

~ Though They Sink Through The Sea ~

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Disclaimer: The characters of 'Stargate SG-1' don't belong to me, unfortunately, but to MGM, Showtime Productions, Gekko et al. I just borrowed them to play. The story, however, is mine.

Sexual disclaimer: This is an alternative story, dealing with a sexual relationship between two consenting adult women. If you are too young to read stuff like this, please go away. If it's illegal where you live; get the hell out of there. There are some dark scenes (character rape); I don't like writing these but I thought they were necessary for the integrity of the story.

Pairing: Sam and Janet (established relationship), Cassandra and Jennifer Hailey (alluded).

Timeline: Follows the show up to season seven, 'Heroes' and offers an alternate solution.

Language: English isn't my first language. So, if this story doesn't totally suck in this compartment it is due to my beta readers.

Feedback: This is my first venture out of the Xenaverse. I really hope you like it. Let me know anyway under romansilence@yahoo.de

Prologue

After intently looking at her wrist, she requested a break. The meeting wasn't going anywhere, so General Jack O'Neill was happy to grant all of them a breather. She rushed out of the room, speed dialling her cell-phone. Jack followed as soon as he could and overheard the end of the call.

"...not to freak her out. I'll be there as soon as possible."

"Something wrong?"

"She's waking up, Sir."

"You're sure?"

"Positive, Sir. Increased brain activity and changed breathing rhythm."

"Hailey was in on this project, right?"

"Yes, Sir, but she's off duty now."

"We'll call her in." Jack answered and then shouted for Siler who promptly sprinted around a

corner. "Siler, find Captain Hailey. She is to report to the briefing room ASAP - first call topside. Have one of the mini-helis prepped for Doctor Fraiser."

"Yessir." And the master sergeant was gone, hoping that the barely concealed excitement on the woman's face was good news.

"Now, go and kiss your sleeping beauty. I'll deal with the meeting. Hailey still needs some practice at spouting confusing techno-babble. Everything will work out. Go!"

"Thank you, Jack!" She gave him a kiss on the cheek and raced towards the elevators.

"You're welcome, Sam." He answered to an empty room.

Chapter One: ... they shall rise again

There was a confusing mixture of images and sounds in her head but her first coherent thought was that something was tickling her nose. She tried to concentrate on the feeling and finally decided that it had to be a ray of sunshine. Sunshine? No, that was impossible, the infirmary is 21 levels under the ground.

She slowly opened her eyes and saw a big window to her right with the blinds almost completely drawn shut, creating a comfortable twilight broken by a single ray of light settled on her nose. Definitely sunshine!

She turned her head, trying to orient herself. A hospital bed. She was lying on a hospital bed but she didn't feel any pain. There was a door facing the bed and on the wall were a multitude of coloured pictures made by a small child - at least as far as she could tell in the dim light. The wall to her left held two doors. One was open and showed the outlines of a bathroom. The other door was slightly ajar but not enough to see anything.

She tried to take stock of her body: No pain; that was good. Her mind was becoming clearer with every heartbeat. There was what felt like an IV-drip in her left arm. What else? It was as if she were wearing some kind of adult diaper, telling her that she had been here for quite some time but not long enough to earn her more drastic measures.

She lifted her right arm slowly towards her throat, wondering how such a simple movement could be this difficult. Her fingers touched some sort of patch on the left side of her throat between jugular vein and collarbone, some sort of sensor, she presumed, but at a rather odd placement. For monitoring her heartbeat or brain activity it was definitely in the wrong place.

She turned her head as far as she could and saw the glow of a single monitor. There it was: blood pressure, pulse, heart rhythm, brain waves, and oxygen levels - everything on a single screen. Her infirmary equipment was state of the art but she didn't have anything as advanced as this. She began to get a very bad feeling about the whole thing.

She tried to sit up but found that she didn't have the strength. She wiggled her toes and moved her feet. So, it wasn't any kind of paralysis. The only other option left was muscular atrophy due to... what? A long period of immobility or something even more serious? Yes, very bad. She swallowed hard, trying not to let the panic she began to feel overwhelm her.

Starting her visual inspection all over again, she tried to get a feeling for this place. This time she saw a perfectly made military cot just under the window, something that looked like a plush carpet and a stash of toys in the far corner next to a children's writing desk close to the door. It was getting more and more unreal.

She once again tried to get up, and then the door opened, a typical hospital smell wafted in, followed by a nurse whose face was eerily familiar. She moved her lips and said a name but her mouth was dry and even she didn't hear her words.

"Hello, Doc. It's good to have you back. No, don't try to speak just yet. I already sent for some ice. Take it easy. You're awake, now everything will be all right."

She knew that the other woman was babbling in an effort to keep her calm until a doctor was able to check her out. It was good not to wake up to the face of a stranger. She deduced that she had been in some sort of coma and studied Abby's face to gauge for how long. The nurse opened the blinds, bit by bit to give her eyes the chance to accommodate to the light.

Another nurse brought a container with ice chips. She hated ice chips; rejecting them would have been an acceptable defence mechanism, but then the doctor in her asserted itself, and she gave in to the inevitable.

"Here, Doc. Take these. You know the drill, let them melt in your mouth. Yeah, that's it, a few more."

"Sam? Where's Sam?" This time it was audible.

"She's on her way, Janet. Should be here in a couple of minutes."

She barely had spoken the last word when the door burst open and a tall woman with short blond hair ran in, wearing black slacks and a matching jacket with a cream coloured shirt underneath. The woman stopped dead in her tracks at the end of the bed, her right hand instinctively grabbing the upper part of the footrest. Janet almost could feel her eyes roaming all over her body.

Two more steps brought her to the head of the bed and she swept the other woman in her arms. "Oh, God, Janet." She pressed the smaller woman against her chest but it wasn't enough. She gently laid her down and searched her eyes. "You're really awake. I missed you so much. You're back; you came back to me, my love." She whispered.

Abby quietly closed the door behind her to give them some privacy and Samantha swept the smaller woman in her arms. "I love you so much, I love you, I love you, I love you."

"Love you too," Janet whispered and had a coughing fit.

"Damn. What was I thinking?!" Samantha said, snapping back to reality. "Here have some more ice. Sometimes I'm such a dork. I really should know better."

"It's okay, baby. I love you." The prone woman whispered with a smile. Sam was so beautiful. There were other things to think about -- but why wasn't she in uniform; though the business suit looked really great on her.

The blonde slipped out of her jacket and grabbed a stethoscope from a table next to the monitor. "Let me check you out, darling. Just to ease my mind."

Janet wanted to protest; checking her vitals was the job of a medical doctor not of an astrophysicist but something in her lover's demeanour stopped her. She could sense her lover's deep-seated need to establish some kind of control but there also was the certainty that Samantha just needed to do this.

Samantha gently opened the nightgown and warmed the cool metal between her fingers before checking her lungs. Obviously content with what she heard, she snuggled one arm around her shoulders and pulled her in a sitting position. She slid behind her and continued her check-up.

"Sounds good to me, Jan. Now, let me have a look at your eyes. Your EEG is perfectly normal but I want to make sure." Samantha picked a penlight from the table and quickly flicked them in Janet's eyes. "That's my girl. You'll be fine; a couple of months' physical therapy and you can go back to work. What's the last thing you remember?"

Sam, yes, it was Sam. No doubt there.

There were so many questions racing through her mind but she couldn't give in to her desires, not now. She tried to stay focused. "P3X-666, got shot, staff weapon, a bright beam of light, your voice."

The brunette whispered. "How long?"

"Four years, six months, and thirteen days." There was a hitch in Samantha's voice. Janet, however, looked at her with disbelief. It simply wasn't possible. She couldn't have been gone for more than four years.

"I'm so glad to have you back, my love." The blonde's voice was real.

"Tell me what happened?"

"It's a long story -- but in a nutshell. You were DOA in the gate room. I brought you back with a healing device but you slipped in a coma. All we could do is make you as comfortable as possible and wait for you to come back. I'll tell you the rest when you're stronger. Let me first

check if there's any memory loss."

Samantha knew she was desperately trying to stay in control but this also was too good to be true. Everything she had dreamed of during the last few years had come true. She couldn't let these feelings overwhelm her. So, she first concentrated on medical questions and then switched to more personal things. "When did you start as CMO of Stargate Command?"

"As if I'll ever forget the day I met the love of my life," Janet answered, her voice much improved by now.

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It was her first day and she already had lost her way twice. These dull grey corridors all looked the same - and this time there was no conveniently stationed Airman standing around to help her out. She heard a voice and followed.

"...this new CMO the general chose. She's only a little bit of a thing. She needs a stepladder to even reach the examination table. The marines will have a field day with her, that's for sure. They will laugh themselves silly. I don't know what the general was thinking."

Janet would have been the first person to admit that she could have a rather volatile temper and she was about to barge in and give this male the dressing-down he deserved, when the soft but deep voice of a woman spoke up.

"Colonel, please. I read the memo. Her qualifications alone guarantee that she will be a big asset to this facility. She's the world's leading expert in virology. She spent the last two years troubleshooting for the CDC in every hot spot in the world. She's more than good at what she's doing. I'm pretty sure she can take care of herself and won't be easily intimidated by it by marines or flyboys, Sir. I'm really looking forward to getting to know her."

The small woman rounded the corner and stood in the doorway to a room filled with computers, switchboards, and other technical paraphernalia she'd never seen before. A tall man with silver-peppered short-cropped hair was leaning against a counter to her right and she was facing a blond woman with the most beautiful blue eyes she had ever seen. The picture in her medical file didn't even come close, and she was suddenly glad that she had spent the weekend going over the files and mission reports General Hammond had had sent to her on-base-quarters.

"Captain Carter, I apologise for eavesdropping but I think you got your wish. Captain Janet Fraiser, M.D."

"Cap... Captain Fraiser, I..., I... nice to meet you."

Blond, blue eyes - and blushing. "Nice to meet you too. Please call me Janet."

"Janet". The brunette was sure that her eyes had an almost dreamy expression when she repeated the name. "I'm Samantha. Please, call me Sam."

"Sam, it is." Neither of the women was aware that they were still holding hands.

O'Neill loudly cleared his throat, feeling definitively left out, and Samantha snapped back to reality. "Where are my manners?! Captain Janet Fraiser, may I introduce Colonel Jack O'Neill, the leader of SG-1."

Janet turned slightly and saluted. "Sir, it's good to meet you and the perfect opportunity to remind you of your physical. 1600 sharp."

"Hey, there was no physical scheduled. I had one only the last week." He protested.

"Well, it is now, and your last full physical was the week before last, Sir."

Samantha saw the expression on the face of her CO and decided that it would be better to hightail it out of her laboratory, or risk being stuck with a bitching and whining superior for the next few hours. "Janet, why don't I accompany you to the infirmary? If my memory serves right my own check-up also is overdue."

They both saluted the colonel and were gone before he knew how. Jack later told them that he should have known about their special connection from the beginning, considering his second-in-command's almost notorious dislike of the infirmary.

When they reached the elevator that would bring them to level 21 Janet said. "Your physical is not overdue, Sam. You don't have to go through with this. I know you don't like doctors."

"What makes you think that? I'd like to like you."

There it was again the adorable blush.

"I quote: On a good day Captain Carter is uncooperative but usually her behaviour borders on insubordination. End quote."

"Warner!" The blush was gone and a hint of anger lurked in her eyes but a heartbeat later she had regained her composure. Her face was set in a neutral expression Janet over the months and years learned to read as denial. "Doctor Warner is a good surgeon. He did his best to save Kowalski but I'd rather not have him as my regular physician."

"Let me guess: his bedside manners leave a lot to be desired." Samantha hesitatingly nodded and the other woman knew that there would have been much more to tell but that the blonde wasn't ready to speak just yet. "It's a common trait with surgeons. - You're sure, you wanna go through with the check-up?"

"Yes, Janet, as long as it's you doing it."

Entering the infirmary they were greeted by the irate voice of Doctor Warner. "Already ratting me out to the new CMO, Carter. Good to know what your word is worth."

"I keep my promises - just stay away from me and every other woman on this base and we won't have any problems." She answered in a low threatening voice.

"Sam, would you please go in my office and get ready. There's a gown under the examination table. We do your physical in there; no need to get in the way of the technicians setting up the new equipment I ordered. - Doctor Warner, may I have a word?!"

It definitively wasn't a request and he reluctantly followed her to an empty observation room. "Care to explain to me what this was all about, Doctor?"

"As if your new 'friend' didn't already fill you in!" He snorted.

"Answer my question," Janet hated this kind of power play but that didn't mean she wasn't good at it. Her voice was calm and she suddenly seemed much taller than her five foot two. "Better get it over with because we won't leave this room until you tell me."

"It was nothing more than a honest mistake but that bi..." Taking in the blazing brown eyes of his young superior he relented. "Captain Carter blew it all out of proportions."

"Blew what out of proportion?"

"It had been one of these day when everything goes to hell in a hand basket. Doctor Myers called in sick; SG-2 came back with food poisoning, SG-6 had run into a Jaffa-ambush, and Lieutenant Carey sprained her ankle in the gym. I gave her some painkillers but I was distracted and instead of ordering x-rays I somehow marked her down for a gynaecological examination. The painkillers were pretty strong and she was prepped without being really aware of it. When I finally came round to have a look at her, it had totally slipped my mind why she was in the infirmary in the first place.

"So, I did what the chart told me to do. -- I was in the middle of a regular check-up when Captain Carter stormed in and threw me to the ground. I don't know what she had been thinking. I just was doing my job. She stood over me like some sort of avenging angel and told me that she would personally cut me to pieces if I ever again came near to one of the women of the base. I tried to tell her that it had been a mistake, something that can happen to everyone working 16 hours non-stop."

"It can happen but it shouldn't, Doctor Warner. See to it that something like this never happens again and avoid treating the female members of the staff outside of the main room, not without a nurse or someone else in attendance. Gossip is the bread and butter of every military installation, even more so with high-security-facilities. This isn't a matter of trust but just a precaution. I'll send a memo to the other members of my staff to take similar precautions with the opposite sex."

Janet answered, not completely convinced by his explanation, and resolved to keep an eye on him while willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. All thoughts of Warner disappeared when she opened the door to her office.

Samantha was sitting on the examination table in one of the hospital gowns, kicking her bare feet and pouting like a three-year-old. When she heard the sound of the door closing she looked up and a smile spread over her face.

"Regretting your decision, Sam?"

"Decision? Oh no, I was just getting a bit bored and I apologise for the scene with Doctor Warner."

"He told me his version of what happened," She could feel the sudden tension in the other woman's body; and she was close to following her heart instead of her mind. She silently debated with herself, took a deep breath and continued.

"I probably should ask you what really transpired but from what you said, you gave him a promise; so I know you will not tell me what really happened. So, for now, I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. I'll make sure that he never will be alone with one or the other of a female member of the staff to me, unless there's an emergency. And if you or anyone else ever should feel like there is something to say, please, do so."

"Thank you, Janet." The blonde answered, surprised at the degree of insight in her thought structures the doctor had gained in the short time since they had met.

"You're welcome, Sam." The young doctor was now standing directly in front of Samantha.  
"Now, let's get this show on the road."

"I missed you, Janet."

That came from around a blind corner. "I was gone but for a few minutes, Sam."

"I know, five minutes, 36 seconds. I missed your eyes; they're so deep and warm. It's like looking right in the centre of the earth."

"Samantha Elizabeth Carter, are you flirting with me?"

"And if I were?" The blue eyes facing her became darker, more intense and even then, after having known the other woman for less than an hour she knew that it was more than just a game.

"It's all right between friends, Sam." Her right hand, almost of its own accord cupped Samantha's left cheek and Janet had a hard time to get back into doctor mode.

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"You simply took my breath away, Sammy-baby, and you still do. Would you please kiss me?" And kiss they did, for a long time. Parting their lips just long enough to come up for air.

Minutes changed to hours and they just held each other; suddenly Janet asked. "Tell me about Cassy. Four years, she must be ready to finish college by now."

"Cassy finished pre-med school two years ago. She just started her residency, baby." Samantha answered softly. "She followed her mom's footsteps."

"And yours, Mum." A young woman almost as tall as Samantha said while closing the door. In three strides she was at the bed. "I didn't believe it when Abby told me. Oh, Mom, I'm so glad that you're back." She took Janet in her arms with tears streaming down her face. "It was so hard seeing you both so helpless but now everything will be okay."

"Let me look at you, Cassy. You've grown so much, so beautiful. Tell me about you."

"I just assisted in my first appendix removal. It was great. Doctor Harrington said I did good."

"That's great, Cassy. I'm so proud of you." Samantha answered and took her in her arms.

Suddenly, Samantha's pager began to beep. She cast a quick look and then excused herself and headed towards the office to the right of the bathroom. A couple of minutes later, she came back, dressed in scrubs.

"I'm sorry, I'm needed at the ER, a multiple care pile-up at the interstate. I'll be back as soon as I can. Keep your mom company, Cass, would you?" She kissed Janet, squeezed the young woman's arm, and was gone before anyone had the chance to say anything.

"Emergency room? Care to enlighten me, Cassy?"

"Mum..., Sam didn't tell you? No, she wouldn't. She's too damn modest."

"Cass, watch your language."

"Sorry, Mom. I'm awfully proud of what she has achieved these last few years, but I also get so angry about the whole thing. I'm sure she will tell you soon. Sam finished her residency almost two years ago. She now is one of the leading trauma surgeons in Colorado." The young woman said with pride in her voice.

"Cass, I know Sam's a genius but not even she can balance the SGC and a whole new career. That's simply not possible,"

"She had a lot of time on her hands after P3X-666, Mom. She first finished her book on wormhole theory and then began to study medicine to understand the healing device better."

"But what about SG-1? She was about to be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel."

"A lot has happened. Uncle Jack is now a general and runs the SGC and Teal'c has returned to his people. Sam still helps out at the science division and occasionally goes on missions but she is no longer an official part of the Air Force. I'm sorry, Mom. I would feel much better if you'd let Sam be the teller of her own tales."

"I'll try and be patient, baby, but now tell me what you were up to. The pictures on the wall, who made them? Is there something I should know?"

Cassandra laughed. "No, Mom, I didn't make you a grandmother, don't worry."

Before she could say more, the speaker system in the far corner of the room was crackling and a voice announced. "Sam Fraiser to day-care, Sam Fraiser to day-care."

"There was some trouble with her father," Cassandra said prompted by her mother's questioning look. "She changed her name because she didn't want to be a Carter anymore. I'll be back soon, Mum should have picked her up half an hour ago."

About twenty minutes later, she was back. A child of about three years with unruly brown hair and bright blue eyes was holding her right hand. "Say hello to your mommy, Eli."

The child ran to her desk, dragged her chair to the bed, and climbed on top of the mattress. "Hey, Mommy. Today, I learned about the solar sys.... Wow, you're awake. How great is that?!" The girl exclaimed and swung her arms around Janet's neck. "Holy Hanna! You really have beautiful eyes, deep and warm, just like Mum said and Mum is always right."

"Eli, introduce yourself, would you? You know a lot about your mommy but she has yet to learn about you, little one."

"Oh, yes, Mum said that. I forgot, Andy. -- Hi, Mommy. I'm Eli Rebecca Fraiser. I'm three years and two months old. I'm in fourth grade but sometimes it's rather boring. Andy, no, Cassandra, is the bestest sister ever and I love to cuddle with Grandpa George; though I love Andy best. Uncle Danny and Jonas play word games with me, and Uncle Jack gave me a baseball glove, and I do a lot of neat stuff with Jenny but the bestest, no, the best of all is stargazing with Mum."

There was a short moment of silence. "So, you made all those beautiful pictures?"

"Oh, yes, Mommy. Mum said they would help you to come back to us, and guess what, it worked."

"Yes, it did, sweetie, it worked. Tell me more about your Mum."

"Mum is a doctor and she's down at the ER saving lives. She didn't have the time to come and get me but Andy was there and now you can also come and play with me. Mum also is an astrophycist, no, Andy help me, please."

"Astrophysicist, little one."

"Yes, astrophysicist. She looks at the stars and helps that everything works out fine up there. And she's beautiful, and everyone is in love with her but she only loves you. And she is the best playmate ever. Last week we played catch in the garden and we jumped in the heaps of leaves, and then we made cookies and ate them in front of the fireplace - but I'm not allowed to go there without Mum or Andy or Jenny. - Mommy, do we do your exercises today?"

"Exercises?"

"Yes, of course, Mommy. Mum taught me how to move your hands and fingers to keep them sup... keep them from getting stiff. We do this every day."

"Sounds reasonable, sweetie. Since I'm awake I can do it on my own but it would be better if you show me how to do it right, wouldn't it? But first, tell me, what is Eli short for?"

This time her older daughter answered. "Sam wanted a name that reminded her of the both of you. It comes from Elizabeth and Elyssa, your second names."

The blue-eyed girl meanwhile began to stretch and move Janet's fingers one after the other with practised ease. The doctor concentrated on what she was doing, trying hard to keep her mind from speculating, and had to admit that this small girl was as skilled at this as a well trained physical therapist. When the second hand was almost finished, Janet no longer could fight her eyelids dropping and she soon was fast asleep.

"Andy, will Mommy wake up again?"

"Yes, little one. Soon. She won't leave us again, I promise. How about you finish the exercises and then do your homework? I'll be in Mum's office and do the same."

"All right, Andy. - Andy, do you think Mommy likes me?"

"Yes, Eli, she does, what's not to like. I'm sure she can't wait to get to know you better. Don't forget, you're her little girl. Now, scoot, homework's waiting."

"Yes, Andy, and then we play?"

"Yes, little one, then we'll play."

A couple of hours later, Janet came back to her senses. The sun had already set and the light on

the desk was the only illumination in the room. She could see Cassandra sitting on the cot with the small child nestled in her arms. "Eli-baby, you must have heard this story a hundred times at least."

"But it's one of my favourites, Andy. Please!"

"All right, little one, you win. - Eleven years ago, I was living far, far away from here with my mother and my father, my cousins, and aunts and uncles. One day they all became ill and died. There was an evil woman named Nirrti, and she wanted me to die too, and I was very afraid. But then four people arrived. Three of them were dressed in strange yellow suits with helmets to make sure that they didn't get ill as well. Uncle T didn't need the strange suit. He gave me his hand and coaxed me out of my hiding place. He was really, really big but I liked the funny mark on his forehead. And then I saw the eyes, eyes as blue as the sky above and a smile that took away all my fears."

"And then they brought you in this big tent and Mommy checked you out and they both made sure that the evil woman didn't get you."

"Yes, little one. Then they had a meeting with Uncle Jack, and Danny, and Uncle T. They were talking about staying there to have a very special look at the stars - but I didn't want your mum to stay, so, I snuggled up to her."

"And then Uncle Jack send you home with Mum and Mommy. Mum wanted to keep you with her but then she all the time had to go away to look after the stars. She wasn't a doctor then, and you stayed with Mommy."

"Yes, and she became my Mom, and I love her as much as I loved my first mother."

"And Sam became your big sister and best friend and playmate." Janet's words cut through the room.

"Not to forget, my other mother. -- Now, let me talk to Mom for a bit, Eli, then I'll get you home. Remember, Jenny promised to finish the jigsaw puzzle with you." The girl nodded enthusiastically and started to pack her things in her satchel. "Hi, Mom, how are you doing?"

"I'm fine, I think, or at least I will be. A bit confused, no, very confused. It was a lot to take in and there is still so much to learn. Don't worry; I'll be fine in the long run."

"Sam's still stuck at the ER and will be for some time but she will come back to you as soon as possible. I have to take the little one home. Daniel will bring her by after school tomorrow. I'll send Abby in with something to eat."

"I'm ready, Andy. Can I say goodnight to Mommy?"

"Of course, sweetie. Waiting for your Mum will be much easier if I were to have a proper kiss and a hug, don't you think so?"

"It works for me, Mommy."

A few minutes later Cassandra and the girl were gone, and Janet was alone with a whirlwind of thoughts and disconnected images, beginning to give her a headache. Abby presented her with a tall glass of a milky liquid. She knew it was better than waking up with a stomach tube or something like this - but still she was a doctor, and doctors are supposed to be the worst patients, so she said.

"That's not exactly what I was hoping for, nurse Washington."

"Oh, please, Doc, you know better."

"Abbyyyy! I'm not Seven-of-Nine. Give me something edible."

"Wanna have some cheese with your whine, Doc?" Janet cast her a defiant look but internally grinned, knowing from experience that Abby wouldn't let anyone get away with such behaviour. "You're just as stubborn now as you were then. So, let me give you the facts. On P3X-666 the blast from the staff weapon missed your spine only by the quarter of an inch but all but destroyed your stomach and intestines. When Samantha carried you through the gate you had flat-lined. She raced to the armoury, got the healing device, and used it, right in the middle of the gate room. The yellow beam of light slowly enveloped your whole body and continued to spread around Samantha as well. The whole SGC were waiting with their breaths held. Your body arched off the ground and you once again began to breathe. But she didn't stop until she collapsed on top of you. You still were critical and Samantha was close to a small stroke.

"So, please, don't complain about the food. Just follow your doctor's orders. She is damn good at what she's doing though it may be a bit of an adjustment for you." What Abby didn't say was 'And she had to live through a hell of a lot to make it happen!'

"Never argue with your head nurse! I should have remembered this part of CMO 101. All right, I'll eat it and I'll try and stop complaining. It's all a bit overwhelming right now, Master Sergeant."

"I understand, Doc, believe me. And just for the record, I'm no longer with the Air Force. I resigned a few years ago. Take your time eating. I'll be back in half an hour. There are some other people waiting to welcome you back, Doc."

Unable to completely hide her confusion Janet only nodded in answer. - Abby, the woman who had told her at their first meeting that being with the Air Force was her life's dream fulfilled, having resigned her commission. That was more than unlikely but there had been no regret in her voice. Still, the brunette was sure to detect some residual anger directed at she had no idea what.

Exactly thirty minutes later, her non-descript drink drained, Abby returned with at least half the

staff of the SGC infirmary in tow. In a way it was like coming home after a long journey; they shook her hand and hugged her, some of them with tears in her eyes. They tried to keep the conversation to a level just above of small-talk and still Janet had had the feeling that she more times than not just didn't get the true sense of their words, a feeling that left her rather unsettled.

She asked Abby to leave the light on when they all left. She wanted to have a better look at the pictures. She had to learn more about the artist. There was no doubt that young Eli was Samantha's daughter. She had her eyes and obviously also her brain - three years old and in fourth grade, incredible. Her hair and her way of holding her head when listening to Cassandra's story reminded her of someone else. It took her some time to admit to it, even for herself but it reminded her of herself. The girl already thought of her as her other mother and Cassy had told her that Samantha wanted a name that was part of both of them. No, that was nothing more than wishful thinking; it was biologically impossible. And Samantha never would decide something this important without her, wouldn't she?

She once again drifted in a deep sleep.

When she opened her eyes again, the lights had been shut off but the full moon shining through the window illuminated the room just enough to let her easily study the slumbering figure in the chair next to her. Samantha's legs were stretched out in front of her; her upper body also was tilted forwards with her head resting on the mattress and both of her hands holding Janet's.

Her blond hair was still cut short and as unruly as ever but there were almost imperceptible lines at the edge of her eyes that hadn't been there before. Four years, four years and a half. She had missed so much, a pang of regret travelling through her body. She drew a deep breath trying to re-centre herself and inadvertently flexed her fingers.

The small movement was enough to wake Samantha, propelling her from a deep slumber to complete alertness in less than a second, her military training firmly in place. Her eyes immediately flicked to the monitor broadcasting Janet's vitals and only then settled on her face.

"I'm all right, Sammy. I didn't want to disturb your sleep. You need it."

"Just had three hours." The blonde answered to the loud complaints of Janet's stomach. "I'll get you something to eat, baby."

Seconds later another of the milky drinks was in her hands, her bedding rearranged and she was sitting up. Samantha herself was at the edge of the bed, anxiety clearly written in her face. So, Janet decided to postpone her most pressing question.

"Sam, after four and a half years of coma, I shouldn't be able to move this easily. I know I'm still weak but not as much as I should be."

"It was a gift from the Nox. They couldn't do anything to make you regain consciousness but

they were able to stabilise your body to make it easier for you to recover when the time came. - But that's not what you really wanted to know, right?"

"No, it's not. Tell me about Eli. Who is her father?" Samantha kept her mouth shut and had this deer-in-the-headlight-expression in her eyes. "Someone I know?" Janet prodded. "Please, Sammy, tell me whom I have to thank for such a bright and beautiful daughter."

"Daughter? You really think of her as your daughter? Already?"

"She calls me Mommy. How could I not, my love?"

"Oh, I love you, Jan. I love you so much." The taller woman hugged her, kissed her forehead and her cheeks, and finally found her lips. After another passionate kiss, Samantha once again took her right hand between hers and answered. "The Asgard, Thor, and Heimdall."

"But Human and Asgard physiology are incompatible. If they weren't they would have solved their cloning problems a long time ago."

"Oh no, Eli is as completely human as someone with a strange protein marker and naquada in her blood can be. After Selmac and I destroyed the Replicators by reprogramming the Ancient weapon, the Asgard came to earth to install a satellite defence grid around earth. Heimdall tried to transfer your consciousness in a new body but it didn't work.

"Then they offered to combine our DNA and create a child made by both of us. Eli is a perfect mix, and though I gave birth to her, you're every bit as much her mother as I am." She saw the doubt on her partner's face and continued. "These nine months since 666 I was so alone. I had my friends and I had Cassandra but it wasn't enough. They tried but I needed more; I needed you; and all I had was your unmoving body."

Samantha searched Janet's eyes. "I'm sorry, my love. I should have been more faith in you, more patience but seeing you so vulnerable and being so helpless myself was tearing me apart; and I think Heimdall picked up on my desperation. Having Eli in my life gave me the strength to go on, to wait for you. It gave me the strength not to give in." She explained with a soft voice.

"Slow down a bit, would you? Cross ovular fertilization doesn't work."

"It does when you have the right help. There are a few organizations studying the procedure as we speak but they don't know that it's more than just a theory."

"So, she really is my daughter. She not only thinks so. Wow!"

"Yeah, wow! Our daughter! - You're not angry with me, don't feel left out?"

The small brunette tried to hug Samantha but didn't have the strength to reach all the way up. "No, baby, I'm not angry, far from it. I know you good enough to understand that you didn't make this decision lightly. I'm sorry, I missed your pregnancy and the first three years of her life,

but I'm glad the Asgard made this possible for us. -- Please hold me in your arms, Sam." The blonde slipped out of her shoes and soon Janet was cradled in her lover's arms. "They made possible what had only been a dream for me: being able to give you a child. -- And now tell me more. You destroyed the Replicators? How?"

"The Replicators were attacking Ba'al and his forces." The blonde answered trying to leave out the story with Fifth and her evil twin. "Teal'c and Bratac decided that this would be the perfect opportunity to try and reunite the Jaffa. They wanted to take a planet named Takara from him. It's sacred to the Jaffa because it was there that the first Jaffa received his first primpta. They succeeded and found a weapon of the Ancients in the temple. The inscriptions said that it was designed to destroy the plague killing the Ancients but that they didn't have the time to make it work. Selmac and I found a way to turn it against the Replicators and with Ba'al's help we were able to send an ultrasound signal to all stargates in the universe. It destroyed the Replicators' ability to bond with each other."

Samantha yawned. "Samantha Elizabeth Car... Fraiser, when was the last time you had a whole night of uninterrupted sleep?"

"You don't mind that I took your name, do you?" Samantha asked with a hint of apprehension in her voice.

Janet turned in her arms as far as she could to make eye contact; choosing her words very carefully because she knew that now was not the time to speak about General Carter. "No, baby. Cassy told me, and it makes me proud. I'm just sorry that your father hurt you enough to make you do it and I wish that you could take my name because we could get legally married. So, no, Sammy-baby, I don't mind. It's an honour."

"Will you marry me, Janet Elyssa Fraiser?"

"I wouldn't hesitate a heartbeat if it were possible. You're mine and I want the whole world to know it."

"It's possible, Janet. It was the very first law President Clinton pushed through after she had to take over when President Hayes was killed last year. One of these Islamic fanatics shot him and three of his bodyguards."

"I remember Hayes campaign. He had some good ideas but his choice in running mates sucked."

"Kinsey wasn't his Vice President for long. He resigned from office when Anubis attacked earth - and he's dead now. Hayes brought Clinton on board because he needed the support of both parties to boost the defence expenses. They were a really good team, and Hillary Clinton has already proven that she's a good President in her own right. She got the highest number of votes since Teddy Roosevelt."

"You sound like a fan."

"In a way I am. She has come through for me and the SGC on more than one occasion." She stifled another yawn.

"Close your eyes, Sammy. I want you to sleep. The fate-of-the-world lecture can wait. Close your eyes. I'll still be there when you wake up." Janet snuggled closer, only slightly hindered by the IV-drip.

Chapter Two: Though lovers be lost love shall not

Janet woke for the second time that day; the first one had been when Samantha left her to begin her shift at the ER and do her rounds. She told her that she would have to run a few tests but that she was confident that she would be back on her feet in less than three months; and in her head she knew that this would be a surprisingly fast recovery. Abby had given her a sponge bath driving home the point that she by far wasn't as strong as she thought and that the next few months would test her patience to its full extent while filling her up with another of these bland milky drinks.

"Good morning, Doctor Fraiser."

"General Hammond, Sir, I..." Janet tried to salute.

"At ease, Doctor, you're still on medical leave. As soon as Samantha gives you a clean bill of health it will be up to you to arrange your return to the SGC with General O'Neill - if you want to, that is. I had to clear a few things up with Jack this morning and when Sam asked I gladly agreed to take the time to fill you in on the last four years. I have to be back at Washington tomorrow morning - that should give us enough time to cover the basics."

"That would be good, Sir. And why don't you start with explaining to me why Sam, a career officer if I ever met one, left the Air Force." Janet knew that her question at least bordered on insubordination but her need to know was stronger than her common sense. "She should be a full-bird colonel by now. Has is anything to do with us?"

This question alone could have been a death blow for both of their careers but the general was one of the few people who never bought the excuse of raising Cassandra together for Samantha to move in with her. He was Samantha's godfather and knew her probably better than her own father; always had and always would. When her lover almost had been taken by the entity he told her that he had known about them almost from the beginning, after the incident with the Land of Light and what Daniel Jackson called the 'Broca Divide.'

For a moment lost in her memories she didn't mind the silence, until the general's voice brought her back to the here-and-now.

"I'm sorry, but that's for Samantha to tell you, Janet. Just believe that everything she did, she did for you, because she loves you more than anything else, more than the security of earth, more

than Cassandra, even more than Eli. Eli gave her something to live for but all these years she wasn't really alive. Now, we all have a chance to get our old Sam back."

There was another long moment of silence, and years of waiting with General Hammond for SG-1 or one of the other teams coming in late from a mission had taught her to read his face. So, she knew that he wouldn't answer any more questions concerning her lover.

"After P3X-666 turned into a disaster, an inquiry of my leadership capabilities was initiated at the request of Vice President-elect Kinsey..."

George Hammond talked and talked, through a second breakfast and lunch consisting of more milky liquid. She still didn't know the details of everything that had happened but what she learned was enough to leave her completely intrigued and flabbergasted:

The Replicators were gone, for good. The Gao'uld had been so greatly reduced in numbers that all but one didn't pose a threat anymore. Their erstwhile nemesis, Anubis, was gone, too. Though officially still top secret the SGC had become an open secret for everyone who really wanted to know. Teal'c was now the leader of a proud Jaffa nation. They finally had found the lost city of the Ancients in the Pegasus galaxy; where ever this was. Samantha had designed a system of re-aligned stargates to insure regular communication without depleting the still rare ZPMs. On the other hand they had found a new formidable enemy in the Wraiths, a race of beings that used humans as their only food source, literally sucking the life out of them like some sort of nightmarish vampire.

It was a lot to take in.

"Danny, help me up. I want to sit with Mommy." The curly haired whirlwind kept her from thinking too much for the better part of an hour. "My friends at day-care are waiting. We are building a tower but I will be back soon, Mommy."

When the girl was gone, Daniel did what he had wanted to do from the beginning. He swept the small woman in a heartfelt hug. "I'm so glad that you're back, Janet. We all missed you so much. Sam said on the phone that you would make a full recovery. She said that you only have to regain your strength and motor control."

"I'm glad to be back, Daniel. I missed a lot, I heard. General Hammond filled me in this morning. He even asked me if I would consider coming back to the SGC."

"If I were you, I would hold off on this decision until I heard all the parties concerned, Janet." The archaeologist cautiously answered. "Jack certainly would be thrilled. He's been bitching about every single one of your replacements. They're either too easily intimidated, or too bossy. And none of them comes close to your brilliance and great bedside manners. Ending up in the infirmary is definitively no fun anymore. It's not only the CMO; it's all of you. Two thirds of your staff transferred or resigned after what Warner did. It took a lot to get him out of the

mountain and by then it was too late. They didn't want to come back, and I can't say I blame them. Sam begged me to stay; else I would have left too. - I'm sorry, Janet, I'm not supposed to talk about this. Sam wants the chance to tell you in her own time."

"Whatever happened seems to have affected a lot of people. I could hear it in Cassandra's voice and in the general's, and now you really have me worried, Daniel."

"I'm sorry, Janet, for not keeping my mouth shut in the first place but I promised, and I never would break a promise to her."

"I understand, Daniel, but as soon as I know at what you all are hinting, I want to hear your version of events. Deal?"

"Deal, Janet. And now I must leave. It's time for your physical therapy session."

Shortly after, Abby came with another of the despised drinks and another ten minutes later the door opened to admit a young woman who introduced herself as Lefty.

"My real name is Catherine," the red headed woman said, "but I like Lefty better. It reminds me of the one and only time I ever had one up on Samantha at the pool table, about two and a half years ago. I later learned that she had gone without sleep for almost four days. That evening she dubbed me with the nickname and it stuck. Now, let's get to work."

From a professional point of view she had to admit that Lefty was good at what she was doing, very good, but it left her exhausted. And she was asleep even before the redhead had completely turned towards the door.

She woke to the sensation of something smooth and moist travelling up her left leg. Her eyes soon confirmed her suspicions. She was given a sponge bath.

"Isn't there some kind of rule that says that this is the work of a nurse or an apprentice, Sam? Chores like this are not for a doctor to do."

"Chores? No, Jan. In my book, it's a pleasure and a privilege to be allowed to do this for your, my love. I've been doing this every chance I got for the last three years and three quarters. It's one of the things that kept me sane while I waited for you to wake up. Between the hospital and the SGC I miss enough opportunities to serve you." Samantha answered while continuing her gentle ministrations.

"Didn't you say that I was in a coma for four and a half years?" Janet asked.

"Yes."

"Then I..."

"The first nine months I wasn't allowed to take care of you like I wanted to. Eli and Cassy will be here in a few minutes to have dinner with us. I promise, I'll explain everything when they're gone. Please!"

"You waited over four years. The least I can do is show a bit of patience, Sam." The brunette said with a smile.

For dinner, Janet graduated from the milky liquid to something more solid but not less bland. The girls chattered about their day, and Samantha was obviously content to leave the bulk of the conversation to Janet.

The small woman hadn't spent six years with her lover not to recognise the tell tale signs of stress and anxiety in her body language. She definitively dreaded telling what she had to tell but Janet also knew from experience that talking would do her a world of good.

So, for now, she concentrated her attention on the curly haired girl who was brandishing a picture in front of her eyes."

"Wow, that's great, sweetie. It looks like a wedding, yours or Cassy's?"

"Oh no, yours and Mum's of course." The girl explained.

"Why don't you put it on the wall with the others, little one? We'll have to let your Mommy decide about that." Samantha said dejectedly while the girl already was halfway across the room.

"Ah, Mum, for crying out loud, would you please finally get over it and stop feeling guilty. You were not in your right mind," Cassandra retorted exasperated, picking up on the things the tall blonde hadn't said explicitly, "and you should never have agreed to the asshole's terms."

"Cassandra Fraiser, mind your language."

"I'm sorry, Mom, but it's still true."

Samantha was about to say something when Eli slipped into her lap and snuggled close. "I don't want to fight, Cassy, but ultimately it will be for your mom to decide. Will Jenny come by tonight?"

"I doubt it; she's stuck with the trade negotiations. They apparently have trouble understanding the mechanics of the irrigation system you designed. She said that she would probably stay on base tonight to find a way to dumb it down for them even more."

"I'm sorry, Cassy. I know it's your last evening before you'll have to work graveyard." Samantha answered."

"I'll live, Mum, and I'm sorry that I lost my temper."

"It's all right, Cassy. You're not alone with your opinion, and you might even have a point but what is done is done."

"Love you, Mum."

"I love you too, Cassandra, and you, little one." Samantha said, kissing a curly head.

"Will you come home tonight, Mum?"

"I don't know yet, Eli. I have to speak with your mommy but I'll be there tomorrow morning to bring to you to school and tell your classmates about the stars, just as planned. Did you do all your homework?"

"Yes, Mum. Mrs. Fisher didn't give us any and the things for Mr. Schroeder I did during recess. Took no more than five minutes, and then I played tag with Jason, Chrissy, and Billy."

"That's my girl. Did you play in teams or free-for-all?"

"Free-for-all, and I nearly bumped into the janitor, had to slip through his legs. But I apologised."

"I'm proud of you, little one. Now, give your mommy and me a kiss."

"May I watch Winnie and Tigger?" Eli asked Janet.

"Yes, sweetie, but not too long. You go to bed when your sister tells you to, all right?" The girl nodded and gave Janet a kiss and hug.

"Have sweet dreams, my best beloved." Samantha said when she closed the door behind the girls.

"Sam, isn't Eli too young to worry about homework and school?"

The blonde smiled, having expected the question somewhere along the line. She stepped in her office and came back holding a folder. "Here have a look at this. I'll have a phone call to make."

Janet studied the contents with growing wonder and just heard the end of the call. "...out just fine. The lecture at Eli's school is scheduled at 800; so, I'll be at the base on time. Take the day off, Jenny."

She came back in the room and took her place at the edge of the bed. "So, you still think that she is too young for school? She's already starting to get bored with her mathematics teacher."

"Why did you have her tested?" Considering that the blonde had adamantly refused to submit to IQ-testing herself, even going as far as to object to a direct order, it was a sensible question.

"I didn't. I knew her potential from the beginning, and I didn't want her categorized. The former head of the day-care centre did it without my permission. For Eli it was nothing more than a game, a boring game. Sometimes she is far beyond her years but in other aspect she is a normal three year old. I try to make sure of that."

"I know you do, baby. Tell me about this Jenny, you and Cassandra were talking about. Who is she? A baby sitter?"

"Jennifer Hailey. When the whole mess started, she really came through for Cassy. They became friends and about a year ago it became something more. I wasn't too thrilled when they told me, because of the age difference but bottom line is that, they are good for each other. Cassy keeps four-foot-nine grounded in the here and now, and Jenny helps our daughter to dream. But that's not what I have to talk to you about."

Samantha began to pace; it was her way to centre herself. When she was ready to speak she was facing the window, desperately trying not to get lost in the dark memories.

"O'Neill was hit by a staff blast but the new inserts in his vest had done its job and I managed to stabilize him. Then I heard Daniel over the radio, requesting a medic. 'Fraiser is down,' he shouted, and Daniel never ever shouts or yells. I ordered an immediate retreat and sprinted towards him.

"I took you in my arms and carried you through the gate."

"You were dead when we arrived at the other side, and Warner didn't even try to resuscitate you. He said that he had patients to care for that still stood a chance. I stormed to the armoury, nearly running down this silly reporter, and got the healing device. I brought you back but your condition remained critical.

"The healing device had sapped most of my strength and I was out like a light for a few days. I heard that you already had flat-lined twice but Abby and the rest of the staff didn't let you go. I was so afraid for you, and Warner had me under constant guard, not even allowing me to sit by your side. He became really angry when I suggested to once again using the healing device, citing medical reasons.

"We tried to contact the Tok'ra and the Nox but none of them answered. You had another seizure and finally General Hammond overruled Warner and let me use the device again. For more than a week it was touch and go, but you held onto your life, barely but tenaciously. Warner had ordered the staff not to interfere should your condition take a turn to the worse. I was getting desperate, and one night while I was sitting at your bedside when he was off-duty, I knew what I had to do.

"I had to by-pass a bunch of security protocols but I managed to get my hands on the communications device the Tollans had used to contact the Nox all those years ago. I sent them a message, telling them the exact time when I would dial their gate and bring someone in need of their help. I had everything planned, including a virus that would disable the better part of the

base's security systems. But I was realistic enough to know that at one point or the other I would encounter resistance, so, I armed myself with a zat and a ribbon device.

"When the base computers shut down as programmed, I knew I had twenty to twenty-five minutes to get you to the gate room and dial the Nox homeworld. Pushing your gurney I ran into Warner just outside of the infirmary. He wanted to stop me, grabbed the gurney, and pulled. I hit him with the ribbon device, and he slumped against the far wall.

"No one else tried to stop us but the general was in the control room, together with Siler and three other techs. I didn't bother with asking for permission. I zatted them and disabled the iris control. I dialled the Nox but when I arrived at the gate room, the seventh chevron didn't lock as if the gate had been somehow disabled. You once again went into arrest and there wasn't enough time to get you back to the infirmary or go and find the healing device.

"So, I used the ribbon device. I knew that it reacts on emotions, so I tried and poured all my love for you into it, and it worked. Forty minutes later, they finally figured out how to open the doors, by then you were really stable and I didn't resist when they brought me to the brig."

Samantha turned around; her blue eyes searched Janet's brown orbs.

"You shot your commanding officer?"

"Yes."

"You shot him to save my life?"

"Yes."

"You willingly threw away your career?"

"Yes." Samantha's confirmations grew softer and softer.

"Come here, Sammy-baby!" The tall woman stepped forward with an expression on her face as if she were to face the final judgement. "Do you know how much I love you, Samantha Elizabeth Fraiser?"

"You're not angry with me?"

"No, my love. Mind you, I'm not too happy with your reasoning or your strategy but what really counts is why you did it. How could I be angry with love?"

Janet was swept in Samantha's arms. "Oh, baby, I was so afraid that you wouldn't want anything to do with me."

"Nothing to worry about. I love you, now, then, and forever. I love you, and I love our daughters."

The blonde began to weep in the slightly older woman's arms. Tears turned into sobs that made her whole body shiver. It was as if the tension and the fears and the emotional turmoil of the last four and a half years had finally breached the barriers the young doctor had built around them. They stayed like this for a long time, and when the tears slowly subsided Janet began to hum and then sing an old lullaby and let Samantha cry herself to sleep.

She leaned back into the pillow, the blonde head nestled on her shoulder, just like they had slept countless times when a mission had gone wrong, when Samantha had to act against her instincts to obey an order, when nightmares disturbed her dreams. The small doctor knew that she was the only one, the blonde soldier felt close enough to, to let her guard down and show her vulnerability.

A few hours later, Samantha stirred in Janet's arms and mumbled. "I'm sorry I failed you. I'm so sorry, my love."

"Sammy, wake up, please." She kissed the blond head. "Everything's all right. It's just a dream. I'm here, Sammy-baby. Open these beautiful eyes of yours and see for yourself."

Blue eyes obediently fluttered open. "You're really back. You're real. It wasn't a dream."

"Yes, darling. I'm awake and I can't wait to get out of here and make you my wife."

"I love you, Janet Elyssa Fraiser. I'd love to marry you right now but it probably would be better to wait."

"Why, Sam? Do you reconsider?"

"No, but a Lieutenant Colonel of the US Air Force should not marry a convict, a prisoner."

"A prisoner?" Comprehension slowly dawned on Janet's face. "Of course! Not even General Hammond could let what you did go unpunished, but a convict, that's rather harsh. I was sure he would have let you get away with a slap in the wrist. All in all, there was no real harm done, right?"

"Warner had a few bruises from hitting the wall and Siler hit his head when I zatted him. But it wasn't that easy. Yes, General Hammond tried to cover the whole incident up but by then we were under investigation by one of Kinsey's goons. The NID found out and Kinsey began to blackmail the general. He wanted control of the SGC. I signed a detailed confession to keep Hammond and the SGC out of the line of fire. We sort of struck a deal. He agreed to stay away from the SGC and to keep the whole thing under wraps. I agreed to go to Leavenworth for assault and battery and conduct unbecoming for fifteen years. Surprisingly, he kept his word and pulled enough strings for it not to go beyond the base and the Joint Chiefs. He only did it because at the time he was convinced that he had found another way to control the SGC."

"That's when Elizabeth Weir and the whole depository of Ancient-knowledge thing comes in, right?"

"Yes, for once, Jack had to save the world on his own. Elizabeth was a big surprise for all of us. Kinsey thought she would be easy to manipulate but she stood her ground. She led the SGC with competence and compassion while O'Neill was in the Ancient stasis chamber. I don't know why but they didn't send me to Leavenworth immediately. I stayed in the brig and was allowed to spend a few minutes with you, every day after my shower. That's where I met her for the first time."

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Samantha stood next to the bed, silently looking down on her sleeping lover. She looked so small and helpless, and there was nothing she could do for her, not anymore. She heard the door behind her and straightened her shoulders. She didn't want the SFs to see how she felt, especially one of them. She reluctantly turned around and found herself face to face with a blond woman almost as tall as her and with sparkling green eyes. She instinctively tried to take her outstretched hand but her restraints didn't allow it.

"I'm sorry, Doctor Weir, please don't see it as bad manners." Samantha apologised.

The other blonde turned around and called for one of her guards. "Get these things off of her."

"Vice President Kinsey himself ordered the dy...the prisoner to be restrained 24/7, ma'am."

The green eyes sparkled dangerously at the self-satisfied expression on the man's face. "Kinsey resigned more than ten days ago. Why wasn't I informed about this order?"

"You're not military. It was none of your business, Doctor."

"None of my business? Well, Airman Miller, the SGC is now under my command. You can consider yourself under arrest for insubordination. Go to my office and wait outside - I will then tell you to which god-forsaken place you will be reassigned. Get out of my sight!"

The man was too stunned to say anything but the other guard, a woman, snickered softly, and undid the wrist and ankle and waist restraints without further ado. "Tell me, Major Carter didn't wear these things since I first came here."

"They were taken off when I took a shower, Doctor Weir, and please, don't hold Airman MacCoy responsible. She was only following orders. It was Miller who enjoyed doing it." Samantha said while instinctively rubbing her wrists."

"No, Major Carter, Doctor Weir is right. I should have filed a complaint directly after Mister

Kinsey was gone. It isn't right to treat you like this."

"I broke the rules, Airman. It's only just that I now have to pay for it."

"What would you have done had your plan succeeded, Major?"

"I would have returned to stand trial, Doctor Weir. And just for the record, technically I'm no longer a major. Signing the confession was equivalent of a dishonourable discharge."

"If you insist, Doctor Carter. Let's go topside. I need some fresh air and I want to talk to you." They found a bench and sat down, the guard stationed just out of earshot. "The NID has asked the President to reconsider your transfer to Leavenworth. They argue that even in the isolation track you would be a security risk and feel that they are more qualified to guard you. Doctor Jackson gave me a few files to read pertaining to your history with the NID. I had a long talk with General Hammond and the President. To make a long story short, the President offers you a deal. He knows that you were under a great deal of emotional stress and just overreacted but he also cannot completely disregard what you did. There are too many people either involved with or aware of what happened. Some people at the Pentagon even want to go back on the deal you struck with Kinsey and want you properly court-martialled.

"President Hayes offers you to serve your time here, at the base. He doesn't want to give up on your expertise and ingenuity. We find that with O'Neill out of the picture at the moment, we cannot afford to lose another outstanding officer. You basically would be confined to your quarters, take your meals there. You will have access to your lab for eight hours a day - except for emergencies. An armed guard will be at your side whenever you leave your room. Once a week you will be allowed to visit with Cassandra at Doctor Fraiser's house for the afternoon. Doctor Jackson told me that the girl needs you though she tries very hard not to show it. She says that she has to be very brave for her Mom and you."

"Where's the catch?"

"I want your word of honour that you never again will try and pull such a stunt - and for the time being there will be no off-world missions for you."

"That's all?"

"That's all. We'll keep Doctor Fraiser on base and you can see her every day. Doctor Starck assured me that her only chance of making it out of this alive and relatively unharmed is by continued treatment with the healing device. However, your vitals will be closely monitored while using it and you will not be allowed to once again risk your health."

"I accept your offer, Doctor Weir, and you have my word. Janet's well-being is all that counts for me, and I trust Doctor Starck.

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"We became friends. We talked about old missions, about whom and whom not to trust, and things as mundane as the colour of BDUs and favourite movies. I missed her when she took over the research station in Antarctica and later went to Atlantis. On the bright side, we got O'Neill back. When he took command, he tried to get my gate clearance reinstated. He wanted me to lead SG-1 but the Joint Chiefs voted it down. They just were learning how to deal with a woman as Vice President, but a woman leading the flagship team of the SGC, and a woman who by all rights should spend her time counting dust bunnies in Leavenworth - it was too much to ask for.

"By then I had finished the book about wormhole physics and desperately needed something else to do. I began to research the principles behind the healing device but I soon found out that I simply didn't know enough about human physiology to make some progress. So, I began to study - and before I knew it I was in the middle of starting a new career, so to speak."

"But how did you go from being a prisoner at Cheyenne Mountain to being an ER doctor at Colorado Springs Central?"

"When the Replicators were destroyed a lot of things changed. It was the first official off-world mission I was allowed to go to, and even then General O'Neill acted without the consent of the Pentagon. Selmac and I reprogrammed the Ancient weapon but Anubis was still a threat. It was Daniel and Oma Desala who took him definitively out of the picture. The mission reports blew my part in this whole endeavour out of proportions; even the Joint Chiefs were impressed. With the help of the Asgard and Vice President Clinton O'Neill was able to get another deal.

"I was allowed to leave the base and care for Cassandra. I'm wearing an implant in my arm that's traceable via satellite; so, the Pentagon knows where I am all the time but my freedom of movement is not longer restricted. Due to the pregnancy O'Neill didn't want me to work at the mountain and I did what I could from home but I soon learned that I wouldn't be able to adequately care for you without professional help.

The Academy Hospital claimed that they're not equipped for long time care. They wanted me to put you in a veteran's nursing home out of state but luckily CS Central has a special station for coma patients. Abby and a few other members of your staff were already working here; so it was a rather easy decision. I spent a lot of time sitting at your bed but I was never good at having nothing to do, so, I continued with my medical research and took a few courses at med school. Always the over-achiever I got my medical degree rather quickly. The doctors and nurses at the CSC knew me, so it was easy to get a residency; they even accepted me on a part time basis because I continued my work for the SGC.

"Only after Eli was born, General O'Neill told me about the other part of the deal he struck. Whenever I take over a project or go on an off-world mission a certain amount of time is deducted from my sentence. So, instead for ten and a half years left, I'm currently down to three years and about eight months." Samantha yawned. "I'm sorry, Jan."

"It's all right, baby. We have all the time in the world to talk. Get some sleep, Sammy. I'll watch

over you. Sleep!"

A few hours later the convalescent woman kissed her love awake. Samantha looked at her with eyes full of wonder and love. "Oh, I missed you so much; I missed waking up in your arms, Jan, my beloved, my heart." She said between kisses. "Sometimes, when the need became too much, I slipped in bed with you. Just to hold you in my arms, to feel the rhythm of your heartbeat not just seeing it on the surveillance monitor. Love you so."

"I love you too, my Sam. But now you have to get up and bring our daughter to school. And later you can explain to me what you did to boost the power of one sensor enough to derive all these detailed readings, and I want you tell me all the things you didn't yet have time to tell me about. So, now scoot, blue eyes. Eli is expecting you in less than an hour."

"I'll be on time. I promised her a ride with the Indian." The blonde answered, trying to bait her lover and being successful.

"Are you nuts, Samantha?! Taking a three-year-old on a motorbike as powerful as your hog, hell, taking a three-year-old on any motorbike. How can you be this irresponsible? This is our daughter we're talking about! Of all the..."

She was silenced by a passionate kiss; she couldn't help but respond to. "You are so cute when you're angry, my love. I never would endanger our child. Master Sergeant Siler found an old sidecar; he refitted it and added a few security extras. It was a gift from the base for Eli's second birthday. We'll soon have to put it into storage during the winter season. She just loves riding her sidecar, with helmet and leather jacket and all. She even got Cassy to try it a few times." Samantha said, standing in the bathroom door. "I'll be back in five, then we'll take care of the IV-drip. It's only fluids and now you can drink on your own."

True to her words she was back five minutes later, wrapped only in a towel with her hair still damp from her shower. She opened the doors to one of the built-in closets between bathroom and office door, negligently tossed the piece of cloth aside and began to dress, giving Janet an unimpeded view of her backside. She had added a few muscles to her frame whose subtle play was easy to the eyes but Janet also noted a few new scars she would have to ask her about.

They kissed good-bye and a few minutes later Abby entered with a tall glass of nondescript liquid and a stack of papers: two thick folders with her medical history and a smaller one with information on the sensor system. She quickly was engrossed in her reading material. Samantha obviously had found a way to retro-engineer the Tollan health sensors and improved them to make them less invasive. It was nothing less than an absolutely amazing piece of technology. She couldn't help but speculate where else Doctor Samantha Fraiser had already left her mark in the medical field."

"Good morning, Doc Janet." Lefty's voice snapped her back to reality. "What do you read that has you daydreaming? A technical manual? And I found Doc Sam odd!"

"It's information about the monitoring sensors I'm hooked up to. It's elegant in its simplicity and at the same time extremely complex. It's so much like Sam."

"Tsk, tsk, Doc. Drooling over schematics when you have the real deal all for yourself. - But joking apart, I admit it's useful and on its way to replace the older monitoring devices everywhere in America and Europe. However, it's nothing but a toy compared to the other things she developed. I'll tell you all I know while we work on getting you back on your feet."

Physical therapy had been exhausting, leaving her only half awake to consume another glass of the dreaded liquid. Her mind in contrast was running a mile a minute.

Under her guidance they had made a lot of progress with cloning transplant organs, reducing the risk of rejection by 30% by trying to eliminate the markers responsible. Samantha had found a way to grow a healthy and viable transplant based on the original tissue thus reducing the risk of rejection to less than 1%. A new kind of radiotherapy all but guaranteed a remission rate of 100% for breast cancer, even in advanced stages, and also worked on other kinds of cancer in the early stages.

It was mind-boggling. Janet fell asleep with her own files still unopened.

A couple of hours later she heard Eli's voice. "Andy, why are planets round? Everything is more or less a ball out there, planets, moons, suns. Why?"

"Because balls are perfect, little one...." Janet tuned out the rest of the explanation and basked instead on the feeling of seeing the young woman and the child so harmoniously together. They both were so beautiful, the red golden hair of her older daughter mingling with the darker curls of her youngest, bent over a piece of paper. Her child, Sam's child, thanks to the help of small grey skinned aliens. It was so unbelievable and yet felt so right.

The blue-eyed girl looked up and quickly ran to the bed. "Mommy, you're awake."

"Hello, sweetie. Yes, I am. Climb up and tell me about your day."

"It was so cool. Mum blew them all out of their socks. She never before had brought me on the bike. Even boring Mister Schroeder stood with his mouth hanging open when we rolled in front of the entrance. When I'm old enough, I'll get a bike of my own and Mum will help me to take care of it. Maybe I'll even ride the Indian all by myself. Her lecture was really great. She had a computer program that showed us what is outside of our solar system. It was great, as if we were flying through the sky, no, the galaxy."

After a few minutes of listening to the girl Janet was convinced that Eli not only shared her mother's intellect and curiosity but also her love for the stars and her craving for adrenaline rushes. Except for the colour of her hair it was easy to imagine what Samantha must have been

like as a child. They continued to talk for another half an hour, then Cassandra had to start her shift and Eli had a date with her friends at day-care.

The afternoon session with Lefty proved every bit as taxing as the one in the morning but the physician in Janet was pleased to find her range of movement already greatly improved. It was almost unreal and though she already knew that the Nox had a lot to do with it, it still defied logic how quickly her muscles seemed to recuperate from their long immobility. She grabbed her medical file from the bedside table to find out more, silently wishing for a strong cup of coffee, black steaming Java.

Janet recognised the first half of the first folder as her medical file up to the day she gated to P3X-666. The next five pages listed the extent of her injuries, signed by Warner and Starck, just after her first treatment with the healing device. It was a long list, a very long list, including assessments by both physicians detailing her chances of survival. Warner already had her tagged for the morgue. Starck was cautiously optimistic but strongly recommended the further, monitored use of the healing device.

There also were a few lines detailing the damage inflicted on her lover by its prolonged use. Anyone else, anyone that didn't have Samantha's unique physiology and body chemistry would have been afflicted by a major stroke. As it was she showed signs of extreme anaemia, minor blood vessels had popped from the exertion and she was extremely weak.

To her annoyance Janet found several days worth of reports on her condition missing and asked herself if it had anything to do with the use of the healing device and Warner being overruled by General Hammond. Her next complete physical had been conducted by Doctor Starck only. It showed considerable improvement after Samantha had used the ribbon device on her. She definitively was out of the woods by then and Starck was reasonably optimistic that she could make a full recovery.

Another assessment from Warner was annexed coming to vastly different conclusions. He was adamant that regardless of any kind of alien interference "the damage to Doctor Fraiser's body is too severe to hope for even a partial recovery. Should she ever regain consciousness she would be a prisoner in a completely unresponsive body."

Chapter Three: Strapped to a wheel; yet they shall not break

Janet went back to the report and grew more angry with every line re-read. It was there as plain as the day that Warner's report was deliberately misleading. She didn't understand it. He usually was an unimaginative, thorough stickler to procedure, dotting every "i" and crossing every "t". There was only one possible conclusion: he didn't want her to survive.

"That rat bastard!" She loudly exclaimed, suddenly thinking of her first day on base and Samantha's run-in with her second-in-command.

"I sincerely hope that it's not me you're talking about, Doc." Abby's voice came from the entrance with yet another of the milky drinks.

"Of course not, Abby, but coincidentally you're just the person I wanted to talk to, to ask a few questions. Sam filled me in on what happened directly after P3X-666, roughly. I read some of the medical reports in my file, and had to accept that Sam being Sam, she left out quite a few things. So, I want you to simply give me your point of view. And don't even think about telling me that you have work to do or that I should wait for Sam to come clear with the rest of the story. All I want is your version of what happened."

"I'm way ahead of you, Doc. I didn't work for you for more than six years not to know that eventually this question would come. What Sam did was so incredible..." The woman's voice trailed off while she was taking a seat. "We were summoned to the gate room. Practically every single soldier stumbling onto the ramp had one injury or the other. Colonel O'Neill and Crewman Wells were carried through - by the way, his wife gave birth to a girl a few days later. They named her Janet."

"And he was so sure that he would have a son." The brunette said.

"Eventually they did, almost two and half years ago. Janet and Eli are good friends, but back to business." The woman cleared her throat. "He would need surgery but was no longer in any immediate danger, thanks to you. Surprisingly none of them was. Then Sam stepped through the event horizon, closely followed by Teal'c and Daniel Jackson. She cradled you in her arms, and everyone in attendance instinctively knew that you were more to each other than just best friends - the few of us that didn't know already. She held you as if you were the most precious thing in the world. She looked around for an empty gurney but there were none, and finally settled you on the ground, straightening out your limbs. She called for a defib unit and for Warner to take care of you.

"He took two steps forward and looked you over; then he just turned his back without checking your vitals or even touching you. Samantha looked at him with disbelieving eyes and then raced out of the gate room. She was back within minutes, the healing device in her hand. Sam knelt next to you and extended her hand, and slowly your whole body began to glow. It was a yellow beam of light that began to extend until it encompassed both of you. I stopped my ministrations; every single pair of eyes in the room was riveted on you both. Time seemed to stand still; even Warner stared. It was as if we had the chance to witness something extraordinary, something not of this world.

"The moment you took your first breath, Sam's eyes began to bleed. Daniel tried to get her to stop but she pushed him aside as if he were nothing more than a rag doll and he landed a few feet away. When she finally collapsed, General Hammond ordered Warner to take care of you. Your heart rate was flat, your blood pressure low but your vitals were stable, relatively speaking. Sam was out like a light and because there was nothing he could do for her at the moment Doctor Starck participated in your care.

"With Samantha and the healing device out of commission, we had a hard time to keep you

stable. There was so much damage; it still amazes me how tenaciously you held on to life. Warner ordered us to let you go, -the next time, to give you peace, he said -- but we didn't. Marc Starck stayed by your side night and day because coming from the Academy Hospital, he was the only one not directly under Warner's command.

"The day Samantha decided to get you to the Nox, Starck was named as temporary CMO and Warner had just filed a formal protest with General Hammond, stating that he was the senior officer in the facility and that by right he should have been promoted to CMO right after the Kowalski-incident. The general rejected his complaint and sent him back to the infirmary. That's when he encountered Sam and ended up as wall decoration.

"Starck was still checking him out when you and Sam were brought back to us. You were still on the gurney but there was a hint of colour to your cheeks, your breathing was regular, and your heartbeat strong. Teal'c followed with Sam in his arms. She was unconscious, her eyes, ears, and nose was bleeding. Warner jumped from the cot and began to shout at her. He swore that he would get his revenge; that 'the immoral dyke would pay for her sins.' End quote.

"Teal'c put her on a bed and got Warner to back off simply by staring at him. This time Sam quickly regained her strength and insisted on staying in the brig whenever she was forced to leave your side to get some rest herself. General Hammond tried to keep things inside the base but Warner went over his head and filed charges with the NID. The next day we had an investigation on our hands and one of Kinsey's goons snooping around."

"Wait a minute. The NID? But it's none of their business; it's not their responsibility. He should have gone to JAG."

"Yes, he should have but he didn't. I took General O'Neill more than a year to find enough intel linking Warner with the NID and the Trust to get him out of the mountain and earn him a dishonourable discharge. He found evidence that he had sold confidential medical information and other personal files. He sent regular reports about alien technology and other stuff.

"However, the fact that he didn't go to JAG was what made Samantha's deal with Kinsey possible. Outside of the base, the Pentagon and the White House no one knows what happened, and the base at Cheyenne Mountain is occupied with deep space radar telemetry. There are no official court reports, only Sam's confession."

Silence fell and after some time Janet asked. "Why did you leave the SGC, Abby? Why did you leave the Air Force? You and all the others?"

"In my case it's easy. Doctor Starck died only a few days after the defeat of Anubis and Warner naturally succeeded him. Four months later I surprised Warner doing a completely unnecessary and particularly invasive examination during Sam's monthly physical. I objected, he ordered me to leave the room. I didn't go though Sam told me to. He tried to push me out of the door; I lost my temper and decked him - in full view of a surveillance camera. General O'Neill had just taken over command and offered me a choice: either stand trial or retire. I chose retirement. General Hammond pulled a few strings and I had a new job here at the CSC."

"What about the rest of the staff? Daniel said that the better part of my staff left the mountain at one point or the other."

"They all have their own story and their own reasons but in retrospect I can't help but think that he planned on having us all out of the way. We were a damned good team, and I'm sure he wanted to get his own people in. With Warner at the helm it was as if life was sucked out of the infirmary. I'm sorry, Janet."

"Don't be, Abby!" Samantha's voice came from the door to her office. "Without your support, yours and the others' of Janet's team, I would have been lost all these years. You took care of Eli when I didn't have the time. You were the voice of reason when I lost hope. Don't be sorry. - With Warner gone, things have got better at the SGC infirmary though we still are in need of a CMO. The general reassigns them quicker than he changes his BDUs. I would say he misses his Napoleonic power monger. By the way: He sends his best wishes and promises to visit as soon as possible."

"You look beat, Sam. Sit down! Abby, could you get her something to eat?"

"There's no need, Abby. Daniel and Sarah will be here in a few minutes. I called them before I left the mountain. I want you to try some chicken broth tonight. If it works out we'll get you on a more solid diet."

"Sarah? As in host to Osiris? This Sarah?"

"Yes, remember, the Tok'ra separated them. Daniel and she married two years ago. She doesn't like to be reminded of this time and her memories are rather sketchy but she has proven a big asset to the archaeological department though she adamantly refuses to lead her own team through the gate."

"How many are there now, anyway?"

34, in all. Ten military and ten civilian teams here on earth. Three teams with mixed members and eleven at the new Alpha Site, working in co-operation with the Tok'ra, the Hak'tyl and survivors of Jonas' planet."

"Twenty-three teams, that's a lot for one small infirmary. They must be working overtime with the pre- and post-mission physicals alone."

"Not really. Pre-mission physicals have been replaced by monthly check-ups at Warner's request, and General O'Neill was the first to embrace the new rule. When the Asgard installed the satellite grid they also gifted us with a modified version of Thor's Hammer. They are set up at the entrance of the gate room and scan everything and everyone coming through. Sorting out Gao'ulds as well as bacterial or viral infections. It works well but we still lose a lot of people in the infirmary. I hope you will be able to improve their track record once you're back on duty." Samantha answered.

They spent a leisurely evening with Daniel and Sarah. Janet found that she liked the former host a lot and that the woman had been good for the archaeologist come soldier. When little Eli had fallen asleep in Samantha's arms they called it a night. The tall blonde promised that she would be back in the morning and Janet quickly was close to follow her daughter to the dreamland, still overwhelmed with everything she had learned these past few days.

The whole thing with Warner kept nagging at her. She couldn't help the feeling that Abby had somehow held back, that she didn't tell her everything: sprained ankle, gynaecological examination, invasive. Her eyes snapped open, no, it simply couldn't be. Don't speculate; go with the facts. And fact was that her chief surgeon had used every opportunity he got to ogle her lover, and that the blonde had been in a foul mood, whenever an emergency had forced her to delegate Samantha's care to him. At the time she had thought that it was her jealousy speaking, her damn possessive streak - but now...

Suddenly, she remembered an incident with Lieutenant Astor, a few days before the summit and the whole Zatarc-mess.

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"Take your paws off me." The woman's voice was angry and scared at the same time, and Janet's instinct drove her to investigate. She found the young lieutenant strapped to a gurney and Warner standing over her, obviously fondling her breasts.

"What's going on here, Doctor Warner?"

"The good Lieutenant objected strongly to have her post-mission physical, Doctor Fraiser. I didn't have a choice but to strap her down or bring her up on charges of insubordination. So, Doctor, if you don't mind, I just got started."

Janet didn't believe him and suddenly couldn't shake the feeling that she should have insisted on Samantha or Captain Carey giving her more information about what had happened almost three years ago.

"I'll take over from here, Doctor Warner. Major Castleman and the other member of his team are all yours."

"Yes, Doctor Fraiser." His voice was full of disdain but he left the room.

Janet quickly checked the neck and throat of the young woman for tell tale signs of Gao'uld infiltration and released her from the restraints. "I apologise for Doctor Warner, Lieutenant. If you want to press charges, I'll be in my office 'til seven. I will back you up with General

Hammond, and if you want to speak to someone, Major Carter and I will always have time to listen."

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Then, all hell had broken loose: the assassination attempt on Vorash, the Zatarc-testing, Astor's suicide, Samantha almost put to sleep indefinitely, O'Neill professing his love for the blonde, Freya's hurt expression and her relentless questioning if or if not her lover shared her CO's feelings, the death of Martouf. Warner had totally slipped her mind and she began to suspect that might have been the biggest mistake she ever made. She finally fell asleep, only to be found by nightmares.

"Mom, wake up. It's just a bad dream. You're safe, Mom. Sam's safe. Wake up!" Cassandra implored. Janet bolted upright in bed, her breathing ragged, dislodging the monitoring sensor at her throat. "It's all right, Mom. You're safe."

She knew she was at the hospital, she knew Samantha was at their home, taking care of their daughter but to no avail. "Warner! I have to stop him, have to keep Sam safe. Hurt her."

"Mom, please Mom, look at me!"

The brunette slowly turned her head. "Cassy?"

"Yes, it's me. It's all right; you were having a bad dream. Sam's safe."

"Warner. He hurt her." She whispered still in the grip of her dream.

"Warner has disappeared some time ago and T told me that he will never again hurt a woman or anyone else. Mum... Sam had nightmares about him for months after she returned to our house. She never told me what they were about exactly but I told Uncle Jack and T and he assured me that Warner will never return. Sam's safe; lean back and calm down." She saw the dislocated sensor. "Damn, I have to call her!" And off she went to the adjoining room. "Too late! Sam's already on her way." Seeing her mother's questioning eyes she continued. "The sensor stopped transmitting data the moment it lost contact with your skin. To Sam it must have been as if everything suddenly flat-lined and sent her in a full-fledged panic. She also doesn't answer her cell, so all we can do is to wait for her to show up."

"But how does she know? No one called her."

"The big, ugly watch she's wearing; it isn't a watch. It's a receiver, able to monitor your vitals remotely. Even when she was not at your side, she always knew how you were doing; she always was with you. We all think that's so romantic!" The young woman said with a smile.

"It also could prove that I'm an incorrigible control freak, Cassy." Samantha said stopping her

full-out run when she saw that Janet apparently was all right.

"No, it means that you care - and that you go to great lengths to insure the safety of those you love, Sammy." The woman on the bed answered with a breath-taking smile. "Thank you for taking care of me, Cassandra."

"It was my pleasure, Mom. Besides, you held me during so many of my nightmares; it was the least I could do. You're in good hands now. I have to go back to work."

"A nightmare? Wanna tell me about it?" Samantha asked sitting on the edge of the bed.

"Not really. - Someone was hurting you and I stood aside, and there was nothing I could do. - How could you let him hurt you, Sam? You're a soldier; you're trained to defend yourself."

The blonde only smiled, a smile Janet had long ago learned to associate with remembered pain, a smile that appeared when she talked about her friendship with Orlin or about her mother. The brown-eyed woman studied her beloved.

"It wasn't you, you were trying to protect. You let him abuse you; let him rape you, to keep me safe. That slimy bastard! If I ever get my hands around his throat, it will be the last breath he takes."

"Janet, please don't. He's not worth it. He threatened to kill you if I didn't let him have his way. It was only once a month and it's long in the past. He wasn't able to taint our love then and he will not succeed now. Don't let him win, please!"

"Take me in your arms, Sammy." As soon as she felt the other woman's strong arms around her she whispered. "Please, make love to me. Show me that you're mine, mine alone. I need you, Samantha, please!"

She knew Janet wasn't yet strong enough; she knew she should have a better handle on her desires but it had been so long, and Janet's eyes told her that she knew exactly what she was asking of her. Samantha gently kissed her lover, her forehead, her eyes, her lips, her throat, the square inch where the sensor had been. Janet's hands were busy sliding under her T-shirt and roaming over her skin, leaving a trail of fire in their wake.

"Off, the shirt has to go off. I want to see you, all of you." Samantha complied.

Samantha knew that she couldn't let this go too far; Janet was able to move her arms but not much more; she couldn't allow her to overexert herself, but she also relished the touch of her partner's hands. What they did wasn't more than petting but the blonde soon had to admit to herself that she needed it as much as her partner did. Making love to the smaller woman was what after more than four and a half years made her whole again. It was why she had fought for their love. It was what made life worth living. It finally washed away his touch.

Janet's recovery progressed amazingly, thanks to the Nox. Her medical file told her that Samantha had been able to heal her body but that nothing could be done for her mind.

Neither the Asgard nor the Nox had been able to guide her back to consciousness. Shortly after Eli's birth Lya and Nafrayu had gated to Earth to apologise for not even answering Samantha's message, sent one and half year prior. The Nox had taken in the few survivors of the Tollans after their planet was destroyed by Tanith. Deeply traumatized by their experience they had tried to take control of the Nox' technology and for a while even gained access to the communications array and the gate. The Nox had a hard time to stay on their peaceful path and still prevail against the frightened Tollans but finally succeeded. When they heard what had happened they offered to try and heal her but even their powers were not sufficient. All they could do was to keep the body from decaying due to the immobility. Combined with regular physiotherapy and the low wave muscle stimulants Samantha had developed, it kept her from suffering the most debilitating effects of a long-term coma.

She had a lot of visitors on a daily basis, aside from Daniel, Sarah, and Jennifer Hailey. She got to know Eli better and couldn't help but being impressed and proud at the mixture of childlike wonder, pranks, and scientific curiosity the girl showed every day. Almost everyone she knew from the base dropped by. She shared laughter and tears with her friends and family, fun and sorrows. And she learned a lot about Samantha, about the woman she had become and the woman she always had been.

Some of the things she learned were hard to hear but Janet felt that she needed to hear them; so, some of the conversations she had were rather heart wrenching, in particular one with Daniel when she coaxed him to tell her about Warner. After their night of reconnection and passion the nightmare had not returned but she still couldn't get it out of her mind. Samantha, still being the brave and stoic soldier refused to talk about it, and so Daniel was the only one she could ask.

At first he tried to play it down. "It's in the past, Janet. He hurt someone we all love and respect - and he paid the price. There's nothing more to say."

"Oh, yes, there is, Daniel. Warner hurt her so deeply that she doesn't allow herself to even think about it. She has tucked the memories in a remote corner of her mind and built a wall around them but the bricks keep falling down. I have to know exactly what happened, and I have to know what happened to him, the first one for Sam's sake and the second for mine. Please, Daniel, tell me." Reacting to his uneasy glance she added. "The monitor is off-line. She won't come barging in if I get upset but I think she misses the thing at her wrist."

"She was wearing it every day for more than three and a half years; day and night, except when off-world." His words trailed off and he took a deep breath. "All right, I will tell you what you want to know but it's not easy to tell and it will be hard to hear."

"Every time she used the healing device it sapped her strength. Shifu would say it depletes the reservoir of her Chi. That's why Doctor Starck insisted on closely monitoring her health. Warner used this recommendation to schedule monthly physicals, and though Starck and then Halliwell

were listed as her primary physician she didn't object to Warner doing them. If we all had been in our right minds, this alone should have tipped us off. Then there was the incident with Abby but Sam refused to comment on it. It was evident that she had a hard time to reign in her temper but when ever we asked she only said that it was nothing.

"Since taking over responsibility for the SGC and reading about Warner's conduct in the gate room, Jack covertly began to gather information and evidence against Warner. We quickly suspected that he was an NID spy but he was very careful and hard proof was difficult to find. Then Sam was allowed to leave the base and became pregnant with Eli. Cassandra one day told Jack about the nightmares and I tried to get her to speak. She told me that it was in the past and that I should mind my own business - but in less words. 'It's over, forget it!'

"When Jack finally found what we needed Warner was booted out of the Air Force and disappeared. A few weeks later, in a storage room we came across a box with videodisks. Though the surveillance cameras had been deactivated when he was alone with her, he obviously had a small camera going." Daniel took another deep breath. He really didn't want to go into any detail but Janet's determined face told him that she wouldn't be satisfied with anything less than the whole truth. "He had her gagged and bound, strapped to the examination table. He tortured her, penetrated her with every object imaginable. It was like some hair brained, X-rated, SM flic.

"She looked so vulnerable, so frail but when one found her eyes there was hatred and resignation and defiance. He was rambling the whole time, about the proper way women should serve men and not command them, and what a woman's body only was good for, and that he would teach her to forget her sinful ways. He said that your current condition was a sign from the creator to save her, that she needed re-education and that he had fifteen years to show her the light. He went on and on, that he would save her, first her soul and then her body by giving her a bunch of children."

"He raped her. This is all my fault."

"With everything he could find but he didn't use his penis. He said that she was not yet worthy of being the receptacle of his pure seed. And it's his fault, not yours."

"How long did this go on?" Janet's voice was barely audible.

"We found nine disks, so once every month while she was confined to her base quarters. - Sometimes she wasn't gagged and she tried to argue with him. It was like talking to a wall and whenever she came close to breaking through, he began to shout and threaten you, and he beat her.

"She thought that she didn't have a choice, especially after he became the CMO. She was convinced that letting him have his way with her body was the only way to keep you out of harm's way. She didn't trust any of us to do this and I really can't blame her. We let her down, all of us. We didn't help her when she tried to gate through to the Nox. We didn't do anything when the whole thing blew up in her face and Kinsey targeted General Hammond. We didn't do anything when she signed this damned confession and sacrificed herself to save the SGC - and

later, we didn't protest when Kinsey walked in and had her put in chains. It was easier to believe her when she said that it was okay and that she was ready to pay for what she did.

"In the end, it was not her friends who made a change for the better but a virtual stranger. Elizabeth Weir had a better grip on what was going on and why than any of us. She really came through for Sam. I was so fed up with everything that I just wanted to get out. But Sam made me promise to stay. Regardless of how many times she tells me how important I am, regardless of how many times she tells me that there's nothing to forgive and that we didn't let her down; I still feel guilty. I feel guilty and I always will because I know that I don't have her strength. I never could have lived through all of this and come out with my integrity and love unscathed."

"General Hammond told me what a confusing time it was, with the NID sneaking around, a new president to content with, and Sam acting totally out of character. I know you all would have spared her if possible. Sam doesn't blame you and I don't either. You're a good friend, Daniel. - And now, please tell me what happened to Warner."

"It was Teal'c who found the video disks, recognised Warner's handwriting on the casings and put one in a player. Then he called us, Jack, Hammond, and me. It was evident what they were about and Jack wanted nothing more than to fast-forward them. The general wanted them destroyed. But T was not to be moved. He insisted that we watch all of them, every single agonising minute. It's still burned in my mind. He argued that Sam deserved that her comrades in arms watch the torture and how a noble warrior prevailed over such brutality. He said that we owed her at least this much respect - and he said that it would be up to us to exact revenge in her stead. He said it was a question of honour.

"General Hammond pulled a few strings and we were able to locate Warner. Jack wanted to kill him on the spot but T convinced him that Samantha deserved a deeper kind of justice. We took him into custody. He bragged about what he had done and that soon he would have the opportunity to work on her every day. He told us his associates only waited for the birth of the baby, as it turned out it were only delusional words. There was nothing planned against her or Eli.

"We arranged for a late night dial-out. Sometimes it pays being pals with the leader of the SGC. We gated to the new home world of the Hak'tyl and he was put to trial. He was sentenced to death and the sentence was carried out."

"Please, Daniel, no short-cuts. I have to know and I have to know if Sam knows." Janet insisted.

"Sam knows that he's dead and that he wasn't murdered. She never asked how he died and we never volunteered - at least as far as I know."

"Meaning?"

"During the last three years there were a couple of missions when Sam worked closely with Ishta and her warriors. They might have told her but she never said anything. You know, Sam's not really forthcoming with her feelings. Sometimes I'd really like to pummel Jacob."

"Speaking of Jacob Carter..."

"Don't ask me, Janet. It's another of the things she doesn't speak of. I only know that less than three hours after he angrily stomped away Sam had to have her hands bandaged and the wall right beside her door had to be cleaned of her blood. Then she requested to see a lawyer. I hoped that she would have finally come to her senses but instead she had her last name changed. There are only three people who know that really happened: Sam, Jacob, and Selmac."

"Back to Warner please!"

"You asked for it, Janet." Daniel closed his eyes to centre himself. "We presented the video disks as evidence, and like T the women insisted on seeing them all. One of the elders volunteered to speak on his behalf but he insulted her and the others. He argued that Sam hadn't offered any resistance when being bound to the chair and that she secretly enjoyed their sessions. But he didn't take into account that if someone knows about abuse, continued abuse it's the woman of Ishta's tribe. They still are independent because they think that their male brothers are too willing to go back to the old ways and to confine their women at home, instead of sharing their lives as equals. Normal Jaffa justice is of the an-eye-for-an-eye variety. The Hak'tyl do not believe in torture - with one exception: rapist.

"He was whipped to death. Every adult member of the tribe gave him two lashes with a single tail whip. Even T probably wouldn't have survived this. They left his body for the scavengers and burned his cut off balls in a ceremony of justice."

Janet had sworn an oath to do no harm but she couldn't find it in her heart to pity Warner or to condemn the justice of the Hak'tyl. In her book, Warner got what he deserved.

At the beginning of her third week, in the middle of the night, Janet had rather unusual visitors. A beam of white light roused her from sleep, and Thor and Heimdall were paying her a visit, exchanging pleasantries, and promising to be back soon. The next day, she had another unusual encounter.

Whenever possible, and crisis at the SGC seemed far less frequent than a few years ago, Samantha spent the afternoon and evening, sometimes even the night with her lover. Dinner was a family affair, with Cassandra, Eli, and Jenny. This particular afternoon, however, instead of Eli coming in from her playtime at the day-care centre of the hospital, Samantha entered the room with the distinctive form of Jacob Carter following behind. One quick look was enough for Janet to know that her lover felt anything but at ease, and the haunted look in her eyes almost prompted her to send the man away.

"Hello, my love." Samantha kissed her with the same passion she showed every day. "Janet, Selmac has come to speak with you - and before you pass judgement, please hear her out, I mean him... I'll never get this asexual thing right. I'll be next door, doing some paperwork. And before

you ask: Eli was invited to a sleepover with little Janet and her brother. We'll meet them tomorrow at the park for a brunch barbecue with the rest of the gang."

"You mean I'll get out of here tomorrow?"

"Yes, my love, for a few hours. Lefty is convinced that you can make it under your own steam but we'll also take a wheelchair, just to be on the safe side. I'll leave you now. You'll be fine with Selmac but call if you need me, Jan."

She was gone and an uncomfortable silence settled in the room. Janet was sitting in a high-backed armchair near the window and a two-seated couch had replaced the cot. "I should offer you a seat, General Carter, but I'm not sure I really want to."

"You will not be speaking to Jacob, Janet. He's still sulking and I suppose he will persist in this unreasonable behaviour for quite some time. We are not exactly on speaking terms at the moment, except for Tok'ra assignments. He thinks that I betrayed him by supporting your relationship with his daughter, especially by not telling him from the beginning. It was so obvious but he refused to see it, and he still does. We argue a lot but part of being Tok'ra also means thinking in rather long terms. One day I will wear him out.

"I came to let you know what happened the last time Samantha and Jacob spoke, and to assure you that the two of you have my blessing, if it counts."

"It counts, Selmac. Please have a seat."

"As you know the Tok'ra had severed almost all connections with the people of the Tauri after the incident at the beta site and Anubis' super soldier. We heard about P3X-666, the battle against Anubis' fleet and O'Neill's return only long after the fact. And only another couple of weeks later we were able to send a team to Earth. We especially wanted to find out how Samantha had been able to use the ribbon device for healing - something never heard of before.

"Anise and I were waiting in Jack's office - and Jacob began to read Samantha's confession he had hunted for in the files. He had been tense before but he grew more agitated, even frantic with every single line he read. The confession not only details what Samantha did to trick base security and about her zutting General Hammond. It also tells why. Kinsey insisted having it black on white that her acts were not out of loyalty to a fellow officer but out of misguided passion for a member of her own sex. At the time this would have been enough to ruin your career as well as hers. He didn't want to believe what his eyes were telling him.

"His little girl, his brave little soldier never would this blatantly disregard the rules of military conduct. His little girl wasn't a lesbian. His little girl would never prefer the company of a woman to the company of a real man in her bed.

"I was overwhelmed with the power of his emotions, something I never before had experienced from him. He had found her quarters before I knew what he was up to."

"Please, tell me what happened."

"The door was closed but Jacob entered without knocking. Samantha was sitting at a big desk, littered with stacks of paper and books, typing away on her laptop. She instinctively snapped to attention at the sound of the door. She recognised her father and wanted to greet him with a hug but he stopped her in mid-step with nothing more than a look. He said, 'Samantha Elizabeth Carter, I have questions and you will give me the answers I seek.' He asked her about your injuries and let her describe what she did to save your life. Despite his strong feelings I let him continue because I didn't know where this was leading.

"Then he said, 'I never would have thought you capable of such blatant insubordination. You let your emotions rule your judgement. Did you forget everything I taught you? I'm disappointed.' I could see her shoulders straighten and she answered, 'You taught me that succeeding in a world dominated by men means leaving your heart behind, means suppressing every emotion from love to hate. Yes, I let my heart decide and I don't regret it. I love Janet with all that I am and I would give my life and my soul to keep her out of harm's way.'

"He answered, 'I don't want to hear it. Tell me that this woman is nothing more than a friend to you.' I knew what her answer would be and I tried to argue with him but he simply shut me out. She said, 'I'm way beyond pretending, Father. Janet is my best friend and the love of my life and the other half of my soul. She completes me - and I will no longer hide who I am just to make you feel better.' He slapped her, hard. Her head snapped to the left and her upper lip was split. She didn't even try to protect herself when he backhanded her -- breaking the skin of her cheek with his wedding ring.

"I am ashamed to admit that I was too stunned to do anything. Samantha's eyes were blazing with anger. I know she wanted to strike back but held herself in check. He spoke again, 'You made your choice, Samantha. Your kind should not mingle with honourable citizens. From now on, you no longer are my daughter. I will never forgive or accept your choices - and I hope the woman who corrupted you will never wake up.' He turned around and left. I just had enough time to assure her that I was sorry and didn't share his opinion. I doubt she heard me.

"A few months later, when we calibrated the weapon of the Ancients to stop the Replicators, we learned that she had her family name legally changed to Fraiser, Jacob was so angry he almost botched the mission."

"Thank you for telling me, Selmac. Tell me, do you have any plans for tomorrow?"

"I planned on returning to our home world. Why?"

"Would you like to take part in this barbecue thing?"

"I don't want to impose, Janet. And I think it would be hard for Samantha to see her father's body and know what he is thinking about her and your beautiful little girl."

"Why don't we just ask her?"

They had a wonderful Saturday. The sun was shining and though it was too cold to run around with shorts and sleeveless shirts, it was pleasant enough to enjoy the outdoors. While Samantha and the others, Selmac among them, enjoyed an impromptu game of softball, Janet and Jack O'Neill were talking.

In his usual straightforward manner he said. "I want you back at the infirmary, Janet, ASAP."

"I don't know if I want to come back, Jack."

"I could make it an order, Lieutenant Colonel."

"Yes, you could, General, but I'm still on medical leave. I have yet to decide if I'm willing to renew my commission; retiring is a viable option. So, I'm afraid, General, you don't have any leverage."

"Oh, for crying out loud, Doc. You used to be not as easily offended. I just want my old team back. I want someone I trust to take care of my boys and girls. I'm tired of incompetents with delusions of god-hood. Janet, no one is as good as you. Fact is that we lost more men in the last four years than in all the time you were at the helm. At least think about it." He almost pleaded.

"All right, I can do that but you should know that I already have a standing offer by the Chief of Staff of the Colorado Springs Central Hospital to head up the ER."

Before Jack could answer a curly headed whirlwind launched herself in his arms. "Uncle Jack, Mommy, come and play with us, please!"

Chapter Four: And death shall have no dominion

Two months later, Samantha was sitting on one of the beds of the infirmary, waiting for the results of the newly reinstated pre-mission physicals. Janet had argued that she needed more than just a vague impression on the teams' health, and that only the knowledge of their exact pre-mission status had often helped to assess the origins of an infection and others things.

"You still can change your mind, Sam. No one can force you to take this mission, to take part in this hair brained Tok'ra plan. It's too damn dangerous. There are a hundred things that can go wrong. Please don't go, baby."

"Janet, please! We both know that I'm the only one with the qualification to do this and stop Ba'al. I have to go."

"And regardless of what happened between you, he's still your father. Promise, that you will be

careful, my love."

"I promise, my love. I'll come back to you."

74 hours; she was gone for 74 hours already - and if everything went according to plan Samantha and SG-2 wouldn't be back for another four days at least.

It was the first time since Janet's return to duty last month that her soon-to-be wife was off-world for more than a few hours. She put her key in the ignition of her car and thought back on how the blonde had convinced her to return to the SGC, at least on a part-time basis. All Samantha had to say was. "I always feel better when you do my physicals, Janet-baby."

So, Lieutenant Colonel Janet Elyssa Fraiser returned to the Cheyenne Mountain Complex and resumed her duties as the Chief Medical Officer but instead of also working at the Academy Hospital like she had done before, she opted on taking a part time job at the ER of the CSC. Alicia, Abby, and a few others of her old team also willingly returned - with Abby being reinstated to the rank of master sergeant and Alicia working as Janet's administrative assistant. All of them agreed that they must suffer from a serious addiction to adrenaline to willingly return to the top-secret facility.

The hospital, however, was not where she was headed now. She stopped her car in the driveway of a big stone building. Samantha had bought it from the interests of her inventions one and a half year prior. It held a two-bedroom-apartment in one half of the ground floor, Cassandra's realm, and increasingly Jennifer Hailey's. The other half held a big kitchen-dining room combination, a living room with an entertainment centre, a guest bedroom, and a half bath. The top floor had another two bathrooms, four bedrooms, one of which had been transformed into a study, and a sunroom with a retractable glass ceiling and a big telescope.

She remembered the first time a bashful blonde had shown her to her new home, a few days after the brunch-barbecue.

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"If you don't like it, we will find something else or we can move back to our old house. Daniel and Sarah are living there now but they probably would be willing to move. I put the rent in a special account, at your discretion only."

The blonde was so nervous she totally missed the look of awe on Janet's face. "I know it's rather big but I wanted something big enough for the whole family and the guys - and it's close to base and the hospital. I wanted a big yard for Eli to play, to invite some friends."

Samantha was blushing. "I never would have thought that one could make this much money with

a few simple inventions but I don't want you to think that I lost contact with reality just because of the money. We can find something smaller if you want to; something more suited to Air Force Officers."

"Sam, Sammy, take a deep breath, calm down. I love the house. I love that you want your family and your friends close. I love you, Samantha Fraiser."

The blonde gave her a smile that had the power to lighten up a big dark room. "You're not disappointed?"

"No, my love. When I was a little girl I dreamed of having a house like this. I'm not disappointed. I love you, baby."

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Janet found her youngest daughter in the sunroom, curled up in an old leather armchair. It came as no surprise to the brunette. The observatory was the one place in the house where the child felt closest to her mother. She gently picked up the three-year-old and made them both comfortable. Waiting was part and parcel of being a doctor, and usually she was very good at it - but waiting for Samantha was harder, it always has been. If not for the little girl in her arms it would have been downright unbearable right now.

Samantha had estimated that it would take them about a week to reach Ba'al's new home world, free her father, sabotage his new weapon, lure him to the fake Tok'ra outpost, and blow up his fleet. The week went by without a sign or a message. Sleeping without her lover by her side had been hard but now it became outright impossible. Janet spent most of her time on base, except for the hours of playtime reserved for Eli.

She was sitting in the commissary, having lunch with Cassandra when the klaxon for an unscheduled, off-world activation rang through the speakers, followed by the request for a medical team. Both Fraiser women sprinted towards the gate room, disregarding the fact that the younger woman wasn't even Air Force and had no business being present. They both had images of a tall blonde being carried through the gate on a stretcher running through their minds.

The wormhole closed behind SG-19 when they arrived at the gate room. The team of anthropologists was suffering from nausea and diarrhoea that turned out to be food poisoning from a rather spicy root the locals regarded as a delicacy. Janet was about to leave with her patients when another unscheduled activation was called. She put Cassandra in charge of the team and called for back-up.

Chevron 7 locked, the wormhole burst into life, the iris closed. She heard the announcements from the control room as if in fog. "Incoming signal. - It's SG-2. - Open the iris."

The blink of an eye later, two rather dishevelled looking Tok'ra carried Jennifer Hailey through.

A score of other Tok'ra and the rest of SG-2 followed on their heels; they all looked as if they had been through a lot. They were continually looking back towards the gate, making the SFs behind their weapons more than nervous. They clearly were expecting trouble but all stayed calm; so she concentrated on Jennifer. She assessed the small woman's injuries and made her as comfortable as possible given her dislocated shoulder and a badly broken leg. Before she could administer a painkiller, the event horizon began to flicker but there was still no sign of Samantha. Janet stared at the gate as if she could keep it open by the force of her will alone.

Finally, three more persons stepped through, their backs to the room. She immediately recognised Samantha who still held her Carter-special at the ready. Next to her was Jacob Carter and to the far right Garshaw, both women holding him upright. They barely had cleared the gate when the wormhole collapsed, severing the tip of her gun. The small doctor was already on the run, closely followed by two medics. A smile lit the blonde's battered face when she felt the presence of her lover.

She whispered. "Kept my promise, love! Take care of Dad!" She then slumped bonelessly in Janet's arms.

Seeing her beloved injured snapped Janet into doctor mode. She quickly made sure that Samantha was not in any danger and within a few heartbeats the pandemonium the gate room had turned into was back to a semblance of order. After sending everyone who didn't need immediate medical attention to one part of the room she concentrated on Samantha and her father. Jennifer already was on her way to level 21.

Jacob and Selmac were both badly injured, badly enough to let Janet wish for a sarcophagus - though she knew that both would object to its use. She managed to stabilise him and then had a better look at Samantha. Her love's vitals were still stable but she had a split lip, her left eye was swollen shut, and her whole body seemed to be covered in bruises. She ushered them off to the infirmary.

The tall woman's guardian angel, however, had worked overtime. Further examination showed no signs of internal injuries or a concussion. A couple of broken ribs, a multitude of superficial cuts, and a deep laceration at her right thigh that had reopened when they cut her out of the Tok'ra issued garments she had been wearing. Samantha came around long enough to give Janet one of her special smiles and then slipped in a deep sleep. In the meantime, Cassandra had taken care of Captain Hailey and Garshaw was trying to treat Jacob/Selmac with a healing device. Instead of improving his condition he flat-lined. An adrenaline injection brought him back and it was decided to wait.

Colonel Ferretti was barely able to stand when he reported to O'Neill's office to give his preliminary report, well three words. "Mission accomplished, Sir."

"When was the last time any of you had any sleep?"

"Two and a half days ago, more or less, Sir. Sam was awesome."

"She usually is, Ferretti. "

"No, Sir, you don't understand. Ba'al unexpectedly sent ground troops; Selmac was still weak from his imprisonment and quickly captured. She led Ba'al's Jaffa on a wild goose chase, kept them at bay, and enabled us to get away. She let herself be captured to get her father out, freed them both and finally led us through the gate. Everyone else would have earned a purple heart for this mission alone, Sir."

"Unfortunately, that's not for us to decide. Go and get some sleep. I'm really looking forward to a full debriefing."

When there was one thing Jack O'Neill hated it was waiting. He was trying to concentrate on some paperwork when the red phone rang. "Yes, Madam President, about an hour ago."

"Yes, the mission was a success."

"No, no fatalities, so far. General Carter was gravely injured. The doc is not sure if he and Selmac will make it."

"I don't know any details, yet. It appears that he and Fraiser have been captured and tortured when they were on the Tok'ra outpost. I wanted to wait with debriefing until she is sufficiently recovered and everyone has had a chance to get some sleep."

"According to the doc, she should be fine after some sleep and a ton of painkillers. I was told that she took quite a beating."

"Yes, I understand, Madam President. I'll get you all the intel you need, two hours tops."

"Your private cell phone? - Yes, noted and memorised, Madam President."

As a man with a mission Jack O'Neill left his office and headed for the infirmary. After two lengthy talks with Jennifer Hailey and Garshaw he used the number he just had been given. President Clinton was on her way to the Pentagon, a meeting with the Joint Chiefs.

"The first part of the plan went without a hitch. SG-2 freed General Carter and Fraiser reprogrammed Ba'al's weapon. Ba'al followed them with his fleet to the old Tok'ra outpost, but he didn't start his planet burner as he had done before. He sent ground troops. As a contingency plan Fraiser had an automated timer running but they had to keep them occupied for 72 hours. They had to play for time. Selmac was once again captured and Fraiser lured the Jaffa away from the Tok'ra and the other members of her team. They had to augment the core temperature of the planet to make sure that it had maximum effect. The technical details are way over my head. Bottom line is: Sam freed herself and Selmac, let the assault on the gate and brought all her people back."

"No, there's been no change to General Carter's condition."

"Yes, Madam President, a complete mission report. 24 hours and you'll have all the details. Do you think that this time they will go for it?"

"Yes, I understand."

"No, as far as she is concerned, she got what she deserved but that doesn't mean that I will stop nagging them about it."

"Yes, Madam President, I'll make sure to tell her. Thank you."

Samantha quickly recovered but Janet insisted that she stayed in the infirmary for at least three more days. She used the ribbon device to heal Selmac and her father - and somehow they came to some sort of truce though their relationship was still rather formal.

Almost three weeks later, Samantha and Janet were called to the SGC on their day off. They were ushered to their shared quarters and told to dress in the clothes laid out on the bed. Having spent most of their adult lives in the military they knew when to question an order and when not. This was not one of these times. There was a dress uniform for Janet, complete with regulation heels and the half wings of a lieutenant colonel on her epaulettes. A second, plain dress uniform was waiting for Samantha.

She adjusted her tie in front of the mirror. "I always loved you in dress blues, Sammy."

The blonde blushed. "I missed wearing uniform, incongruous as it seems. This is more than I ever thought possible."

They kissed and shortly after were escorted to the gate room that was filled to the brim with dress uniforms and other fineries. There was a rather large delegation of the Tok'ra including Selmac and Garshaw, Teal'c with his family, Thor and Heimdall, and Lya and Nafrayu from the Nox. Samantha was directed to the foot of the ramp where Jennifer Hailey was already waiting, balanced on a walking stick.

The Generals Hammond and O'Neill were standing to the left of a lectern draped with the flag of the United Nations. Behind it were the flags of both the USA and the SGC framed by the gleaming black metal of the stargate. Samantha slightly turned her head and saw her lover standing in the front row next to Cassandra, Daniel, and Sarah. She looked as confused as the blonde felt. Something definitively was up.

And it must be more than just a promotion, though Jennifer had more than earned her major's leaves. They long ago had stopped to make a big deal about such things. There usually was a quiet ceremony in the briefing room followed by a big party. She searched eye contact with the smaller woman who imperceptibly shrugged her shoulders. Before she had a chance to lose

herself in pointless speculations, the voice of Sergeant Siler rang through the speaker system. "Attention!"

Everyone, including the civilians snapped at attention. General Hammond, now with three stars adorning his shoulders stepped behind the lectern. "From the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force: in recognition of Captain Jennifer Hailey's outstanding work I hereby authorise her immediate promotion to the rank of major. Captain, step forward."

Jennifer walked up the ramp where the general took off her captain's bars. "The United States Air Force recognises that you have fulfilled tasks and duties well beyond the responsibility of captain."

O'Neill moved forward and attached the oak leaf on her left shoulder while Hammond did her right. "It is with pleasure that I bestow upon you the responsibilities, the respect, and the rank of major."

Samantha's mind went back to the day she had been in Jennifer's shoes, almost nine years ago. There hadn't be any time for a party with the treaty negotiations between the Asgard and the System Lords, Nirrti trying to kill Cronos, and everything else. The rhythm of Jennifer's walking stick on the metal mesh of the ramp brought her back to the present. Once again Siler called them to attention and O'Neill's voice rang through the room.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Air Force, Marines, and dear guests - the President of the United States of America."

A room full of right arms went up in salute when Hillary Clinton stepped through the entrance to the gate room and took her place behind the lectern flanked by both generals. "At ease, please!" The soldiers all flowed to a slightly less rigid parade rest.

"With the initiation of the Stargate Program the words 'first line of defence' were redefined. The first line of defence for this country, for our whole planet is this room - and a piece of technology we still try to understand completely. The members of this command, however, quickly learned that there is much more at stake than the fate of our planet. We found friends out there, true and trusted friends and allies. It is with great joy and pride that I greet the representatives of the Asgard, the Nox, the Tok'ra, and last but not least the Jaffa.

"Many people on our planet still believe that they have a right to try and dominate those that are different, be it by the colour of their skin, their sex or their religious beliefs. You all taught us that differences are a source of strength, not of weakness and that all in all we have more to gain than to lose. May the new alliance we forged exist as long as the old one did."

Thunderous applause greeted her last words and she waited for the noise to calm down but it took long enough for Samantha to begin asking herself why she still was standing at the foot of the ramp instead of somewhere in the anonymity of the crowd.

"Today is very special for me. In the past, when I was called here to Cheyenne Mountain it was

either to sign a treaty or due to some sort of diplomatic emergency. During the last four years I witnessed countless acts of bravery and heroism, with my own eyes and by way of the mission reports. I had the privilege to see the men and women of this command work together to once again save our world and the world's of others. More often than not our country has been amiss to properly show the gratitude we owe you, all of you."

Samantha felt a knot tightening in her stomach.

"Almost five years ago, Major Samantha Carter, an outstanding officer who had proved her worth and her dedication to this program over and over again fell victim to the machinations of former Vice President Robert Kinsey and other parts of our governmental system that meanwhile have been eliminated. The Joint Chiefs as well as the Congress' Defence Committee have finally agreed that she has paid more than once for the lapse of judgement committed all those years ago. - Doctor Samantha Fraiser, please step forward."

Samantha's legs automatically began to make one step after the other and before she knew it she stood at arm's length from the lectern and cast a quick glance at her now beaming lover.

"Doctor Fraiser, without your ingenuity Stargate Command would have stayed the subject of a science fiction novel. Eventually, the Gao'uld would have remembered our world and found us an unsuspecting target. Without your selfless dedication this world no longer would exist."

The President nodded to O'Neill who in turn gave a sign to Siler in the control room.

"Attention!" A shuffle of feet followed and suddenly it was as if the whole room was holding their collective breaths.

"In the name of the Joint Chiefs as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces let it be known: in recognition of her outstanding dedication to the security of this planet and our allies all charges against Major Samantha Carter-Fraiser are dismissed and as of now she is reinstated in the United States Air Force with the rank of Colonel. - Doctor Fraiser, do you accept the promotion?"

The blonde looked at her as if she suddenly had grown a second head; all she could do was nod. O'Neill gave another sign and the ranks to Janet's left parted to make way for a curly haired child wearing something closely resembling an Air Force dress uniform. Samantha was beyond astonished; her daughter hated wearing skirts, with a passion. Eli balanced a big jewellery box in both outstretched hands and was beaming at the older woman. The President bent down, opened the box, and took the golden wings from their casing.

"On behalf of the United States Air Force, it is with great pleasure that I bestow upon you the responsibilities, the respect, and the rank of colonel." She clipped them on both of her shoulders and once again bent down to retrieve the bars with commendations and medals to go at her left side just above the heart. There were almost as many as General O'Neill sported. "Welcome back, Colonel Fraiser!"

Instead of accepting a salute from the still flabbergasted woman she hugged her. This was

enough to bring her back to the necessities of protocol. She saluted the generals and then turned around to pick her daughter up. She found a room full of grinning, saluting soldiers. She returned the salute with a hint of tears in her eyes. O'Neill took the microphone.

"And now folks, go change and prepare to embarque to the Alpha Site. They asked for the honour to host the party. Colonels Fraiser and Fraiser, to the briefing room, ASAP. There are a few details to get out of the way."

"Care to introduce me to this young lady, Colonel?"

"Of course, Madam President. May I present Eli Rebecca Fraiser, daughter of Samantha and Janet Fraiser. Eli, say hello to the President."

Far from being intimidated by the smartly dressed older woman Eli began to tell her how much fun it had been to see her mother so surprised, and that they both hadn't known and that she didn't like skirts but today had wanted to look just like her Mum and her Mummy.

Cassandra was waiting at the foot of the staircase to the briefing room to take her little sister to the locker room to change.

"They have the same smile when they look at you, Colonel."

"They both are my daughters, Madam President, and I'm very proud of them."

"Will Cassandra also join the Air Force after her residency?" Hillary Clinton asked while they were slowly climbing the stairs.

If Samantha was surprised to find that the most powerful woman on earth knew so much about her family she didn't show it. "I don't know, Madam President. When Janet, Cassandra, and I first became a family, all she was talking about was to become one day a member of SG-1. SG-1 no longer exists, and because of what happened she has developed a certain degree of resentment towards the forces, regardless of how many times I told her that it was my fault, my decision. So, at the moment, I don't know. Time will tell and it will be for her to decide."

They arrived at the briefing room and all took their seats. "Let's cut right to the chase. The Joint Chiefs have agreed to put Colonel Samantha Fraiser in charge of a newly to be formed SG-1. Its primary function will be to step in when no one else can do the job, basically you will be trouble-shooting. We recommend Doctor Jackson and Major Hailey as permanent members of the team and anyone else you want to. General O'Neill will assign your missions but you will have the right to refuse them if you don't feel comfortable. We also feel that you should continue to work at the Colorado Springs Central Hospital. Your contributions to this country's health care are too important to miss them. It will be up to you how to balance both parts of your life. Think about it; speak with your family and friends. Let me know what you decide - and now I must leave, I'm expected in Washington. Have a good party."

"Madam President, may I accompany you to the surface?"

"It would be my pleasure, Doctor Fraiser. I hope you don't mind the doctor but two Colonel Fraiser's is just a bit too irritating."

"No, of course not. In the hospital we go by a first name basis to keep the confusion down. Sam, Cassy, and I sometimes work the same shift, and three Doctor Fraisers are too much, even for a big hospital. - I wanted to thank you personally for what you did do today, Madam President."

"It was long overdue, Doctor. Oh, I almost forgot. Adam, the briefcase, please." A young man stepped out of the group of people following the two women. The President took an envelope out of the leather case he presented to her. "General O'Neill has all the paperwork necessary for Colonel Fraiser's reinstatement. This is for her personally. It's the confession Kinsey made her sign, the original. As far as I know there are no copies."

"Why are you doing this, Madam President? This is far beyond your duty."

"There isn't just one answer to this question but there is one that should be obvious: It's my duty to look out for the people of this country, Doctor, especially heroic types who are too honourable and too noble to do so for themselves. But there is more. At first I only took an interest in her case as a favour for an old friend but it became more than just an obligation. Shortly after the destruction of the Replicators I was at the base to sign a treaty with the Asgard. It was over very quickly and I found myself with a few hours of leisure time. I chose to finally have a thorough look at the base and General O'Neill assigned Doc... Colonel Fraiser to show me around.

"We were in the engine room when the whole facility shook with a series of explosions, an accident in one of the science labs as it later turned out. We found ourselves cut off from the others. Life support was down all over the base, a few of the labs were isolated. I was ready to panic but she calmed me down and at the same time she somehow re-routed power to make the auxiliary system work. Then we had to wait for someone to dig us out and we talked. The infirmary had been destroyed and they checked us out in the briefing room. All the time that we were sitting there and talking she had a broken arm and two broken ribs, and she never said a word. Samantha impressed me like no one else ever did.

"Believe me; getting her back in the fold was worth every aggravating minute with these stubborn old men at the Pentagon." She said with a twinkle in her eyes. "I did what I had to do but if you really want to repay me, well, an invitation would be nice."

"An invitation?"

"To your wedding, Doctor."

"We would be honoured to have you, Madam President."

THE END

Addendum -

Dylan Thomas: And Death Shall Have No Dominion

And death shall have no dominion.
Dead men naked they shall be one
With the man in the wind and the west moon;
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;
Though they go mad they shall be sane,
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;
Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.
Under the windings of the sea
They lying long shall not die windily;
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,
And the unicorn evils run them through;
Split all ends up they shan't crack;
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.
No more may gulls cry at their ears
Or waves break loud on the seashores;
Where blew a flower may a flower no more
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;
Though they be mad and dead as nails,
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,
And death shall have no dominion.

Any and all comments welcome at romansilence@yahoo.de - flames will be sent back.

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