have to admire his tactics. I kick the door shut, let out a rebel yell so loud and primal it makes him yelp again, then I throw him down on the bed so hard he bounces and bursts out laughing.

He's still laughing when I pull off my sweats, stops laughing when I pull off his jammies. Cheats outrageously and kisses me enthusiastically when I drop down on top of him and pin him to the bed. I've got his arms pinioned above his head. I immediately release him as he flexes his wrists uncertainly. He understands at once I'm playing, too. He relaxes and that delicious chuckle sounds again as I recapture him and pin him flat once more. He's thoroughly enjoying himself. Me too.

We tussle gently back and forth, hands and lips everywhere we can reach, and when I can, without being too obvious about it, I let him break free and roll me onto my back. I'm

bigger, stronger and meaner than Daniel but those things don't have any place in our bed. I love him, so he gets to win if he wants to.

Besides, there are definite compensations to being on the losing side. Daniel's tongue quests towards my lungs. While I'm still breathless he snuggles into my chest, so sure of his welcome he reduces me to jello. Then he goes on the offensive.

"Wallis Budge, Jack?"

I exercise my right to remain silent.

"Keys, Jack?"

Nope. I'm not gonna be drawn on that one either.

"Jammies, Jack?"

"You look scrumptious in them." I say defiantly. I'm going to buy him lots more, first chance I get. He looks adorable and sexy as hell in jammies and it's the most fun I've had in years getting him out of them. He'll get over it in time. Meanwhile, I get to enjoy all the pouting.

His head snaps up and he scowls at me. "Scrumptious?"

I wink at him and kindly point out the obvious, "You're beautiful, you know. Well, no, I take that back. You're the only one who doesn't know."

"I'm not!"

"You are. Ask anyone."

"Sam!"

"Too easy. Try Hammond."

Daniel reels from that mental picture for a moment, then rallies. "Feet, Jack?"

Ah.

I'm pleading the fifth. My attorney will be entering a plea of temporary sanity real soon. Daniel's feet will be Defence Exhibit #1.

Daniel looks sulky so of course I have to roll him back underneath me and kiss the pout right off his face. He's boneless beneath me when I can't ignore the insistent demands from my body any longer. I reach into the nightstand for the lube. He's as relaxed and trusting as he can be.

I say sincerely, "I want to make love with you, Daniel. I'm telling you now, you can trust me. If you want me to stop at *any* time, I stop. No questions, no recriminations. I stop. Okay?"

I have to be sure. I couldn't bear the thought of hurting him and I know how easy it is to hurt someone when you love them this way. Especially when you want them *this* much. I want him doing this cause it pleases him, not cause it pleases me.

"... 'kay. I know I can trust you, Jack."

I spoon up behind him on the bed and whisper, "I'll be gentle. Just relax and open for me. That's all you have to do." I start to kiss the nape of his neck and trail my lips down into the tender hollow between throat and shoulder. I kiss, lick and nibble at his throat until he's squirming. Only then do I carefully slide a lube coated finger inside him. He gasps at the sensations I'm arousing but doesn't tense up. I'm thrilled by the absolute trust and confidence he has in me.

I take my time preparing him, making it as pleasurable as possible for him, hitting his prostate over and over again. I never stop kissing him, my other hand caressing every single part of him I can reach. When he's moaning and gasping into my mouth, pushing back against my fingers, as slick, relaxed and willing as it's possible for him to be, I can't wait any longer.

I turn him to face me and search his eyes, "Are you ready, Daniel? Sure you want this?"

"Sure. I love you, Jack. Love you."

His eyes are glittering with a desire mirroring my own. Reassured, I roll onto my back and gently urge him to sit astride me. I want to see him as we make love and this first time has to be as easy for him as possible. We have to build a new kind of trust between us, set new boundaries. It's important to me he feels in control of his own body, knows we are equals in this.

I hold his gaze and tell him again how much I love him as I guide him into position and enter him oh so slowly. He can't tear his eyes from mine, staring at me like I'm the most amazing thing he's ever seen. I feel on top of the world. He's doing terrible things for what some consider to be an already over-inflated ego.

I keep my hands on his hips, helping to steady him, but it's Danny who sets the pace. As it should be. He eases down on me agonisingly slowly, gets comfortable, eases a little further down. I scan his face, those glorious eyes, over and over for signs of pain or refusal. I see nothing but his love and need for me. Maybe it's all he'll let me see. I'm content to follow his lead. He isn't content until I'm buried in him to the root.

We're both overwhelmed by the sensations flooding through us. The tight, silky heat surrounding me is almost unbearably intense. Daniel rests his hands on my abdomen, eyes closed, shaking with reaction to me completely filling parts of him he didn't know he had until now.

We stay absolutely still for what seems an eternity to me. I've exhausted every scrap of self-control in me; I'm dying of need when he finally starts to move, very slowly and carefully.

I'm *good* at provoking Danny. "Beautiful," I insist.

"Ja-ack."

"Especially your mouth. That lush, kissable curve."

He's moving more confidently now.

That's it, that's right, love, just right. It's supposed to feel this good, you're supposed to feel this pleasure...

I lift my knees so he can brace his back against them but I'm holding still until I'm sure I won't hurt him. I'm on sensory overload as it is.

"Your eyes. Pellucid."

"Pe...What?"

"I have it on the best authority." I say primly.

He stops for a moment and glares at me suspiciously, "On whose authority?"

"The Marine Corps."

"What?"

"Women would *kill* for your eyelashes..."

Daniel displays his youthful suppleness to great effect, shutting me up with a passionate kiss. I respond enthusiastically and risk a gentle thrust in counterpoint to Daniel. He gasps, his eyes widening again. Yep. That hit the spot alright. I try another gentle thrust as he comes down to meet me.

"Oh God! *Jack!*"

"That's my name. Don't wear it out."

Our loving is slow and subtle, infinitely satisfying. I want this to last forever. I want to be inside my love forever. Danny is arching his back with every thrust, so satisfied he's almost purring, trying different angles, enjoying all the wonderful new sensations. We kiss and touch as we please.

I tease him mercilessly.

"Soft, silky hair. Exquisitely arched brows."

"Shut up!"

"Make me."

He stills and clenches around me. I almost come on the spot and yelp, "Jeez-us! Warn a guy before you do that, will ya? My heart can only stand so much excitement."

I let him think he's won. He relaxes and goes back to driving me out of my mind and him into my soul.

"Acres and acres of flawless skin."

He's moving more urgently now, riding out the waves of pleasure as I thrust into him, his eyes closing, moaning and whimpering my name over and over.

"Endless legs."

We're both sweating freely and I for one am getting breathless. The pleasure is crashing through me. I reach out and take his shaft in my hand, stroke him urgently.

"A butt...that redefines...pert...Oh Jesus, *Danny!*" I come so hard I'm screaming and Daniel is only a beat behind me, tightening around me as he feels my heat pouring into him, then his is pouring onto me.

"Jack. Oh...oh...oh! *Jack!*"

I catch him as he frees himself and tumbles down on top of me. I need to keep my eyes shut until the room stops spinning so I just hug him to me and kiss the aforementioned soft, silky hair, currently tickling my chin. We cling together until we can both see straight again and he tells me, just in case I missed it,

"I love you. And...Thank you. It was...we...*you*...mmm." He just trails off into dreamy, contemplative silence.

Terrible, terrible things he's doing for my ego. I'll be no good to man nor beast, I get much more of this.

“Right back atcha. And then some. You okay?”

“Mmm.”

“Sure?”

“Jack!”

I put on a hurt voice. “Just checking.”

Mother-hen from *hell* is muttered into my chest. Get used to it, kid. *Plenty* more where that came from. Been saving it up, for years, all for you. One of us has to have the sense to carry the other in out of the rain.

“Jack?”

“Yeah, Danny?”

“I’ve decided what to do in the cold light of day about that Air Force colonel. The one who kissed me tonight.”

I try to sound casual as I say, “Okay. Wanna fill me in?”

“I’m going to get him to kiss me again. And again. And again.”

“Lucky bastard.”

“I love you too, Jack. Now shut up and let me sleep.”

**FINIS**