

Title: Vanilla Sunday

Author: Biblio

Rating: NC-17

Pairing: Jack and Daniel

Category: Comfort. Established Relationship. Romance.

Series/Sequel: An epilogue to Owing Silence

Season/Spoilers: Season 5. Minor spoilers.

Synopsis: Sunday in the Springs

Warnings: Salty Language. VERY Alpha Males. Serious Yet Utterly Gratuitous Sex And Snuggling. Jammies. Bare Toes And Pretty Much Bare Everything. A Gazebo With A Grassy Knoll. A Small Friendly Mary Sue. Licking.



Vanilla Sunday

An epilogue to Owing Silence

A slash story by Biblio

Jack backstroked lazily up the full length of the pool, gloating over the peace and quiet. No annoyingly tinny easy listening piped over the PA. No swimmers cluttering up the place, not this early on a Sunday morning. The water was perfect; blessedly cool and crystal clear, rippling gently above the azure and silver tiles, and refracting the sunlight streaming in through the tall windows.

This was his ritual; a personal, intensely private time out he took every off-duty, on-world Sunday; no variation to his routine, no exceptions. A long satisfying swim, a steam and a steak. And in the afternoon street hockey, followed by a barbecue and beer at someone's house during the on season, or a solo movie and beer in the off.

This had worked perfectly while Jack was alone. He needed the solitude. Or so he'd told himself. Yep, he'd always done fine on his own, so why mess with success? Why? Try having something better to do. Or someone. The 'why' was sidling up to the steps at the deep end, smiling nervously at him. Jack waved cheerily back at his lover of one whole week, who wasn't exactly thrilled so much of himself was on public display.

Jack swam back towards Daniel as he tentatively dipped one slender foot into the water.

"What are you DOING?" Jack called. "Get in here!" Daniel was exciting when slippery and wet, something Daniel was getting to grips with - along with Jack - every time he got in the shower. Jack wanted him slippery and wet now. He tried not to gloat too obviously when Daniel scowled at him and dove smoothly from the steps, emerging from his shallow dive more or less in Jack's face.

"No," Daniel said crisply as he hastily backed off to a respectable distance, eyeing Jack suspiciously. "I don't care HOW hot you insist these trunks are."

"It's YOUR fault," Jack riposted. "You could have lazed in bed and met me in town for brunch at Poor Richard's but noooo, you just HAD to go and..."

"Stupidly mention I find swimming an uplifting experience?" Daniel asked politely as he leaned back and relaxed, allowed himself to float and drift. "Which led your libido right to what I WORE while swimming."

"You should not have modelled those trunks, Jackson," Jack informed him, admiring the view as Daniel sprawled in the water, the sun kissing his skin and lighting his hair to gold. The trunks were fabulous; navy blue, skin tight and distressingly - for Daniel - abbreviated. They were in a class of their own for practically naked sex appeal, but Jack was solidly behind Daniel's newly revealed tendency to wander vaguely around at night barefoot and deliciously distracted in an array of staggeringly sexy flannel jammies and slinky T-shirts, usually clutching a book or peer-reviewed journal.

Daniel wasn't aware his jammies were baggy and had a tendency to settle low on his hips, and Jack utterly failed to bring to his attention the slinkiness of his tees. He restricted himself to encouraging Daniel to snuggle, which Daniel did with as much élan as he'd just displayed sidling apologetically into the pool. Dr Daniel Jackson was slowly realising he was a total babe and was not at all happy about it. He was deeply suspicious of the snuggling and the quote 'bizarre and perverted interest' Jack took in his wardrobe. "You only have yourself to blame," Jack laid blame squarely on Daniel's shoulders.

"I'm to blame for you being a lecherous sonovabitch?" Daniel queried, backstroking lazily away.

Jack paced Daniel, admiring the play of sleek muscles as Daniel pulled cleanly through the water. "Yep," he agreed equably. His Sunday would fit around Daniel from now on, with a shared swim for him, book browsing and brunch at Poor Richard's for Daniel, no movie, no beer, and given the choice between a long, lazy afternoon making love lingeringly with Daniel or playing hockey...no brainer. Hockey schmockey.

Jack felt a pang of desire spike through him every time he thought about what Daniel wanted this afternoon. This was the first time since their return from the Dwelling Place Daniel felt ready for intercourse again. Jack was pretty much letting Daniel dictate the pace of their deepening intimacy. Daniel had had the famine so long he was nervous about the feast, was desperately shy about letting Jack so completely into his personal space, and was still adjusting to the fact Jack just wanted to be with him only all the time.

Regardless of whether they wound up at the house or the loft, they were to all intents and purposes living together, at Jack's insistence. "Are you okay?" Jack asked quietly as they reached the side of the pool. Daniel glanced at him and let his feet touch the bottom, close enough Jack felt the heat of his body in the cool water.

"Sure," Daniel said easily, smiling a little.

"With us?" Jack persisted. "I didn't exactly let you work up to this stuff. One day you were living alone, the next I had half your closet space."

"And you don't feel guilty about that all," Daniel observed mildly.

Jack shrugged. Having Daniel with him was non-negotiable. Maybe he was moving fast, but Daniel was about as fragile as tensile steel. Jack reluctantly admitted to himself it was a hell of a jump from doing Daniel against his front door to effectively moving in with him, but there was nothing casual about what they had. They were in love and he wasn't wasting a minute of their precious free time when they could be together.

Besides, they'd lived together while they were in the Dwelling Place. He saw no reason to alter their understanding now they were back on this side of the gate.

Hammond, Teal'c and Janet were ecstatic over getting them back, and Carter was backing them to the hilt. The debriefing had been a cake walk and after...well, Jack had done everything but march Daniel up the aisle. Admitting he wanted Daniel to move out of the loft and into his house after a week together - and only a few days actually on-world - was likely to be the proverbial straw. Daniel liked the house just fine, but he loved his quirky loft, his things. Jack was tolerating the time they spent there for Daniel's sake and just had to accept if Daniel had work to do, they were going to wind up in town. He was deliberately acclimating himself because now Daniel was getting used to the idea he got to have Jack anywhere, he was so happy to have him there.

Jack was frankly glad he and Daniel had both been trained to manage logistics, because the secrecy thing was a kicker. They were going to have to maintain two of everything from cars to closets and carry every damn thing they needed with them. There was no choice here. Neither he nor Daniel would give up the SGC and they couldn't give up each other, so they'd have to plan and manage their personal lives. The alternative was to be apart and there was no goddamn way Jack would let that happen.

"I've never lived with anyone," Daniel admitted. "It was different with Sha'uri. I had to deal with the language, the culture, the sheer difficulty of surviving in the desert, and the fact I couldn't get home. It was a long time before I realised the place was home."

"You didn't live with Sarah Gardner?" Jack asked, surprised.

Daniel shuddered. "Living with Sarah would have driven me nuts. We might have shared the same profession, but I like a home that's lived in, you know?" he asked innocently.

"I know," Jack agreed sympathetically, straight faced.

"I'm in love with you, Jack," Daniel said quietly, eyes intent on Jack's. "Never doubt that."

Jack caught his hand for a moment. "I know," he said simply. "Me too." He grinned when Daniel's face lit up and turned to push off again before he embarrassed himself and got even more sappy than being within ten feet of Daniel had him to start with.

He was a strong swimmer, far faster than Daniel. It evened out. Daniel ran rings round him on dry land. He didn't slow his pace, just gave Daniel room and ploughed up and down for his usual two hundred laps, non-stop. When Jack took his breather, he idled at the side, watching his lover. Daniel wasn't going to break any speed records but he had a beautiful stroke, elegant and poised in the water, drawing admiring glances as the pool slowly filled with the usual early Sunday crowd.

The third time Jack had to stop and tread water to let someone slower pass he called quits and Daniel swam back over to his side. "Sauna?" he asked hopefully, shaking his head wryly at Daniel's sceptical look. "I am NOT going to seduce you in the sauna!" he hissed.

"Right," Daniel drawled as they climbed out of the pool and headed into the showers to freshen up. "Steamy slippery sex never even crossed your mind."

"It's good for your sinuses," Jack insisted, gently steering Daniel through the locker room and around to the sauna suite. "I wish you hadn't said that," he complained, loosening his towel a tad. "It's crossing more than my mind now."

"Are you objectifying me again?" Daniel scowled, blushing. "Bastard."

"That's not what you said last night," Jack said smugly. "O'Neill. Sauna for two." The attendant made the booking at his console and waved them through, calling out the number of their sauna as they strolled past. There was a lot to be said for expensive exclusivity, including the opportunity to have steamy, slippery sex with Daniel in public privacy. "I don't know what you want me to say, Daniel," Jack said casually as he pulled open the door to the sauna cubicle and the heat enveloped them. "You're VERY attractive. I'm VERY attracted to you. You want to have sex with me but don't want me to see you as sexy? That doesn't make any sense to me."

"That's simplistic," Daniel protested as Jack hauled him over to the low, pale pine bench and shoved him down.

"No, it's not. It's simple," Jack disagreed while he carefully poured a little water on the coals. Jack liked the heat pounding, but he knew Daniel got breathless. He dropped onto the bench and leaned back, his thigh resting against Daniel's. "Sex is just one intimacy among many. You love the sex, but it throws you when I want to be close while we're watching TV or listening to music or whatever." Which took care of both of their evenings together as S.O.'s.

"Close?" Daniel asked incredulously. "You like having me sit on your knee, Jack. I'm thirty-six years old, I have two PhDs and according to you, an array of annoying accomplishments, and suddenly you've decided I'm a...a 'babe'..." he stammered awkwardly.

"I can HEAR the parentheses."

"You were supposed to," Daniel snapped. "I was quoting you, not agreeing with your position, and don't tell me that's not what I said last night," he added rapidly. "I know perfectly well what I said last night."

"And this morning," Jack supplied helpfully.

"And this...shut up!" Daniel glared at him.

"Although it wasn't so much said as whimpered," Jack pointed out in the interests of accuracy.

Daniel ignored his interjection. "So out of the blue I'm a 'BABE' and it's okay for you to haul me down onto your lap and maul me?" Daniel complained.

Jack let the mauling diss go. That was in fact a fairly accurate description.

"And you make comments," Daniel accused.

"Comments?" Jack asked blankly. "Such as?"

"You know," Daniel said darkly.

"Sorry," Jack apologised effusively. "I don't get it. Would you care to elaborate?"

"No."

"I can't accept the legitimacy of your complaint without supplementary evidence," Jack said pleasantly as he poured a little more water over the coals.

"Stuff," Daniel muttered cryptically.

"Quote 'babe' stuff?" Jack asked sweetly, managing to take up as much bench as two men so he could crowd Daniel into sharing some skin. He knew exactly what stuff Daniel was referring to, none of it...

"Hyperbole," Daniel scowled at him, eyes wide and bright with temper.

None of it hyperbole.

"I think I'll paint the bedroom," Jack decided. "Blue."

Daniel shot him a suspicious sidelong glance. "Why?" he asked slowly.

For the obvious reason.

"What shade of blue?" Daniel demanded, stiffening a little.

Jack figured he'd just get the sales guy at the Paint Spot to take a good look at Daniel's eyes and match the colour. "Any suggestions?"

"Turquoise," Daniel said promptly.

"Turquoise?" Jack stared at him. "This from the guy who painted everything white?"

"Your whole house is vanilla!" Daniel accused him, slightly indignant.

"Daniel, apart from saving the world, our whole lives are vanilla," Jack felt honour bound to point out. "We're about as straight as de facto gay gets."

"Are you saying we're boring?"

"We are. You haven't noticed because you're..."

"Boring." Daniel looked as if he wanted to protest against the judgement but settled for a mutinous pout.

"We've been together a week, and we were still way more excited about that 'Bear Necessities' thing on National Geographic than we were about, for example, your first attempt at fellatio."

"Don't say it!" Daniel warned him menacingly.

"You sucked," Jack said gleefully.

"Smug bastard." Daniel eyed him bitterly. "I'm getting better."

"You suck even more," Jack agreed supportively. He slipped his arm round Daniel's waist and squeezed.

"I hate you, and no, you DON'T hate me more." Daniel chose to palliate his comprehensive condemnation by returning the embrace, fingers spread possessively over Jack's side.

"You have it within you to hate me even more," Jack suggested, hunching his shoulder. He sighed and stretched out blissfully as Daniel shook his head a little and settled it on Jack's shoulder, sighing heavily.

"If people only knew," Daniel grumbled half-heartedly, making himself more comfortable.

They sat quietly, close, letting the steam bathe their skin; warm and slowly relaxing, letting the tension seep away. Jack waited patiently for Daniel to achieve his now familiar boneless sprawl, his slim, supple body slumping gratefully into Jack's. Jack hadn't realised how habitually uptight Daniel was until he'd held a soft, satisfied and newly pliant Daniel close in a post-coital embrace. A Daniel wanting to be that close, blithe, basking in his affection, literally contented, satiated putty in his hands.

Like now. Daniel opened drowsy eyes and smiled blindingly up at Jack, reaching up to cup his face, mouthing the words.

"I love you too," Jack murmured.

"Let's go home," Daniel suggested, skimming his hand slowly over Jack's shoulder and down his arm to take his hand. "And just spend the day like this."

"Naked and sweaty?"

Daniel chuckled. "I meant being close."

"You can't get much closer than naked and sweaty," Jack coaxed. He caught his breath at the light in Daniel's eyes.

"Later," Daniel promised, blushing a little. "You've been whining about wanting visitation rights to my psyche as well as my closet so let's just laze around all day. We can go to the deli, pick up a little salad and coleslaw, some chicken, maybe a cheesecake. I'll fry the chicken and we can eat ourselves stupid out in the garden. How does that sound?" he asked gently. He looked down for a moment. "And later, we can..."

"Make love. Oh, yeah," Jack said dreamily. Daniel's fingers tightened around his. He'd been waiting for this, not patiently, since their first time. Daniel thought he was patient, but he was in fact disciplined. Discipline earned him a Daniel who trusted him more with every day that passed. "Then we toss on the single most comfortable thing each of us owns, no matter how stupid it looks, and cuddle up on the couch," he ordered.

Daniel elbowed him in the ribs. "I'm not sitting on your lap," he warned sternly. "So don't even try it. We can watch a movie. That'll take your mind off it."

"No, it won't."

"It will," Daniel insisted.

"If it's your psyche, it has to be a movie you like, not one I've dragged you to or one you've taken Teal'c to," Jack decided. "Even foreign language arty crap, if that's what you want." He could take the edge off by...

"I am NOT sitting on your knee!" Daniel snarled. "I won't fit. You only THINK you want me to do it. Try calling in sick a couple of times because your knees gave out while my ass was on your lap and Janet will have YOUR ass in a sling."

"I'm GOOD at logistics," Jack insisted.

"Not good enough to shrink me by a foot."

"There has to be a way. I want to snuggle. I LIKE to snuggle," Jack said plaintively.

"No. N-O!" Daniel scowled.

"A week ago you said you wouldn't sleep on the right side of the bed," Jack informed him smugly.

"I'm trying to deal with a Pavlovian response," Daniel argued indignantly. "Every time I try to sleep on the left, you arbitrarily decide it means I'm in dire need of hot sex."

"You are."

"That's not the point!" Daniel tried for and completely failed to achieve dignified rebuke, stalling somewhere around mischievous.

Jesus. Jack wished there was an easy way to tell the stubborn little shit he happened to be in love with he had beautiful eyes without coming off as a complete SAP. "Blue," Jack decided. "We're definitely painting my - OUR bedroom blue."

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"Do you have to wear so many clothes?" Jack complained as they headed out to the exit. "Give." He held out his hand for the mineral water.

"I'm not running around with my ass on display for the edification of the libidinous, particularly you," Daniel said firmly. He glanced down at himself. "You don't like...I mean, it's not plaid. I've grasped you're anti-plaid." He looked down again. Maybe his ensemble was a tad more formal than Jack's jeans and leather jacket, and maybe grey wasn't the liveliest colour on the planet, but the pants were comfortable despite the pleat fronts only guys who were really built - or in his case, skinny - could get away with. The knit shirt might be long sleeved, and just another paler shade of grey, but it was silk, and Jack had been fairly enthusiastic and distinctly tactile about helping him into it.

"You don't think this is overkill?" Jack demanded, flipping Daniel's wine coloured silk jacket impatiently. He had to stop and retrieve his ID card to swipe through the spa's exit gate. "Sheesh. 'The Springs' has tighter security than the mountain," he grumbled. "I don't know why you fight it so damn much. You have a GREAT ass, I can testify to that. Can't you just quit with this denial thing and flaunt it?"

Daniel followed him out to the parking lot and over to the truck, which Jack had insisted on bringing, citing the large sport bags. Yeah. "You want me to flaunt my allegedly great ass at the population of Colorado Springs?" he asked musingly, watching with great interest as Jack gave this some thought.

"No," Jack decided at last. "You still have that old duffle coat?" he asked casually.

"You have no shame," Daniel sighed.

"None whatsodamnever," Jack agreed happily, beaming at him as he unlocked the truck.

"Can I drive?"

"No," Jack refused with unflattering promptness, hopping into the truck.

Daniel clambered in his side, deciding it was petty to slam the door.

"You want to get out and KICK the damn door, too?" Jack asked sarcastically. He had to grab Daniel as he reached for the door handle. "You are THE single most annoying man on the face of the Earth."

"That's why you love me," Daniel smirked.

"You drive me nuts!" Jack accused as they pulled away.

"I keep you busy," Daniel said sweetly. "Head over to 'Not Carol's Beans & Things' in Academy Place, okay? We're almost out of coffee. Both of us," he added wryly. "She does great salads and Pike's Perk is right next to it for the cheesecake. Do you want something disgustingly calorific and sticky?"

"You can say yes to that with the fullest confidence," Jack grinned. "In fact, yes to eating ourselves stupid but why cook? Juniper Valley is only a little out of the way and God knows they do great chicken. Biscuits and apple butter," he tempted. "We can have lunch there and laze around in the great outdoors."

"If that's what you want," Daniel agreed at once. He was slightly disappointed. He couldn't exactly say the thrill was gone, not the way he and Jack were all over each other, but that vanilla crack stung. Daniel was beginning to feel like he should...well, loosen his tie. Undo the top button. Untuck his shirt. Let it hang out - a bit. He had been hoping 'laze around' would translate into fooling around with Jack's enthusiastic co-operation. Without guaranteed privacy, Daniel doubted Jack would be comfortable making out and even if he was, Daniel wasn't. Oh, well. He'd already muscled in on Jack's sacrosanct Sunday ritual so all he could do was give way now with a good grace.

"We can pick up the salad stuff and the cheesecake and pig out at dinner too," Jack suggested. "I've got the cooler box back there, nothing will spoil. I'll cook us a couple of sirloins," he offered.

"Okay," Daniel returned Jack's smile. "I love Sunday," he confided. "It's weird how there's always so much time on a Sunday. I always feel as if it's the one day of the week where your life is truly your own, no pressure, no distractions, just...time. It doesn't feel the same if you're off on, say, a Wednesday."

"My favourite day of the week too," Jack agreed.

The sun was getting brighter every minute, so Daniel handed him his sunglasses as they pulled up to the next stop sign. Even downtown Colorado Springs was pleasant on Sunday morning. There were still plenty of people around, but the pace of life was slower. "I read an anthropologist a few years back who posited that the reason we find modern life so stressful is that human beings evolved as gregarious, social animals genetically designed to live and hunt in a pack or tribe. Our essential nature hasn't changed even though communication, agricultural settlement and technology have transformed our environment. We're designed to be happy in a tightly knit social grouping of maybe a hundred individuals, inclusive of extended families. Instead we had a population explosion and new industries to service after the Industrial Revolution, and this necessitated urbanisation. Today we have the nuclear family, and the elderly are cast adrift as their nurturing role is assumed by the formalised education system. The needs of the tribe and the individual are subordinate to the needs of the systems which process them. Instead of a small, cohesive social unit striving towards a common goal, we have to compete with a vast throng of rivals for limited resources. People just weren't designed to live like this," Daniel gestured at the townscape rolling smoothly by them. "We strive to find that sense of community urbanisation has deprived us of, and interests become parochial." He caught the sly look Jack shot him as they turned left off East Platte and headed up to towards Constitution Avenue.

"A hundred people?" Jack asked sceptically.

"Seriously, Jack. How many people do you actually know? This guy did research and in the majority of his sample, a hundred was in the upper percentile, and many didn't even come close to that."

"You know some bizarre shit, Jackson," Jack shook his head, laughing a little. "It's Sunday. No in-depth socio-cultural analysis on Sunday."

Daniel didn't miss the paternal indulgence in Jack's manner. He decided there and then to loosen with a vengeance and seduce Jack in the great outdoors. If he wanted naked and sweaty, Daniel would GIVE him naked and sweaty. "It's still early," he suggested as Jack pulled in. "Let's drop this stuff off at the house and I'll change so we can take a walk. You want to call the Juniper Valley and make reservations while I pick up the stuff?"

"Sure," Jack reached for his cell phone.

Daniel marched briskly into the homey gingham trimmed environs of 'Not Carol's', sniffing appreciatively at the dark, rich scent of coffee. He bought a couple of pounds of premium organic Colombian roast and some of the chocolate shavings Jack liked, plus two large sweet 'n' crunchy salads, then headed out and up the street to Pike's Perk. The mouth watering display of pastries, desserts and baked goods always blew him away. He loved to sit here on one of the overstuffed blue couches, coffee and desert within reach on one of the neat little beech and chrome tables, dipping into the articles in the journal of something or other and basically people watching. In a small way, it helped connect him with the people the SGC were fighting for. Daniel felt more of a stranger in the Springs than he did at the mountain. It bothered him the only people he really knew were his teammates, Janet and the general, and Cassie. Hanging out in places like 'Pikes Perk', 'The Chinook' and 'Poor Richard's' helped. Daniel's 'tribe' barely made it into double figures.

The sales assistant - who was a Carol - looked up brightly, gauged his indecision over the cheesecake and suggested a selection of slices. Daniel thought about Jack for a moment, and asked for a slice of everything. That gave him vanilla fudge, coffee walnut, triple chocolate, caramel pecan and citrus burst. "It might not be enough," Daniel said gloomily as Carol carefully boxed each slice. Pike's Perk had its own take out packaging. You got slim slices of a cheesecake that walked tall. "It really might not be enough."

Jack was waiting impatiently when Daniel got back to the truck. Big shock there. His eyes went straight to the parcels.

"What are you having?"

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While Jack was putting away the food they'd brought in, retrieving the sirloins from the freezer, and packing up water, thermal blankets, the medical kit, and probably his gun, Daniel managed to smuggle a blanket and a few essential supplies, including lubricant, into his own backpack. He highly doubted he was going to be comfortable enough to want intercourse on a little blanket in the big woods, but he and Jack had a lot of quiet - um, noisy fun when they let their fingers do the talking.

Unfortunately, this meant he was still dressed when Jack loped into the bedroom to find out what he was up to. Jack brightened visibly. He thoroughly enjoyed 'assisting' Daniel to undress and was extremely persuasive and creative when it came to ways to keep him from changing into anything else. Daniel gave up after the third time Jack batted his fingers out of the way and let him pull the shirt off. The silk did cling, which might explain why Jack's hands spent more time on his skin than on the fabric, but eventually - and somewhat reluctantly - Jack extracted him from it. Jack tossed the top and reached for Daniel's belt buckle.

"This could take some time," he warned solemnly. "Please tell me you're wearing those 501s," he pleaded. "I LIKE buttons."

"I've noticed you like buttons." Daniel liked having Jack's hands on him. In fact...he leaned into Jack's stroking fingers; pleasantly hard and interested, reaching up to pull Jack into a kiss. "Hi."

Jack smiled at him and kissed him back, a gentle promise of their plans for later.

Daniel laid his head on Jack's shoulder, idly smoothing his palms over the soft cream jersey clinging to Jack's broad back. As always, Daniel found his freedom to touch led his errant fingers up into Jack's hair. It wasn't that he didn't appreciate what half a lifetime in Special Ops or the morning ritual of three hundred sit-ups had done for Jack, the man was rock solid, but he loved the softness of Jack's eyes; the way Jack's head moved against his hand, returning the caress, even though Jack was totally focused on easing down his zipper a tooth at a time; the way Jack's lips moved against his in a kiss.

He was so grateful he had Jack at last, and so scared he would lose him. It wasn't just the dramas and crises at the SGC, but the daily grind of being two men who were lovers and having to hide it from everyone. No one could know they were together because it wasn't fair to make them lie about it, any more than it was fair for Jack to have to deliberately and systematically breach Air Force policy on same sex relationships. All Jack would say was that they knew, and that was enough for him.

"Jack," Daniel hinted, rocking his hips into Jack's tormenting hand, more than pleasantly hard, try *NEEDING*, as in right now.

"The reservations are for fourteen hundred. Late cancellation," Jack warned. "Ethel won't hold the table."

"It's just after ten," Daniel murmured, rubbing his cheek against Jack's throat as he fumbled in turn at Jack's zipper, gloating over the eager erection throbbing against his hand as he roughly pushed the jeans down.

"Bed," Jack hissed, his breath hitching as Daniel stroked him knowingly.

"Here," Daniel demanded, reaching up for a kiss. Jack shoved him against the bedroom wall, Daniel laughing softly at the glittering hunger in his eyes. He swung his weight up as Jack lifted him, wrapping his legs tight around Jack's back. The sheer strength of his lover turned him on so fast he couldn't see straight, literally couldn't get enough of him. Jack comfortably held all of Daniel's weight, straining up to let Daniel plunge deep into his mouth as he thrust powerfully, driving Daniel's butt hard against the wall, lifting them both.

"Oh, God, that feels good," Daniel groaned, pulling Jack into another deep, desperate kiss. None of Daniel's fantasies had come close to the reality of being with Jack. He'd never imagined Jack just doing him, hard and fast against the wall, his arms braced beneath Daniel's butt. He'd never imagined the softness of fabric chafing his nipples to aching hardness, Jack's muscles flexing against his own, pinning him to the wall, both of them sweat slick as Daniel yanked up the T-shirt to feel Jack's skin slip over his. Jack was the

gentle lover Daniel had dreamed of, absolutely, all that and so much more, but when they needed it like this...

The pleasure was boiling up, making his heart pound sickeningly as Jack slammed into him, grinding his hips urgently into Daniel's.

"Love you...love..." Jack grated through clenched teeth, leaning in to bite at Daniel's lips.

Daniel opened to the raging kiss, Jack's probing tongue so aggressive, so forceful he banged Daniel's head off the wall. Daniel surrendered, his arms wrapped tight around Jack's neck, cupping Jack's head as he sucked at his tongue. Jack was quivering now, straining against Daniel's weight, thrusting deep into Daniel's mouth as his back arched and he came, a shock of slick heat splashing over Daniel's groin, tumbling him over the edge into orgasm.

"O'Neill," Daniel sighed. Love you too.

His knees buckled when Jack let him down, only the weight of Jack's body leaning into his enough to keep him upright as they wrapped around one another, still shaking. Daniel kissed Jack's brow and hugged him close as they fought for breath and balance.

"Wh-what?" Daniel wheezed, perplexed by the odd grimace twisting Jack's face. He smoothed the sweat from Jack's brow. "What is it?"

"I love to see you smile," Jack whispered.

Daniel understood. It was incredibly awkward being in love with another man, wanting to be affectionate and not knowing what to say. He bit back half the things he was thinking and feeling when they were alone. Jack was right in a way. Daniel loved being with him, loved the way they were gradually learning to know one another's bodies and needs, but he wanted to curl up and die when Jack got that glazed look which told him clearer than any words Jack found him not just desirable but...but beautiful. Jack seemed to find him a whole host of other things too, including adorable, sweet and engagingly naïve, to quote but a few of a wide selection of damning endearments. Even something as simple as letting Jack lead him by the hand into the bathroom so they could clean up was fraught with difficulty. Daniel didn't mind being naked, he barely even registered Jack's jeans were giving up the struggle against gravity and his T-shirt was...um...saturated. He was more aware of his own attraction to Jack, who was mussed and sweaty, sleek with satisfaction and tenderness, definitively male.

Daniel turned on the shower and jumped in as Jack shucked his clothes, rinsed himself thoroughly and promptly got out of Jack's way, otherwise the quickie against the bedroom wall would segue into the shower.

"Wuss," Jack sneered as Daniel neatly sidestepped him, snatched up a towel and bolted.

Daniel still had plans to seduce Jack while they were out this afternoon so he dispensed with underwear, settling for the 501s Jack liked him in so much, or rather was now admitting he liked him in, maybe because he'd had them since he returned to Earth and what was once a tad on the baggy side wasn't now. It was lucky they'd been laundered to softness, because they looked like they'd been sprayed on. Daniel usually tossed on a sweater that at least covered his ass but it was getting hotter by the minute so he settled for a T-shirt, a pale green that reminded him of frosted grass every time he wore it. The tee was on the tight side too. It was difficult to hold onto his somewhat deprecating self-image when he was busting out of most of his casual clothes and Janet was adamant his BMI was perfect. He couldn't convince even himself he was getting fat.

He had to root around in the bottom of the closet, which presented a target of opportunity for the colonel, who was a sneaky, silent sonovabitch. "Get off me!"

"Gettin' off on you," Jack corrected, utterly failing to remove his hands as instructed. "This..." Jack patted Daniel's derriere fondly..."is one of my reasons for living."

"It's rapidly becoming one of my reasons for killing you, so back off," Daniel warned, finally getting his hands on his boots. Jack backed up with him, and when he turned, he was in Jack's arms. Daniel took in the slightly hopeful, 'soo not going to embarrass myself and ASK' look on Jack's face and rushed to reassure him. "Only your ass is enough to save you," he admitted self-consciously. See? Awkward.

"You are such a pushover, Jackson," Jack said complacently.

"Jackson?" Daniel queried. "Didn't we agree the pillow talk only occurred when we were adjacent to the pillows?"

"They're right there," Jack jerked his thumb at the bed.

"I'm not comfortable with you using an endearment in every day conversation you usually howl when you're coming," Daniel said firmly. "Unless your tongue is down my throat."

"Or your dick is in mine," Jack said equably, pulling on his jeans. He rolled his eyes at Daniel, sighing theatrically. "Fine. I won't use the orgasm pet name at the briefing table. Okay?"

"It's private," Daniel insisted gently, reaching into the closet for the faded chambray shirt that went with the jeans.

"No." Jack wrestled the shirt from him. "You do not need it. It's hotter than Abydos out there, and don't pout, it makes me want to kiss you."

Daniel ignored Jack's scowl and tried to work out how just standing here gave him a pout. This wasn't the first time Jack had mentioned pouting. Back at the Dwelling Place...wasn't there some nonsense about a sexy pout? Daniel wasn't pouting. He didn't pout.

"I said DON'T pout! What part of 'don't pout' didn't you get?"

"The kissing part," Daniel complained, trailing his fingertips maddeningly over Jack's navel. "What part of 'I've got the hots for you' didn't YOU get?"

"The part I'm getting this afternoon." Jack lifted Daniel's hand and lingeringly kissed the veins at his wrist. He snorted as colour flooded Daniel's face again. "I can't tell you how cute that is," he told Daniel softly, stroking over the flushed skin of his cheek.

"Wear the grey one," Daniel ordered, blatantly ignoring yet another deposit in the 'cute' bank.

"This one?" Jack held up a T-shirt.

"The other one." The one Daniel had accidentally laundered on the hot cycle. The one that fit like a second skin.

Jack pulled the T-shirt over his head and was disconcerted to find there wasn't a great deal of it to tuck in.

Daniel cleared his throat and wandered over to sit on the bed while Jack stalked back over to throw open the closet door and check himself out.

"Am I putting on weight?" Jack asked incredulously, turning circles trying to look at his ass.

"Oh, no, no," Daniel hastened to assure him. "Well..." he murmured doubtfully. Jack froze and glared at him. "No."

"Honestly, does my butt look big in these?" Jack asked anxiously, turning to present his rear for inspection.

Daniel duly inspected. "Um..."

"Well?" Jack wriggled.

Daniel's throat dried. "Um..."

"Well? Is it?"

"Um..."

"Why am I even asking you? You're like a Rottweiler."

Daniel dragged his eyes from Jack's rear, straightened up and matched him glare for glare. "I only bit you that ONE time," he retorted.

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"You do pout," Jack said judiciously as he spotted the sign for the exit to Fountain just ahead of him. "You're pouting right now, and let me tell you, sullen is seriously sexy."

"I'm not doing anything!" Daniel denied adamantly. "I'm just sitting here."

"You're just sitting here pouting," Jack corrected him meanly.

"You can't tell a grown man he has a sexy pout," Daniel complained to the universe at large.

"You can't tell a colonel he's cute when he lisps," Jack observed mildly.

"That's 'my dog is a cat' logic!"

Jack wanted to get mad, he really did. Daniel was patently horny as hell, spoiling for a fight and some hot alfresco make up sex on the vile plaid blanket he didn't know Jack knew he'd brought, but Daniel wasn't just pouting. The soaring temperatures had resulted in a stern lecture about the perils of heatstroke from Dr Jackson, which in turn resulted in TMI about both of them having a hat fetish. Jack had no idea the mere sight of him in a boonie made Daniel weak at the knees, which was pretty cool, because he hardly ever wore his boonie at work, and he did have his fishing hat at home. Daniel equally hadn't realised how hot Jack found him in both a boonie and a bandana, which was a big problem, because Daniel frequently wore both. He was wearing a bandana right now. Jack couldn't keep his eyes off it. It was blue, several shades lighter than Daniel's eyes, close to the colour of his jeans. Every self-respecting hormone in Jack's body was woofing and slobbering right now. "I've got a surprise for you," he said, grinning as Daniel perked up.

Oh, BAD image. Perky and pouting in a bandana? They had hours before they got to have make-up sex, which at this point in the day, Jack was certain would be making up for not getting to have sex sooner.

"Surprise?" Daniel's face fell. "A surprise I'LL like?" he asked suspiciously. "We're stopping in Fountain?" he went on as Jack turned off the 115 and then again onto Parker Road.

"Antiques and Crafts Fair," Jack admitted self-consciously. "Ethel mentioned it when I called to make the reservation. She said a couple of reputable dealers were taking part, and there should be some good stuff. I just thought...you know." He shrugged it off.

"Oh, oh, I do," Daniel agreed anxiously. "But this isn't exactly your idea of a good time."

Jack didn't feel any burning desire to tell Daniel he would have all the entertainment he needed from watching him happily poking around the auction lots and the dealer's displays, bright-eyed and bushy tailed. It didn't take much to make Daniel happy; in fact

all it really took was Jack. If Daniel was expecting Jack to be bored, he was mistaken. Having Jack's attention was a small thing, but important. He had it, and if Jack had anything to say about it, he also got to have THE single most hideous objet Jack could find at the fair to saddle him with. "Ethel mentioned free lemonade and a county wide cake competition," he winked at Daniel.

"Better and better."

Jack could see the line of cars and trucks ahead of them and decided to pull in and park where they were. He'd bet money they'd still beat the traffic. Daniel waited for him on the sidewalk while he locked the truck and set the alarm. Jack leered at him as he put his hat on and tilted the brim.

"Did I mention I like the shades too?" Daniel asked. "Keep that in mind."

They strolled along, not exactly dawdling but close, enjoying the sunshine. When Jack tried to remember the last time he'd been this happy he scared himself how far back he had to go, back to when he was promoted to colonel and got those ten precious months at the Air War College. Ten months where he got to go home to Sara and Charlie every night, and the biggest thing on Sara's mind was getting Charlie to eat carrots, because the worst thing he had to face was bad grades and paper cuts. Not that grades had ever been a problem.

Jack glanced over at his linguist, just cruising along, perfectly content, admiring the trees and Jack's ass as he went. He had an irresistible urge to mess with dear Dr Jackson's mind. "Two PhD's, huh?"

Daniel nodded vaguely. "Anthropology and linguistics."

"So how come you always insist you're a doctor of archaeology?" Jack prompted.

"I am," Daniel looked at him, focusing for the first time. "My PhD is in language and literature, which is a specialised branch of archaeology. That was my second PhD, from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago." He smiled at Jack. "That's where my parents met," he said softly. "At the Institute. They fought like cat and dog, competed for every scholarship, fellowship and award going and always got beat out by this one guy who wasn't distracted by...um..." he faltered awkwardly to a stop.

Jack took the mind-blowing hot sex as read and let Daniel skip the ewwwy bit. "If you wanted to follow in your parents footsteps, how come you wound up at UCLA?"

Daniel's face tightened. "I was sixteen when I started UCLA as a freshman. Social Services in New York didn't know what to do with me when I graduated school early and none of the universities in New York would take me, not with a caseworker to keep happy. Too much paperwork. The University of Chicago said yes, Chicago Social Services said no. In fact, LA was the only place that would take me with agreement from both the university and Social Services. The fact UCLA is top ten for anthro was a fluke. LA Social Services

assigned me a caseworker and a couple of foster placements to get me to my eighteenth birthday. I was luckier than most students. The Educational Enrichment Programme took care of my fees for the first two years and I made a lot of friends among the library staff and..." Daniel looked embarrassed. "When I left foster care I got a job...what they described as 'relief cover' which...um..."

"Oddly matched your lecture schedule exactly?" Jack enquired. "I'm sure they exploited you ruthlessly."

"Shut up."

"Tell me you didn't date any of them," Jack sighed.

Daniel seemed to find his hiking boots a source of great interest.

"Dear God. Social Services just threw an eighteen year old virgin at a bunch of sex-crazed librarians?" Jack nimbly sidestepped Daniel's viciously jabbing elbow. "They oil you up and hurl you at the help desk?" he asked interestedly. "Did you HAVE any duties? APART from wafting round the stacks being young, hot, sweet and nice?"

"Shut up."

"Birds, bees and Boolean, huh?" Jack snorted. "Kinks and keywords."

Daniel stared at him. "It's equally odd that you speak with such confidence of stacks and keywords. What happened to 'me Jack, me dumb'?"

"Me colonel," Jack smirked. "Me dumb, we dead."

"You went to the Air Force Academy, right?" Daniel asked, still staring at Jack, brow wrinkling thoughtfully.

"They had a library at the Academy," Jack said placidly. He wanted to milk the wrinkled brow moment. Poor Daniel. It was hell being a genius AND adorable. The Academy had a nice, big library he'd spent a lot of time in because his roomie had spent a lot of time in a fellow cadet.

"Tell me you didn't date any of them," Daniel parroted.

Jack strove in vain for modesty.

"You graduated with a BSc, right?" Daniel persisted.

"Yep."

"With a focus on...what? What was your major?" Daniel nudged him when he didn't answer straight away.

"I'm a pilot, Top Gun as a matter of fact." Jack let Daniel's lack of reaction go, he'd ooh and aah and be suitably proud as soon as he confirmed on Google that Jack didn't win some prize for nailing Kelly McGillis. "Special Ops colonel, amateur astronomer, viewer of C-Span, avid reader of National Geographic...you tell me," he challenged. That would keep Daniel out of mischief for a while.

One of the drivers in the gridlock returned Jack's cheery wave with a gesture of his own. Jack's smile widened. Life was looking good. He made full use of Daniel's distraction to get them into Parker Park, which was the stupidest name he could think of FOR a park, and through the throng of people milling around at the entrance, with the kind of expertise only a three-time Disneyworld veteran could manage.

"Want to register for the auction?" Jack prompted.

Daniel focused again. "Please. You weren't an engineering major, that much is obvious."

Jack decided if they snuck around the back of the cake competition tent, they'd get the drop on the day trippers. He had no doubt at all the pros would already have their spots for the auction picked out, along with all the lots they were bidding on. Fortunately, he and Daniel were here as browsers not bidders, so it didn't matter to them. "Obviously?" he scowled over his shoulder at Daniel as they cut rapidly across the ground where the two tents backed onto each other.

"Your putative expertise in magnetism aside," Daniel explained. He caught sight of Jack's face and sniffed. "Not that kind of magnetism, and I'm hardened to the big, pleading puppy eyes, so don't even bother," he said crisply.

"No you're not," Jack snorted. "You melt like ice cream under a blow torch." Daniel half-heartedly glared back at him but couldn't really deny what was in fact the absolute truth. Daniel just didn't want to admit he was ridiculously tender hearted and susceptible where Jack was concerned. Jack had to fight himself tooth and claw not to take advantage of Daniel's sensitivity, of just how much he loved him. Daniel was far too indulgent with him as it was. Jack was the one making all the demands, relentlessly pushing his way into Daniel's personal space, into his privacy, way too quickly. He knew part of it was that Daniel loved him deeply, and had for a long time, but part of it was insecurity, something that would only be cured by time and familiarity. Jack may have muscled his way in, but he wasn't going anywhere. Sooner or later, Daniel would get that, and tragically the days of being shamelessly indulged would cease and desist. Jack was trying for all the quality lap time he could now so he'd have something to annoy Daniel with on the day he stopped putting down the book and cuddling up next to him on the couch for what that noble bastion of English culture the BBC referred to so quaintly as snogging. Sooner or later he would get Daniel actually onto his lap. "Being nice is one of your most engaging qualities," he said softly, smiling as Daniel squirmed with embarrassment at the compliment, looking anywhere but at Jack. "It's rare enough in the world," he added dryly.

As they got in line, Jack leaned in. "Look winsome and affluent," he ordered. "And tell me more about magnetism," he prodded.

"Ow!" Daniel ostentatiously rubbed his side. "If you were an engineering major, George wouldn't let you get away with half the things you say to Sam," he picked up his argument where he left off. "I'm not saying your lummox act isn't Oscar-worthy..."

"Lummox?"

"Lummox," Daniel emphasised.

"I'm not clumsy."

"You're not stupid either," Daniel said smugly.

Jack made for an unexpected break in the line, beating out three large snarling women and a small friendly dog that sniffed his foot and licked him before settling down to chew his laces. Jack waved his MasterCard and drivers licence at the clerk, Daniel did the same, and Jack emerged triumphant from the line with Daniel, two crudely numbered ping pong paddles and the dog.

"We can't keep him," Daniel said sympathetically, making a paw of his hand and holding it out for the dog to sniff.

The dog licked Daniel too, and snuggled into the petting and stroking that followed, still licking.

"Remind you of anyone?" Jack grinned. "This is a cute dog." He stroked it soothingly as Daniel leaned in to check out the name tag on the collar.

"Elvis."

Jack lifted Elvis, who licked his chin enthusiastically, for a closer inspection. "He's got a floppy ear."

"I know," Daniel agreed softly. "And a wayward tail." He stroked Elvis. "He's lost. He needs reassurance," he explained as he kept on stroking.

"Absolutely," Jack agreed heartily. Nothing to do with the silky brown and white fur or the licking. He took in the softness in Daniel's eyes and the gentle fingers. "You never had a dog when you were a kid?"

"One of my foster placements - they had a dog." Daniel looked up self-consciously. "When the placement ended, I couldn't understand why I had to leave Fred behind too. I tried not to get attached after that."

"There are times when I could cheerfully strangle Nick," Jack said conversationally, handing Daniel the dog. "I see a PA system over there. Must be the organiser's tent. Let's take Elvis over and give him up before we Thelma and Louise him away from some weeping six year old."

Daniel hugged Elvis closer. "He's well taken care of," he admitted. "Happy." Elvis tried to climb over Daniel's shoulder and settled for draping his paws on Daniel's chest and mock-growling until he got fingers to nibble. "We can't keep him," Daniel warned Jack.

"No," Jack agreed meekly. He decided to replace the large, well trained working dog of his pre-Daniel retirement plans with a small friendly dog that was predisposed to lick and give attitude.

Jack went ahead to explain the situation to the woman making the announcements and she agreed to take Elvis off their hands. Daniel handed Elvis over reluctantly, lingering to pet him until Jack hard-heartedly peeled him away and pulled him into the crowd. Unfortunately the announcement requesting Elvis's owners to come pick him up was drowned out by heart rending whining. "Aw, jeez," Jack groaned as Daniel shot him a distinctly accusatory look.

"We should have stayed with him," Daniel fretted, looking back longingly as Jack ruthlessly dragged him away.

Jack was glad they were still within earshot when the whining segued into ecstatic barking. He went with the noble tradition of parenting everywhere and tried bribery. "Lemonade stand," he said firmly. "It's got actual lemons." Daniel didn't seem particularly receptive to lemons at this precise point in time. He was still watching Elvis, who didn't seem overly enthused with the announcer while Daniel was frowning at his touching reunion with whoever it was had been careless enough to lose him in the first place. Jack glimpsed the auction tent through a small break in the trees and marched off. It was time to get tactical. He went with a diversion. "Did I mention my Masters degree?" he called over his shoulder, smirking as Daniel caught up with him a moment later. Daniel was such a pushover.

"Masters degree?" Daniel asked inquisitively.

"It's a prerequisite," Jack said lightly. "The standard for promotion to major in the Air Force is a masters degree."

"Well, despite all the books you have hidden in your basement, and the fact you've corrected my grammar on more than one occasion, I doubt you're an English major," Daniel mused.

"Hidden?" Jack protested.

"You have a laundry-cum-library down there." Daniel looked across at Jack, eyes sparkling. "I know it's hard to work books into attack helicopter themed décor. Not that I

don't appreciate rotors," he teased. "I mean, I know you feel the exact same way about my 'little brushy things'..."

"Which I only borrowed that one damn time," Jack griped. "Didn't dare try that again after the fuss you made, just because I used it to..."

"I know what you used it to...I know exactly," Daniel snapped. "Stop trying to change the subject. Did you take a sabbatical to get your masters?"

"Nope, but I'll give you a clue," Jack said cheerfully. "I did it before I went to the Special Operations School. And YEARS before I went to the Air War College. That's graduate level education too." Something he snowed Carter into forgetting every damn time.

"If you were a pilot you would most likely have been stationed in this country," Daniel speculated, watching Jack's face for clues.

Jack just used the face he normally used when Carter Explained Stuff.

"If I was Sam I'd smack you one," Daniel said coldly.

Pity it didn't work on the linguist.

"You went to the University of Minnesota," Daniel suggested, carefully watching Jack's reaction. He nodded. "And if it was before you went to..."

"SOS," Jack chuckled. "Trust me."

Daniel winced sympathetically. "So you've graduated from High School, the Air Force Academy, Flight School, where you were Top Gun," he added conscientiously, "Special Operations School, the University of Minnesota AND the Air War College." Daniel shook his head in mild disbelief. "You don't do a damn thing you don't want to, do you?" he asked half- admiringly, half-disapprovingly.

Jack beamed at him.

"Political science?" Daniel suggested, eyes soft. "You're a cynic, Jack, and a cynic is just a frustrated idealist. Before you can change your world, you have to understand it. As for your masters, if you went into Special Forces after that, I'd suggest international relations. The politics of policing the global market." Daniel's smile widened with satisfaction. "There had to be some reason for George to keep right on indulging you, even if it wasn't immediately apparent," he grinned wickedly and darted off into the auction tent. "I'll check it all out and get back to you."

"What do you mean? 'Not immediately apparent'?" Jack fumed, hurrying to catch up with him. The first thing they found in the stifling hot tent was a large board with Polaroids and a description of the contents of all the boxes.

After reading the notice pinned above the snaps, Daniel turned to him incredulously. "People SWAP the contents of the lots? That's...that's..."

"Enterprising?" Jack asked sourly.

"That's one word for it," a soft, low voice rumbled behind them.

They turned to find a middle-aged couple waiting patiently behind them to get a look at the board, both in shorts, both in hats, both in love and holding hands. Jack and Daniel stepped aside to make room for them.

"It's no fun when you bid a couple of thousand dollars for an antique appliqué quilt and when you get your lot the contents are a legless Barbie, a check tablecloth and a licence plate from Dubuque," the speaker's wife agreed.

Jack was looking at a quiet, thoughtful man with veteran written all over him.

"I'm Tom," he said. "And this is Jen," he nudged his wife.

"I'm Daniel, and this is Jack," Daniel smiled at them as they shook hands.

Tom seemed to weigh them up and decide they were good people. "You serve?" he asked Jack.

"I'm a colonel in the Air Force. Sir?" he prompted Tom.

"I'm Navy," Tom said modestly.

"Tom was MCPON when he retired," Jen told them proudly, squeezing her husband's hand.

"Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy," Jack explained to Daniel.

"And you, son?" Tom asked.

"I'm an archaeologist," Daniel offered.

"Expert in languages," Jack told them with justifiable pride. "Twenty three languages," he couldn't resist adding, basking in the oohs and aahs and the perennial 'isn't he young!' Daniel could hate him later, for the make up sex.

"You boys work up at Peterson?" Jen asked them brightly.

"Doesn't everyone?" Tom snorted. "You bidding today? Take a word of advice, and don't be too obvious picking out your lots. We might be in a tent in a field in park with a stupid name, but there are some pieces of work who get to these auctions, shop owners, serious

collectors and the like. The kind who want a dollar change from fifty cents. Don't get me wrong, they're not all like that, but there are a few."

"Thanks for the warning," Daniel said gratefully. "We weren't really planning to bid but..."

Jen laughed outright, shaking her head tragically at their naïveté. "Honey, that's what ALL the rookies say first time out! Then they stagger back to their cars laden down with who knows what costing they wish they didn't know what," she teased.

"You get in that zone and bid your ass off for crap," Tom sighed. "It's embarrassing. Auction fever happens to the best of us. You never know when it's gonna strike or how long it will last. If it does hit, just take the paddle away." He scowled at his wife. "Jen smacked me in the head with it one time," he announced provocatively.

"I barely touched you!" Jen complained, scowling up at him. "I should have hit you harder. Two thousand bucks!"

It was obviously an old grudge match. Jack and Daniel looked suitably aghast.

"Nice meeting you boys. Have fun," Tom grinned, steering his wife away, the two of them still amicably bickering.

"Who can resist honeymooners?" Jack grinned.

"Are you telling me they don't completely intimidate you?" Daniel asked, disbelieving. "Who can live up to that kind of expectation? Aren't you completely in awe of two people who can live together for forty of fifty years and still be in love? I am."

"It takes work." A particularly reverberant comment had them both chuckling at the combatants, who were really getting into it over a box of glassware. They could see Tom sneering from here. "And VAST tolerance. Which we have," Jack added hastily.

"We do?" Daniel asked innocently, angling gently over to inspect the first row of boxes.

"Okay, okay, you do," Jack amended, looking unenthusiastically at his rival bidders. "It's hot as hell in here. You want that lemonade now?"

Daniel chuckled. "Which translates as you want your cake now."

"It's a county-wide competition!" Jack felt the importance of that should be self-evident to any snack lover. "For our sake, I hope it's cut-throat. That means GOOD eating."

"What are the odds of you not whining if I say no?" Daniel asked, wincing over a box full of distressed china.

"Slim to none."

"Don't eat my cake," Daniel warned him sternly.

"Would I?"

"You did on Friday."

"My word of honour as an officer and a gentleman!" Jack made with the big, wounded eyes.

Daniel nodded solemnly. "That's exactly what you said to me on Friday before you ate my cake and again when I complained about you eating my cake. You should have stuck with the swooping eagle story. It was more convincing."

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Daniel wrote off aisle two of the tent. He'd seen nothing in the boxes of china to tempt his interest, then crossed paths with Tom and Jen in glassware and they'd all despaired. Jen had dragged Tom over to look at dresses and frilly lingerie while Daniel withdrew to a discreet distance - out of earshot of Tom's pained protests - to browse his way through the quilts and textiles. Jack had been gone for around half an hour. It was possible he'd been attacked by a swooping eagle with a cake fetish, but knowing Jack, he'd probably convinced the anxious competitors he was the judge from Manitou Springs or something just so he could get more cake. He knew no shame in the pursuit of quality snacks.

Daniel had found a quilt he thought Sam would like, a lovely one with a repeated appliqué pattern of tulips. The soft pastels were appealing, colours Sam often wore. The auction catalogue described them as ice cream shades. It also described the price.

"Hey," Jack breathed in his ear, making him jump.

Sneaky silent sonovabitch! He had to be doing that on purpose. Had to be.

"That's...floral," Jack said carefully, eyeing the quilt dubiously.

"It'll be perfect with your new blue colour scheme," Daniel informed him gravely.

Jack rocked back on his heels, took a deep breath and a long, hard look at the quilt and shuddered convulsively. Then he looked pleadingly at Daniel. "No." Jack looked again. "I love you but...no."

Daniel held up the catalogue for inspection.

"Shit no!" Jack sputtered. "HOW much?"

"It would make a lovely present for Sam," Daniel coaxed.

"I don't like Carter that much," Jack riposted.

"If Teal'c will contribute, that's only two hundred dollars each," Daniel rebuked him. "Don't tell me Sam isn't worth two hundred bucks."

"Each?"

Daniel trod heavily on Jack's foot. "Cake," he ordered, holding out his hand.

Jack brightened. "After extensive sampling, I narrowed it down to this one." He held out a cup of lemonade and a napkin filled with a hunk of something dark, rich and moist. "Date and orange. Spectacular. I waved my ass and got the recipe from Mrs Date and Orange," he said proudly. "I got Intel too. We can get all the stuff in 'Not Carol's', because Doris does, and she says the secret is to leave the tea loaf in the tin for twenty-four hours before you eat it. It'll take discipline, but we can probably hold out if we're not in town. Oh, I checked about the tea part. It's the type of cake this is. We don't have to start swigging Orange Pekoe or anything," he assured Daniel.

Daniel inspected his wedge - it should have been a slice but he guessed the absent Doris shared his own opinion of Jack's ass - of cake, which came with its own set of teeth marks. "You had to sample this piece too?" he asked politely.

"It might not have been nice as the others," Jack said defensively. "I was only thinking of you."

Daniel was still trying to formulate an adequate response when Jack took advantage of his stupefaction to take a massive, deliberate bite out of the other, larger wedge of cake, which Daniel noticed too late was absolutely pristine. "Your butt does look big in those," he said unkindly.

Jack jovially flipped him the bird and kept right on munching as he sauntered down the line of boxes, sneering at the textiles.

Daniel trailed along in his wake, nibbling his cake, which did taste as good as Jack said it did. Most of the people in the tent were filtering away to the auction now, Tom and Jen included, waving from the entrance. Daniel waved back, forgetting about the lemonade he was clutching. It hit some guy in the back of the neck. "Oh! I'm sorry. I didn't realise I was..." Daniel trailed off as the lemonade guy turned slowly and menacingly. "That would be a really bad idea," he said calmly.

As lemonade guy looked him up and down interestedly, his scowl segued into a warm, engaging smile. "Asking you out would be a really bad idea?" He winked at Daniel. "Don't say no 'til you've tried me," he added teasingly.

"I think you might have to try him first," Daniel sighed, glaring down his indignant colonel, who was closing in rapidly for what looked suspiciously like the kill. "Jack!" This had no perceptible effect whatsoever on Jack's speed or motivation.

Lemonade guy glanced around and stupidly stood his ground. Daniel felt absolved of all blame if the guy didn't have the sense not to play in traffic, stepped neatly round him and left Jack to play. He browsed through the textiles, letting the frank exchange of views wash over him, glancing back now and again to make sure Jack was playing nice. Jack was enjoying himself. Lemonade guy wasn't. He also wasn't getting away any time soon. Jack had a lot to say about good manners and 'excessive politeness'. Daniel used to have a lot to say about Jack being unable to let him fight his own battles. Now he just shrugged it off. Jack was the way he was and Daniel getting hit on right in front of him was kind of new, so Daniel was cutting him some slack. This time.

A flash of rich blue towards the end of the row of boxes caught Daniel's eye. He headed over to investigate, knocked first off his stride by lemonade guy accelerating past him, then almost on his ass by six-two of enthusiastically 'concerned' colonel. "Checking for injuries my ass!" Daniel hissed, shrugging Jack off. "He barely touched me. Unlike you." He kicked Jack on the ankle. "Back off."

"You're no fun at all," Jack complained, backing off a few inches. He leaned against Daniel to check out the contents of the box. "We're bidding, huh?" he asked softly.

"Oh, yes," Daniel murmured. "It's Amish."

"How much?" Jack asked, twitching the catalogue from Daniel's grip.

Daniel crossed his arms over his chest and waited, curious to see Jack's reaction.

"I guess we go for pale blue for the walls then, set it off," Jack said lightly.

Daniel smiled involuntarily. "You are such a pushover, O'Neill," he said gently.

"You're getting off just looking at this thing. You bet your bippy we're buying it," Jack grinned. "Let's show some hustle," he ordered briskly. "First we buy, then we try," he leered.

Despite what Tom and Jen had told them about telegraphing their interest in a lot, Daniel couldn't help looking back longingly as they walked out of the tent. The quilt was stunning; a classic nine block pattern in the most intense blues and blue greens imaginable. With all the natural wood and the plants in Jack's bedroom, a pale blue-grey on the walls would frame it perfectly.

They meandered through the stalls, following the small stream of people headed for the gazebo in the centre of the park.

"Looks like the auction already started," Jack nodded casually at the neat rows of chairs set out in front of the gazebo, already full. "We're on the grassy knoll."

They wound their way through the couples and families sprawled comfortably on the grassy bank and sat down. As soon as Daniel was settled, Jack snagged the lemonade and took a long, reviving drink.

"I finished mine," he offered by way of explanation.

Daniel was looking intently at a couple around the curve of the bank, near the rose beds. "I'm sure they live in my building. Leigh and...I can't remember."

"You sure you don't want this?" Jack asked innocently, when Daniel made no move to take the lemonade back.

"I wish I could remember," Daniel said, frustrated, still staring a small brown and white head resting on the knee of the guy he couldn't remember. He'd thought the couple who picked Elvis up from the announcer were familiar, but hadn't been able to place them.

"Why?" Jack asked reasonably. "You don't have neighbours. You have people who live in your building, the same way I have people along my drive and Carter on her block."

"I have neighbours now," Daniel announced definitively. "Elvis is in my building." He thought furiously for a moment. "Okay, this is what we do. We bid on whatever it is Leigh and someone wants, buy it, and..."

"Offer to trade it for the dog?" Jack asked dryly. "You didn't learn your lesson with the fish? You had to flush every time you fed them."

"No," Daniel said impatiently. "We sell them what they want at a reasonable price..."

"Not TOO reasonable."

"And ask if I..."

"We," Jack corrected instantly.

"We can dog sit," Daniel beamed at him.

"Rent a dog?" Jack asked incredulously.

"Don't tell me you wouldn't do it," Daniel hooted. "In fact you did!" he accused. "You made a deal with Iris for access to Alfred the dog. 'What you can't do with a woman's guttering!'" he quoted triumphantly.

"We'd have to keep them apart. Alfred would eat Elvis," Jack said positively. "What do we do if they say no? Stalk the dog?"

"You have all that training," Daniel placidly pointed out. "Why not do something useful with it for a change?" he coaxed.

A man leaned in and tapped Jack on the shoulder. "Excuse me," he asked politely. "I couldn't help overhearing part of your conversation. I'm pretty sure we've got a blockage somewhere because the guttering overflows every time it rains. Do you do free estimates?"

Jack glared at him, ignoring Daniel's wide-eyed fascination. "I'm in the Air Force."

"I guess not everyone makes it as a pilot," the man said sympathetically. "But I bet you could make a lot more than Uncle Sam pays if you freelanced. People round here would KILL for a decent plumber."

Despite himself, Daniel's eyes went straight to Leigh and her someone. "Reeally?" he drawled, fondly watching Elvis snooze.

"You can't afford me," Jack sniffed.

"He means how much more?" Daniel informed the man kindly.

The man told them.

"How much more?" Jack asked weakly.

The man told them again.

"I'm signing up for night school," Jack said flatly. "Sheesh." He turned around. "He's good with a shovel," he jerked his thumb at Daniel. "How much could he make?"

"Enough to buy his own dog," the man grinned.

Daniel grinned back. "He is a pilot," he said regretfully, nodding at Jack.

"I also plumb," Jack announced emphatically.

"I'll talk to you..." The man abruptly stiffened. "Dammit! That was MY lot!" He bounded to his feet. "Hey!" he hollered at the auctioneer. "You wanna raise the volume a tad? We can hear ourselves think back here!"

A ripple of laughter ran along the grassy knoll.

"You tell him, Captain!" someone called out, chuckling.

The man bowed ironically as the auctioneer stalked over to the PA system and cranked up the volume to an ear splitting whine that made everyone jump and, Daniel couldn't help but notice, since he happened to be glancing in that direction, woke Elvis right up.

Soooo...how could he attract Elvis's attention without Leigh and someone realising...he didn't want to be obvious.

"Captain?" Jack echoed. "You serve?" he asked as the man sat back down to a round of applause. "Stop waving at the dog, Daniel."

"I protect and serve," the man said gently.

Daniel stopped waving at the dog. "Oh," he said inadequately. "Um..."

"Just keep on doing what you're doing. I need the arrest," the captain said meanly.

"You're good," Jack said admiringly, highly entertained by Daniel's sputtering. "It took me years to work out to shut him up that quick."

"Why don't you wave your paddle?" the captain suggested to Daniel as Elvis yawned, stretched and decided to take a stroll, nimbly evading Leigh's clutching hand. "Make it a felony," he coaxed.

"That's entrapment," Daniel said indignantly, realising almost immediately there was no graceful way to get out of this. Elvis was sauntering through the crowd, sniffing here and there. The three of them watched as he sat at a woman's feet and begged appealingly for her hot dog.

"Reminds me of you," Daniel said involuntarily to Jack, forgetting his audience.

"He shoots and he scores!" Jack hooted as Elvis wolfed down the hot dog he was tossed and swaggered off before the woman could pet him.

"Why do I keep hearing the theme to 'Jaws'?" the captain asked sweetly, grinning as Daniel vainly tried to look inconspicuous while Elvis got closer and closer.

Elvis stiffened suddenly, sniffing the air. Then he barked and tore across the grassy knoll to tumble into Daniel's lap, licking ecstatically. Daniel hugged him close, trying and probably failing to look like this was sheer coincidence and nothing whatsoever to do with felonious canine stalking. He waved somewhat limply at Leigh and damn, why couldn't he remember the guy's name! They cheerfully waved back as he fussed over Elvis, who was shamelessly snuggling in to be stroked, his tail wagging furiously as he sniffed then licked Daniel's ear.

"You have the right to remain silent," the captain informed Daniel solemnly as Elvis settled down to some serious finger nibbling, both of them luxuriating in the petting.

"Oh, PLEASE," Jack begged.

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"Shut up!" Jack snarled as he slammed the truck door and stalked towards the path leading up to the entrance of the Dining Room.

"They have GREAT historical significance, Jack," Daniel assured him earnestly, hurrying to catch up to his seething colonel.

"These people haven't heard of pruning?" Jack demanded, impatiently shoving a juniper branch out of his way.

"Rustic charm," Daniel riposted.

"Skunk brush?" Jack eyed the undergrowth incredulously. "Charm?"

"Skillet fried chicken, coleslaw, riced potatoes with gravy, vegetables, biscuits and apple butter," Daniel recited dreamily.

"Okay, that's charm," Jack admitted reluctantly, pulling the door of the small red mud building open for Daniel.

Daniel looked around appreciatively at the crisp white linen and the whitewashed walls and pine furniture. "Nice." He smiled sweetly at Jack's stony face. "I don't know why you're so pissy," he said gently. "We got Sam's quilt, we got ours..."

"We? What's this we?" Jack hissed indignantly. "I don't recall seeing your paddle in the action. For five thousand bucks I got ours!"

Daniel dropped his head and batted his eyes winsomely.

Jack eyed him with dislike.

"We got access to Elvis, we surprisingly didn't get arrested for anything..."

"Not even for aggravating assault with a ping pong paddle," Jack said bitterly.

"Aggravated," Daniel corrected.

"I know what I mean," Jack sniffed.

"I barely touched you, and according to all the witnesses, you had it coming," Daniel sneered.

"The same witnesses who didn't see a damn thing?"

"You're only mad because someone yelled 'hit him again'," Daniel blithely pointed out. "And of course we got..."

"Table for one," Jack called loudly to Ethel, bustling out to greet them, flushed and rosy from the heat of the kitchen.

"Your doilies!" Daniel projected his lecture-honed voice effortlessly above Jack's. Ethel stopped in her tracks and slowly looked Jack up and down, a definite twinkle in her eyes.

"They're of great historical significance," Jack told Ethel defensively, shooting a killing look at Daniel.

"Absolutely," Ethel agreed gravely. She smiled at them. "Welcome to our house."

Daniel neatly sidestepped Jack. "Table for two," he asked politely, shaking hands with their hostess.

"I've kept you the corner table," Ethel turned and made her way through the tables, smiling and joking with the diners, a good mix of couples and families. "Between the windows. Best seat in the house," she said jovially. "How's Iris keeping? And that stupid mutt of hers." She grinned at Daniel. "Iris says this one..." she tapped Jack in the chest. "Is the biggest pushover on the planet."

"Doilies," Daniel said simply.

"Sucker," Ethel shook her head sadly.

"Iris is keeping just fine," Jack offered stiffly. A few people were smoking so he opened the tall, black framed window to let the garden air freshen the table.

Ethel let them get settled. "Would you care to see the menu?" she teased.

"Chicken," Jack and Daniel chorused.

"Now, now," Ethel chided them, "We do serve the occasional baked ham, you know!"

"And all the trimmings," Jack ordered emphatically.

"Two," Daniel said firmly.

"I'll be back with the coffeepot before you know it," Ethel grinned as she turned to head back into the kitchen.

Daniel beamed at Jack. "You know that Special Operations School you were telling me about? Where you were trained to pick locks and drive offensively..."

Jack nodded cautiously.

"You've mentioned before you've been trained to withstand mind control techniques," Daniel announced sententiously. "Tell me...did you take the FULL course?"

Jack slouched sullenly in his seat and took a deep, pointed interest in the garden.

"Because I've never seen anyone wield a paddle QUITE as energetically as you," Daniel went on. "You were like Forrest Gump on speed. Four hundred dollars for a box full of Victorian DOILIES? Did you even hear what I said to you?" Jack refused to look at him. Daniel couldn't resist chuckling over his discomfiture. "I should have realised the way you went for the quilt. That poor woman from Glendale didn't know what hit her."

"That's your fault," Jack denied vigorously, scowling at Daniel. "If you hadn't let Elvis chew your paddle - for which we can add the twenty bucks forfeiture fee to the day's accounts - YOU would have been bidding."

"It didn't occur to me I'd do a better job, what with all your training in withstanding extreme torture and mind control techniques," Daniel admitted regretfully. "I guess you skipped the 'have paddle MUST BID MORE!' part of the training course."

"If you tell anyone..." Jack threatened darkly.

Daniel made with the big limpid eyes.

"Not Ferretti," Jack groaned piteously, sagging in his seat.

"Would I?" Daniel asked, wounded.

"Bastard!" Jack mouthed, conscious of their family audience. "You can sleep on the couch!" he hissed.

"No, I can't. You won't last ten minutes without...um...thanks Ethel," Daniel changed subject fluently, smiling brightly up at Ethel. She winked at him as she placed two large green mugs down and filled them to the brim with steaming, fragrant coffee.

"Thank you," Jack relaxed slightly.

"Food in five," Ethel told them chattily, turning at a hail from a table near the fireplace, something alarming about the apple cobbler.

"Without 'relations'," Daniel picked up where he left off the moment Ethel was safely out of earshot.

"Are you saying I'm some kind of sex crazed..." Jack demanded in a breathy whisper, which Daniel rather liked.

"Yes," Daniel cut in ruthlessly. He felt a twinge of conscience. "Me too," he confessed. "Admit it. We wouldn't last an hour."

Jack flatly refused to admit anything of the kind.

"You could drop me off at my place tonight," Daniel suggested casually, "and I'll see you at work tomorrow. If going without sex isn't a problem. I could use an early night."

"You'll get one at my place," Jack snarled, watching Daniel smoulderingly.

Daniel was embarrassed to realise he rather liked that too.

As he sipped his coffee, Daniel took full advantage of the floor length table linen to hook his foot around Jack's. Jack's scorching glare didn't falter, but he curled his own foot around Daniel's, leaving them pleasantly tangled and...um...interested. Despite himself, Daniel's mood softened. He regretted the fact Jack was almost irresistible when he was sullen and pouting, and unfortunately, Jack knew it too. He was visibly relaxing, rubbing his calf hypnotically against Daniel's, scowling theatrically. Any second now and the smug prick would be SMILING. A few seconds after that, Daniel would cave and confess he hadn't told a soul about the doilies. He sighed. It was much easier to fight with Jack when his hormones didn't have the majority vote. "Smug bastard," Daniel muttered half-heartedly, mesmerised by Jack's bedroom eyes and blinding smile. Maybe in ordinary relationships, people called their S.O. 'baby' or something, but 'smug bastard' just fit Jack so well.

Ethel expertly steered her way through the busy dining room, laden down by two huge, heaped platters of fried chicken and trimmings. She slid the plates smoothly in front of each of them and whisked away to take a dessert order, leaving both men sitting in respectful silence for a moment over their feast.

"God, I love this place," Jack gloated, flashing his characteristic shit-eating grin.

"Maybe you should take Ethel home?" Daniel said sourly, slightly annoyed with himself for being so susceptible. All Jack had to do was smile at him just this way, eyes soft...his spine dissolved and all he wanted to do was crawl into bed with the man, make love and never surface.

The food was good, great in fact, but Daniel ate mechanically, totally fixated on every movement, every smile, every look from Jack. He could barely remember the last time he'd felt this rush of sheer, heart-pumping-glad-to-be-alive FEELING, felt it so strongly now he could think of that last time and of Sha'uri without pain.

"...Cassie."

Daniel realised Jack was waiting expectantly for a response to whatever the question was, but he didn't have a clue what he was supposed to say. He settled for an encouraging 'mm hm' and batted his eyes for good measure. Jack's smile widened. Daniel's jeans tightened, along with his gut. Jesus. He wasn't used to this either, not just the intense physicality of sex with Jack, but the way he wanted him and thought about being with him all the time. It would get easier, right? They couldn't just go on and on wanting one another this way.

Could they?

"Girls like lacy things," Jack confided happily.

Daniel clued in. He shuddered. Jack was planning to inflict the Victorian doilies on poor unsuspecting Cassie, whose room was sleek blonde wood and lilac walls. "I think they should go to the Colorado Springs Archaeological Society. You know...I've mentioned them before."

"Right," Jack agreed easily.

Daniel knew Jack didn't have the faintest idea what he was talking about, because Jack was wearing his blandly blank 'poker' face. "They renovate houses of different eras and architectural styles, furnish them and open them to the public," he explained patiently. "Urban archaeology," he felt compelled to point out.

Jack straightened up, visibly alarmed. "Are you a member?" he demanded.

Daniel chewed his succulent chicken slowly, savouring, letting Jack sweat. Then he nodded brightly. "You'll enjoy the meetings," he said happily as Jack slammed his knife and fork onto his plate and buried his head in his hands, groaning. "I drop in whenever I can." It was another of Daniel's deliberate connections with the people he lived amongst. "Or voice conference if I don't have the time to go out." Daniel wondered if he should build Jack up gradually to the anthro lectures he customarily attended at the U, or just lay it on him.

"Voice conferencing," Jack ordered briskly, "Now you have a full programme of canine commitments."

"Occasional, mutually agreed dog-sitting," Daniel contradicted defensively.

"The occasion being?"

"Whenever I can get away with it."

"He's not sleeping with us," Jack grinned. "God knows what he'd lick."

Daniel instantly fixated on Jack's mouth. "You want dessert?" he blurted.

Jack looked up from his depleted plate, slightly surprised by Daniel's vehemence. "Sure."

Daniel cleared his throat meaningfully.

Jack's smile widened to wolfish as he turned to flag Ethel down. "Could we get the bill here?" he called.

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"Nice spot," Jack admired, breathing deeply as he gazed down the length of the valley that made up the Parker homestead.

Daniel prowled after him, shucking his backpack, edgy after their long climb up from the valley floor in search of privacy and pine scented air for Jack. He dropped to his knees, delved into the pack and shook out the blanket. He snorted as Jack cringed back from the virulent plaid, specifically selected to annoy the crap out of Jack every time they had nookie on it.

"Jeez! Does that thing glow in the dark?" Jack sneered, strolling over to check back down the steep, wooded hill they'd climbed.

Daniel only smiled as Jack wandered around, trying to disguise the fact he was in fact surveilling the perimeter. It wasn't the norm for hot dates. He rose smoothly to his feet to meet Jack.

"We'll do," Jack said softly, his eyes lighting.

Daniel let him get within kissing distance before mischievously scooting away, Jack darting after him. Daniel stepped aside, turned and put his hands on Jack's shoulders. He licked his lower lip slowly, waiting for Jack to pounce. He waited until they were touching tongues to insert his foot between Jack's ankles and trip him. They tumbled onto the blanket, Jack going down boneless beneath him, laughing openly.

"NOW he gets it!" Jack teased, arms tightening around Daniel's shoulders as he stretched out those long legs and wrapped them around Daniel's. "You going to kiss me, Jackson?" he prompted, peeling Daniel's glasses and off to toss them to safety. "I've got a wayward tail too," he prompted, wriggling pleurably.

Daniel flickered his tongue over Jack's lips, grinning as Jack eagerly opened to him, hands skimming down his back to cup his ass and hold him tight. They never got enough of sharing that blood rush, feeling what they did to one another as they each hardened and the kiss deepened. Daniel cupped Jack's face in turn, stroking inquisitively over the still unexpected texture of stubble rasping over his fingertips as his lips moved over Jack's. He loved this, taking their time, holding one another close to kiss and kiss.

The sun was beating down, the lazy hush and the lush heat seeping to his bones, relaxing him as he tenderly stroked his tongue against Jack's, exulting in his husky moans of pleasure and the way their bodies moved together, a slow, subtle grind that quickened their breath and made hearts pound.

Jack pushed at the bandana, moving at once to cup Daniel's nape, fingers gliding up to gloat in his hair.

"Sap," Daniel breathed against his mouth.

"And you're just planning to check me out for a trim?" Jack asked politely as Daniel frisbeed the precious fishing hat across the tiny clearing.

"Shut up, O'Neill," Daniel murmured, smiling. "Kissing now."

Jack thrust up pointedly. "JUST kissing?" he challenged, nibbling at Daniel's ear. "Elvis has good taste."

"Mmm," Daniel sighed, arching his throat as Jack kissed and licked the sensitive skin. He resisted as Jack tried to roll him beneath, pushing Jack's shoulder flat. "You weigh a ton," he said unkindly.

"You're no featherweight yourself," Jack answered equably. He cupped Daniel's ass. "Not so much pert as plump," he said judiciously.

"When you can apply the word 'ample' to me, get back to me," Daniel suggested pleasantly, briskly thwarting another playful attempt to tumble him onto his back.

"Ample?" Jack sputtered, outraged. "AMPLE?"

Daniel propped his chin on his hands and grinned down at Jack, writhing sinuously against Jack's hips.

"Ample," Jack said smugly, reaching up to pull Daniel down into another long tender kiss, the two of them softly breathing into one another's mouths. "Want to make love?" he whispered, nuzzling his brow against Daniel's.

"I did," Daniel admitted, "but this..." He rolled onto his side, Jack rolling with him. Daniel hooked his leg around Jack's thighs, then hugged him in close.

Jack wrapped an arm around Daniel's waist, the other stroking hypnotically over his nape and into his hair. He kissed Daniel's brow gently. "Yeah," he sighed. "It is."

Daniel lay quietly, lulled by the steady rise and fall of Jack's chest and the beating of his heart. "Are you glad the general refused to consider sending a team to retrieve the Ancients technology from the Dwelling Place?" he asked at last.

"Relieved," Jack admitted. "It let me off the hook. Your report helped, as did Carter's."

Daniel tilted his head back to look up appraisingly at Jack. "You sound surprised Sam backed us up," he commented.

"Not surprised," Jack frowned. "Carter is just usually more...careful in her reports. I didn't expect her recommendation not to pursue the technology to be so emphatic."

"Sam respected the Barre and wanted to help them as much as we did, Jack," Daniel chided him gently. "And I wouldn't characterise Sam's reports as 'careful' so much as technically accurate. She likes evidence to back up her theories and suppositions."

"Why are we lying here horny as hell droning on and on about Carter?" Jack bitched, "When we could be talking about something WAY more exciting."

Daniel looked suitably penitent. "You're right," he apologised humbly. "I'm glad you feel that way. I thought you'd hate the lectures at the U. I'm looking forward to Thursday. It'll be nice to have company for a change. 'In praise of the beloved language'," he told his appalled lover chattily. "It's a comparative view of positive ethnolinguistic consciousness. The guest speaker posits that..."

"Fuck that!" Jack snarled.

"I'm signing you up for the one on 'Verbal Hygiene' too," Daniel said repressively.

"Do you do this to me on purpose?" Jack snapped.

"I could go on my own," Daniel told him placidly.

Jack snatched him close for a bruising kiss that lasted longer than he intended as Daniel co-operated wholeheartedly, enthusiastically groping Jack's ass and leering madly until Jack caved and laughed.

"I love you, you shit," Jack complained bitterly. "You know there's no goddamn way I'll sit through some endless lecture on the beloved anything. What the hell am I supposed to do with myself?" he demanded.

"What did you do before?" Daniel asked reasonably, stroking Jack's ass fondly.

"No wonder Elvis likes you," Jack purred, writhing beneath Daniel's hand. "I'm not going back to playing myself at chess when we should be in bed making mad passionate love," he picked up the thread of his original complaint.

"Do you honestly expect me to sleep with you AND spend every waking moment with you?" Daniel asked exasperatedly as Jack sullenly avoided his eyes.

"Don't be stupid, Daniel," Jack mumbled unconvincingly.

"I won't do that, even if you are sweet for a sarcastic stalker." Daniel tried and failed miserably to suppress a treacherous hormonal response to the sullen mouth and smouldering eyes. Unfortunately, Jack didn't miss the hitch in his breath and pounced, tumbling him onto his back.

"Want to sleep with me now?" Jack drawled lasciviously.

"No, I want to talk to you," Daniel feebly attempted to deny the mounting evidence being used so compellingly against him.

"You do talk," Jack whispered as he nibbled along Daniel's jaw. "'Oh, Jack, Jack!'" he moaned throatily.

"Wasn't it 'Bastard, bastard, bastard, bastard?'" Daniel riposted.

Jack tutted disapprovingly. "What were you saying about verbal hygiene?"

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Jack sensed Daniel's presence before the arms slid around his waist and one bare foot reached around to rest over his. He curled his toes up and was rewarded with a soft snuff of laughter against his neck as Daniel rested his chin on Jack's shoulder, appreciatively sniffing the enticing aroma of sizzling steak and onions filling the kitchen.

"Still horny and frustrated?" Daniel asked teasingly.

"Prick," Jack accused mildly, unable to suppress a reminiscent smile. Rolling around kissing the shit out of a playfully resistant armful of Daniel Jackson had its own charm.

"Good," Daniel said heartlessly.

Jack waited until Daniel ambled out of the kitchen before allowing himself to turn and check out this evening's ensemble. Adorably baggy? Check. Riding low on the hips? Check. Pooled over the feet? Check. Slinky tee? Check check. WAY too short. Plus an added bonus; the soft grey brought out the intense blue of Daniel's eyes. A week ago, he would never have imagined that flannel could be so goddamned sexy, but on Daniel, it was. Jack admired the way the narrow pale pinstripe in the darker grey bottoms made Daniel's legs look even longer, the way the soft fabric clung to the sweet curve of his ass and when he turned, subtly outlined his dick.

All mine, Jack gloated, turning back to the steaks as Daniel dropped onto the couch and stretched out, already engrossed in the latest edition of Jack's 'National Geographic'. There was a big feature article on 'Bear Necessities' Jack wanted to read too.

"I like your jeans," Daniel shouted out. "But I have to say, they hammer home the point I never expected to get laid by anyone with hairy knees."

Jack glanced down complacently at his oldest and most comfortable jeans, which he'd had since he got out of plaster after his definitive 'Rough Guide to Iraq', and were now not so much torn across the right knee as shredded. His knees got Daniel hot enough to emerge from NG? Cool. "If you come back in the kitchen, you can get laid right now," Jack offered generously.

"Can't stand the heat," Daniel refused primly.

"I'm only thinking of you," Jack said nobly.

"I know," Daniel snorted. "That's why I'm staying put. Unless you need help?"

"My coffee doesn't suck so get that look off your face," Jack hollered without looking round. "I think I can manage to pour a coupla mugs of coffee, slap some mustard on the steaks and share the cheesecake solo." They'd decided to pig out in front of the TV with huge steak sandwiches and dessert. Jack loaded the plates and slid them onto the tray along with the mugs of coffee and two forks for the cheesecake. Daniel obligingly swung his feet off the couch when Jack put the tray on the table, but slid them into Jack's lap slightly self-consciously, shivering as Jack idly flexed a foot and kissed it. "You'll get yours, Jackson," he warned.

"That's what I'm insisting on, O'Neill, yes," Daniel smiled sweetly as he bit into his sandwich, oozing melted cheese, onions, mushrooms and tangy relish. "This is great," he enthused. "The movie is in the DVD player," he said casually before biting into the sandwich again.

Jack set his plate down for a moment to reach for the case. He looked dubiously at a couple in what looked suspiciously like sparkly costumes. He was even more dubious when he read the intro, and taken in conjunction with the title, it looked like Jack was in for a LONG evening. "'Strictly Ballroom'?" he asked incredulously.

"It was a big hit at Cannes," Daniel said cheerfully. "World cinema," he mumbled cryptically, taking refuge in his sandwich again.

"You're overly optimistic about the brevity of my attention span," Jack told him tartly as he chewed and fully savoured the mouthful. "This is ethnic?"

"Australian." Daniel winked and began to stroke his toes rhythmically over Jack's groin.

"Okay," Jack admitted reluctantly. "You've got me on that one." He winked back. "Feel free to use sex to make your point any time we fight," he offered generously.

"I love how you're always selflessly thinking of me," Daniel gushed, dropping his head to look winsomely up through his lashes.

Unfortunately for Jack, the usual happened and he...er...took a sudden interest in proceedings. Very sudden.

Daniel's feet stilled in Jack's lap; he snapped upright and glared at him. "Blue!" he snarled.

"To go with the quilt." Yeah. Like Daniel was gonna buy THAT for a heartbeat.

"To go with my eyes!" Daniel contradicted. "What were you going to do? March me into the store and say match that?" He flung up a hand to emphasise his point.

Unfortunately, it emphasised Jack's too. "I find it hard to believe no one has ever told you that you have lovely eyes," Jack said provocatively.

"Lovely?" Daniel echoed him, the scowl deepening. "I suppose you've never heard the term 'velvety'?" he asked coldly.

"'Velvety'?" Jack laughed outright as Daniel went very red and subsided. "Busted!" he crowed. He vigorously foiled Daniel's attempt to withdraw his feet, watched him seethe for a few minutes in a variety of languages and took pity. "I believe the word you're looking for here is 'smug bastard'," he suggested smugly, softly caressing the arch of Daniel's foot, making him quiver. "I didn't miss any of the interrogation techniques segment of the training. Although," he drawled, "getting a linguist to talk isn't exactly a challenge." Jack turned his attentions to the other foot. "Getting one to shut up," he said dreamily, "now THAT'S a challenge."

He was out from under in seconds, reaching down to grab Daniel under the arms and yank him up off the couch. Jack kissed Daniel fiercely, grinding into his lips, then spun him around, hooked him around the waist and dragged him bodily over to the stairs. Daniel entered into the spirit, struggling and cursing inventively as Jack manhandled him along the hallway. "This would be more convincing if you weren't holding my hand," Jack choked, "or doing that thing with your ass."

Daniel did the thing with his ass. "That?"

"That. Did I say you could stop?"

"I could be more convincing if you were more convincing," Daniel protested. "I'm too heavy for the whole caveman scenario. You'll put your back out." He went very still in Jack's arms. "That was an incredibly stupid thing to say," he observed mildly as his feet left the floor and Jack carried him the rest of the way to bed.

Jack tossed Daniel onto the bed and pounced on top of him as he sat up, grabbing his wrists as he slammed him down into the pillows.

"I love it when you play hard to get," Daniel said ingenuously, deliberately widening his eyes. "You want to..." he trailed off uncertainly.

Jack would probably die if he didn't, but he had enough synapses still firing to know he needed to change the mood from their usual rough and playful, heaving all over the bed all-in skin on skin wrestling match. By way of answering he rocked his body subtly, a gentle nudge of each knee in turn easing him between Daniel's thighs. Jack stroked his hand over Daniel's face. "How'd I get so lucky?" he asked gravely as Daniel's arms wrapped tightly around him, cradling him close.

"How did I?" Daniel asked shakily in turn, dropping his chin to avoid Jack's eyes.

Jack cupped his jaw and drew him into a passionate kiss, teasing his lips apart to slide sweetly in. Daniel sighed deeply and opened up to him, just as he did every time Jack reached for him. He hoped Daniel would have the confidence to know he could reach out for Jack too, that Jack wouldn't leave him hanging. After the way Jack had left Daniel hanging all those months when he was so deeply in love and so alone, Jack wouldn't fault him for that slight hesitance. The need to protect himself from Jack wouldn't leave Daniel in a week, but it would, some day. Jack hoped it would be soon. In the meantime, Daniel was getting excited, needing him closer, his fingers fumbling at Jack's zipper, roughly shoving the jeans down, warm fuzzy flannel whispering over his butt as Daniel hooked his leg around Jack and strained up with increasing urgency.

"I love you, Jack," Daniel whispered achingly. "I love you so much."

Jack would go nuts trying to figure what the hell he'd ever done to bring a man like Daniel to him, so he whispered the words back. His heart skipped a beat as he saw how easily he stripped all Daniel's defences away from him, and prayed again he'd never hurt him the way he'd hurt Sara, never shut him down and out again. Daniel couldn't be without him, not now. He sighed a little. Like he was in any better shape without Daniel. The man was the best part of him.

They helped each other out of their clothes, lingering to kiss and caress, keeping it slow and sexy as they sank down into an embrace on the bed, taking their time exploring one another with taste and touch. Jack had realised the importance of careful, deliberate preparation from their first time together. The more relaxed Daniel was, the better it would be for him when Jack was inside him. Jack began what he guessed would become a well-oiled routine - no pun - and decided he was way more interested in watching Daniel while he touched him, so after some thought, they wound up on their sides, facing one another, Daniel's arms around Jack, his around Daniel, one of Daniel's legs hooked over his.

"I like this," Daniel said simply, nuzzling his cheek against Jack's, hitching as close as possible.

Jack was enthralled by the pure happiness in Daniel's face as he relaxed, totally trusting, boneless and pliant against Jack's body. "I won't hurt you, love," he promised.

"You will," Daniel amended softly, smoothing Jack's hair from his brow. "It's okay." He flashed a quick smile. "It'll get easier every time, Jack."

"And better." Jack watched Daniel's face, only his face, as he pushed his finger inside him, hating the way Daniel bit his lip and paled, the eager erection hard against his belly softening. It seemed like an eternity before Daniel's body stopped fighting what they both wanted and opened to Jack, who pushed deep inside. He wished he could see Daniel's eyes, see how he was really feeling.

Daniel groaned, his fingers clenched hard against Jack's shoulders as he shuddered fitfully then relaxed again, with more effort than before. His smile took effort too. "Sorry," he

apologised ruefully, smattering kisses on Jack's shoulder. "As much as I want this, it's actually harder knowing what's coming."

"That's the nicest thing anyone's said to me in a long time," Jack told him smugly, returning the kisses.

"Prick," Daniel said tenderly.

"What I said!" Jack sobered. "We can wait," he offered seriously.

"Speak for yourself," Daniel teased, his chuckle swallowed in a gasp as Jack began to stroke inside him, as slowly and tenderly as they kissed.

He knew Daniel loved to kiss, loved to be kissed, and he in turn loved to see Daniel revelling in the intimacy, pulling him back each time he eased away, hooking his leg higher around Jack's back, holding him just there, so close.

"O'Neill," Daniel sighed against his mouth.

"Sir is sexier," Jack prompted.

"Not a chance." Daniel's lips quirked into a smile and closed over his again.

The kiss faltered as Jack worked a second finger deep inside, Daniel moaning as Jack rocked their bodies and he struck the sweet spot. Jack watched over Daniel as arousal bloomed hard in him again, as pleasure flushed his skin and the sweat stood proud on the thigh rubbing restlessly over his side; on Daniel's brow. He licked the droplets from the hollow of Daniel's throat, exulting in his soft moans and the way he writhed wantonly, slowly surrendering to his own pleasure.

"Now please," Daniel pleaded giddily.

Jack withdrew and gently pushed Daniel onto his front, tucking a pillow under his hips. Daniel took a moment to settle but he was nothing but relaxed when Jack curved his hands over his hips and held him tight as he positioned himself and as he had their first time, thrust slow and shallow. Daniel tensed involuntarily and Jack stayed absolutely still, waiting for him to relax again and as before, Daniel opened to him, pushing down to meet him as Jack dared to thrust again into the tightly gripping channel.

Jack licked the sweat from Daniel's shoulder blade and thrust deeper, every quiver in Daniel's body rippling round his dick. The intensity of sheer sensation was extraordinary, milking the pleasure from him. Jack thrust again and flowed into Daniel. "Christ, YES!" he cried out triumphantly, his whole weight stretched out over Daniel's back. "Yes," he groaned as he was finally able to MOVE, rolling his hips, gloating as Daniel's glorious ass moved with him, as Daniel's whole body rocked rhythmically beneath his. "Love you, Jackson." He kissed Daniel's nape gently. "You are fucking amazing and I fucking LOVE you."

"Me too," Daniel said, propping himself carefully up on his elbows. "Oh, God," he yelped as Jack drove into him, dropping his head to snatch quick, panting breaths.

"Danny?" Jack called anxiously. "I hurt you," he apologised remorsefully, rubbing his cheek against Daniel's hair. "I'm so sorry."

"No, no, it's good," Daniel admitted shakily. "Jack..." he began and took a deep breath. "I don't like making love this way. I mean this position..."

"Just relax there," Jack said gently, planting his fists either side of Daniel's waist to give him leverage as he carefully withdrew. He rolled onto his side, gathering Daniel in close as he turned convulsively and buried his face in Jack's shoulder. "Hey," Jack soothed him, "I'm sorry. I thought this way would be easier for you," he said sorrowfully, kissing Daniel's hair.

Daniel emerged from his embrace, self-conscious, apologetic and fetchingly rumped.

Naturally, Jack kissed him hard, relieved more than he could say when Daniel shoved him onto his back and mauled him. He assisted in every way possible, holding Daniel as he and the kiss gradually quieted. He stroked his thumb over Daniel's lips when he propped his chin on his hands and smiled down at him.

"It WAS good," Daniel said reassuringly. "I just...Ineedtoseeyou," he confessed in a rush, mortified, face burning.

"The velvety eyes," Jack observed complacently. "Get you every time." His turn to smile reassuringly. "We don't have to..."

"No," Daniel disagreed. "I want to make love. I just want to be able to hold you and...and..."

"Stare dreamily into my velvety eyes?"

"Kiss you," Daniel snarled, smacking him gently in the head.

"Ow!" Jack yelped.

Jack shrugged philosophically when Daniel smacked him again, slightly harder. He had reflexively kissed it all better BEFORE he realised Jack was yanking his chain, after all. Fair's fair. He watched with interest as Daniel traced a pattern on his chest with one fingertip, glancing up now and then beguilingly from under his lashes. Daniel was putting a lot of effort into being alluring so Jack allowed himself to be lured and failed to point out the obvious, which was that it didn't take Daniel any work at all.

Responsibility momentarily outvoted his libido, which was in dire straits. If he'd hurt Daniel at all, he was going to have to excuse himself and see to some goddamned pressing

business in the bathroom. He thought it would be beyond crass to ask Danny to bring him off if all he wanted was to cuddle up. "Are you sore?" he asked gently as Daniel kissed his collarbone.

"Mm."

"Was that a yes 'Mm' or a no 'Mm'?" Jack pushed, tone still gentle. Daniel was pretty distracted down there. Could you have sexy collar bones? Daniel certainly seemed to think so. He was trailing his tongue along the bone and blowing gently.

"Mmm."

"Oh." Jack decided to do a little reconnaissance and fumbled for the lube. They were both lavishly coated as it was, but he wasn't prepared to take any chances.

Daniel wriggled encouragingly when he felt Jack probing gently and gloated over the other collarbone as Jack pushed inside him. "Why don't I lie on my back?" he suggested, arching luxuriously into the gentle rocking.

"That would mean pretty deep penetration," Jack cautioned him, "Especially if you want to kiss."

"I do." Daniel looked at Jack searchingly. "Do you still want to make love?" he asked slowly. He snorted with laughter as Jack's wayward dick jerked against him.

"Okay, now THAT was totally embarrassing," Jack cringed. "I'm trying to be supportive here."

"I'm trying to get laid," Daniel said crisply, reaching up to snag a pillow.

"Your wish is my command," Jack fawned obsequiously, rolling Daniel beneath him.

"Sir," Daniel prompted mischievously.

Jack had done some research on Google and now knew a hell of a lot more about male/male sex. He made a lot of suggestions for Daniel's comfort, all of which Daniel nixed for being 'awkward', which Jack took to mean embarrassing for Daniel. Maybe when they had a lot more practice at this, Daniel wouldn't mind lying flat on his back with his legs draped over Jack's shoulders while Jack fucked him, but for now, he was insisting he'd be perfectly comfortable with them wrapped round Jack's back. Jack had an inkling why Daniel hated being on his front. He didn't want to just lie there passively and be fucked, even if it felt good. He wanted to make love and to him, that meant kissing and holding one another. Jack too.

How he made Daniel feel was more important than what they did. Loved and wanted was great. Fuckably hot stressed Daniel out, like now. Jack shut the hell up and kissed Daniel, who needed no urging to wrap his legs high around Jack's back. Jack entered him

slowly as the kiss deepened, Daniel gasping and arching beneath him, face turned resolutely away until he caught his breath and regained his equilibrium. It was easier this time; Daniel pushing down to meet him, fitting around him as he rolled his hips and rocked gently in.

"Oh, yes, Jack," Daniel whispered. "So good...so..." He threw back his head, moaning as Jack stroked deep inside him.

Jack gradually lowered his weight onto Daniel, unable to disguise just how good it was to be buried to the balls inside him. "Better?" he asked, trying not to be greedy because he loved this.

"Mmmuch."

Jack was far too conscious of putting undue stress on Daniel's back and neck to let himself go as he had the first time but it took all his discipline, all his years of experience to not drive into the silky, gripping heat. He found a barely there roll of his hips made Daniel moan and cling to him desperately and realised each gentle stroke was brushing his prostate, not enough to make him come, but more than enough to drive him out of his mind with pleasure. It made Jack's muscles burn to keep to the slow, deliberate pace but Daniel's ecstasy was enough to hold his own needs in check.

Daniel reached for him and Jack plunged willingly into the kiss, mesmerised by the way Daniel touched him, tenderly, reverently, like he was this amazing thing.

"I never thought I'd have you," Daniel whispered, ghosting his fingers over Jack's cheek and lips. "Never."

"And now you'll never be rid of me," Jack told him mournfully. "I couldn't have happened to a nicer guy."

"Jack," Daniel protested, laughing. Then he gasped and arched, his face stilling. "Oh, God, oh Jaa-aack."

Jack deepened his stroke to thrust hard against Daniel's prostate as the rippling contractions flowing over his dick intensified with Daniel's orgasm and he came with tears falling. "You are so goddamned BEAUTIFUL," Jack gasped as he drove deep and came explosively.

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Daniel rested his feet on Jack's thigh, taking his time savouring the last mouthful of vanilla fudge cheesecake as he watched Jack watch the movie open-mouthed.

"You like this?" Jack asked him suspiciously for the fourth or fifth time.

Daniel nodded vigorously.

"Why?" Jack shook his head in disbelief. "Never mind!" he contradicted himself hastily.

"The dancing is good," Daniel pointed out, "Even if you don't appreciate a clever, subtle parody."

"Subtle?" Jack gaped at the gold lame twirling across the TV screen. "The dancing is adequate," he sniffed.

"You dance?" Daniel asked, surprised, correctly interpreting Jack's haughty manner.

Jack smiled blandly and turned slowly towards Daniel. "You don't?" he asked gently.

Daniel also correctly interpreted Jack's poker face and bolted, scrambling off the couch and up the stairs, making for the safety of the bathroom and the bolt on the door. He was impressed he made it to the front door before Jack caught him and managed a very convincing caveman impression. Daniel's feet left the floor. "Déjà vu," he said resignedly as he was carried back into the living room.

"I was thinking the tango myself," Jack gloated, "but I'm easy."

"No goddamn way am I dancing with you, O'Neill, so get over it," Daniel insisted adamantly as he was dumped on the couch. He smirked up at Jack. "Think you can get to the stereo before I get to the bathroom, flyboy?" he asked softly. "I don't."

Hands on hips, Jack looked down at him thoughtfully. Then he nodded. "Bring it on, Jackson," he invited menacingly.

Jack was three steps away before Daniel made it up off the couch, and Daniel thought he covered the three steps back much quicker. "Prick," he snarled as Jack's arms hooked round his waist again and dragged him backwards.

"You've only got yourself to blame," Jack rebuked him. "How many times have I told you NOT to telegraph your tactics to the enemy?"

"Including this time?" Daniel queried. "One."

"That's BECAUSE I don't telegraph my tactics to the enemy," Jack explained reasonably. As they closed in on the stereo he swung around so Daniel was facing away and he could reach behind him for a disc and hit play. "Sappy love songs." He sighed with satisfaction as a rapid piano arpeggio segued into soft modern music. He turned Daniel in his arms as a beautiful voice sang 'Stay by me and make the moment last.' "Couldn't have put it better myself."

Daniel groaned and buried his face in Jack's shoulder. "If only people knew," he moaned as Jack's arms tightened round him and they started to move. Shuffle. Whatever. "I can't dance. I've got no rhythm," he whined.

"That was immediately apparent," Jack said unkindly, "But I have enough for both of us so just move with me."

"I can't believe you're doing this to me, you shit," Daniel complained bitterly, lifting his face to glare at Jack.

Jack kissed him.

"Can you NOT look so goddamned smug?"

Jack kissed him again.

Somehow the hands Daniel raised to shove him away wound up clasped around his neck, unfortunately in perfect time to a snatch of song about someone dying in someone's arms, which Jack clearly took as a compliment.

Daniel kissed Jack, kept on kissing him and following, not noticing the shuffling lengthened into steps, or that the steps became rhythmic. He surfaced in time to hear another snatch of song, something about a thundercloud dark as the someone's hair. "Please tell me this song doesn't make you think of me," he pleaded with Jack. "Please."

"This song doesn't make me think of you," Jack intoned solemnly.

"Sappy sonovabitch," Daniel sighed bitterly.

Jack took this as his cue to spin Daniel and dip him back over his arm.

"God help me," Daniel complained as Jack closed in for another kiss.

Sarah McLachlan's voice rang out clean and true. Jack smiled. "This song doesn't make me think of you either."

Daniel was caught by the tenderness in Jack's eyes, as he was every time it was there for him. Only for him. He slipped his foot over Jack's and didn't resist the urging hand cupping his neck. Daniel laid his head slowly on Jack's shoulder and his hands rapidly on Jack's ass.

"Dirty dancing?" Jack clung to him, groping ecstatically.

"This should not be construed in any way as a surrender," Daniel warned threateningly.

"The sighing?" Jack asked.

"Boredom," Daniel insisted.

"The snuggling?"

"I'm lulling you into a false sense of security," Daniel said defiantly, refusing to admit that Jack was...well...comfortable and in another kicker for his self-image, he was enjoying the slow, swaying rhythm.

"It's working."

Jack then cheated outrageously by slipping his hands under the waistband of Daniel's pyjama bottoms to cup, knead, stroke and fondle his ass, which distracted him long enough for Jack to extract him from his T-shirt and 'comfortable' became compellingly sexy with the heat of Jack's skin and sleek muscles hard against his. Daniel decided to up the ante, reaching out to help Jack's jeans part company with his ass, his fingers spread possessively wide over the tight, flexing muscles.

"Are you sore?" Jack whispered.

Daniel looked up and couldn't bring himself to brush off Jack's evident concern. "A little," he admitted bashfully, wondering what Jack had in mind. Not that he had any objections to making love, but anything strenuous...

Jack was staring intently at Daniel's mouth, smiling a little.

Oh, God, Daniel groaned inwardly as Jack twined their fingers together and led him towards the bedroom. Talk about the triumph of optimism over experience. Hard as it was to believe, Daniel was worse at oral sex than he was at dancing. If he needed proof of how deeply in love Jack was, his inexplicable enthusiasm for the worst blowjob on the planet was fairly conclusive. It wasn't even a question of unwillingness on Daniel's part, just ineptitude.

"Don't you still have teeth marks from the last time?" Daniel muttered as Jack picked up the pace with unwarranted eagerness.

Jack glanced back, frowning a little. "If it makes you uncomfortable..."

"No!" Daniel denied at once.

Jack's face cleared, obviously satisfied by Daniel's vehemence. "My jaw aches like CRAP," he confided, grinning. "Please tell me THAT gets easier too."

"We don't know what the hell we're doing, do we?" Daniel asked ruefully, cheering up.

"Muddling through," Jack agreed. "Muddling is fun though."

Daniel felt a pang of desire, heavy and low. "Hell, yes." He dug his heels in and when Jack turned to him, grabbed him by the shoulders to back him step by step into the bedroom, staring intently into his eyes.

Jack smiled slowly, resisting a little, pushing back, enough their bodies bumped and ground together as they backed up to the bed.

Daniel roughly shoved Jack's jeans down, using his foot to work them down the rest of the way, then he wrestled Jack down onto the bed, Jack's laughter rumbling low in his chest. Jack stilled his hand as he reached for his pyjama bottoms.

"Leave them," he requested, his smile amused and oddly tender as he stroked over Daniel's ass.

Daniel nodded, slightly surprised, but going with Jack's wishes regardless. He didn't want to make this any worse than it was going to be.

"I hate to be crude, Daniel, but could you cut right to the chase?" Jack asked, arching suggestively up.

Daniel sat up and straddled Jack's hips so his flannel clad butt covered Jack's straining erection.

Jack caught his breath, his hands clutching Daniel's thighs fiercely. "Take your time," he gasped, his eyes wide and glittering.

Daniel put his hands flat on Jack's stomach and rocked. After a moment, Jack rocked in his turn beneath him, so Daniel began to writhe, rubbing his ass over Jack's dick. He guessed the weight and friction must feel really good because Jack was catching his breath and looking kind of...dazed.

"Good God," Jack whispered, his hands stroking and squeezing Daniel's thighs, hips and ass restlessly.

Daniel wished he wasn't quite as aware of his tender behind as he was; he would have liked to pick up the pace for Jack but when he gave it a shot, Jack's hands at his hips stilled him, Jack shaking his head emphatically, frowning. He let Jack pull him into the slow sinuous rhythm he wanted and kept to it, though Jack was moving strongly beneath him, lifting his legs to rest his thighs against Daniel's butt, bracing his feet against the mattress to rock and thrust up powerfully, groaning with satisfaction.

He snatched up Daniel's hands to lingeringly kiss the palm and wrist of each in turn, then he reached out himself, one hand closing bruisingly over Daniel's hip, the heel of the other hand massaging Daniel's slowly swelling erection.

Daniel remembered the feel of the jersey chafing his own skin from this morning and smiled at Jack, whose sweat-sleek body, gasping sighs and harsh, breathy moans told Daniel he found flannel sensuous and INTENSELY stimulating, which was serendipitous, because Daniel customarily wore..."**FUCKING FLANNEL FETISHIST!**" he howled.

Jack snarled wordlessly as Daniel STOPPED MOVING, caught his killing look and smiled broadly, gloating offensively over the jammies. "Literally, Jackson," he growled, surging up to pull Daniel into a passionate, possessive kiss that took his breath away, tongue driving deep into Daniel's throat, eating his mouth.

When Jack tried to back off, clearly thinking he'd established his Alpha rights all over Daniel's mouth, Daniel hooked his arms around his shoulders and yanked him back to thoroughly disabuse him of this notion, grinding his ass maddeningly the whole time they kissed. Jack made a lot of noise; laughing, protesting, growling, sighing as Daniel deepened and gentled the kiss, and finally howling as Daniel accidentally banged his head off the headboard in his zealous pursuit of equal erotic opportunities.

Jack collapsed, shaking with laughter as Daniel anxiously checked for signs of concussion and was still laughing when he slammed up into Daniel and came. He chuckled as he tumbled Daniel onto his side and wrapped around him, sleepy, sticky and disgustingly satisfied. "Jammies sex," he purred, kissing Daniel with sloppy, heartfelt gratitude and tenderness. "Woo momma!" he smacked his lips appreciatively, rigorously suppressing Daniel's attempt to wriggle free of his bottoms.

"My ass is one big wet spot," Daniel informed him coldly. "Thanks to your..."

"Perversion?" Jack suggested, trailing tiny coaxing kisses over Daniel's shoulder and throat as he drifted off, rolling so his weight pinned Daniel right where he should be. "Love."

It took some wriggling under Jack's weight, but Daniel finally got Jack off him and himself out of his bottoms and kicked them viciously onto the floor. The instant he laid back down, Jack practically rolled on top of him, one thigh insinuating itself between Daniel's to rub rhythmically.

"Cheer up, Jackson," Jack whispered. "At least you didn't bite me."

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Daniel still had his fatigue jacket draped over his arm as he dashed into the briefing room, cursing himself for carelessness. He'd left a report at the loft on Friday so Jack had made it into work an hour ahead of him by the time he'd made the round trip downtown to pick it up.

General Hammond was just emerging from his office. "Dr Jackson," he greeted Daniel jovially, "I'd like to introduce you to SG-11's new team leader, Colonel Crawford."

A tall, handsome man stepped out of the office behind the general. His dark chestnut hair was free of grey, and he had clear hazel green eyes in a strong, tanned face. "Conn Crawford," he emphasised quietly, stepping past the general to shake hands with Daniel.

"Daniel Jackson." Daniel's appraising stare was matched in a way that reminded him of Jack; wary, assessing and anything but trusting. He found the familiarity of being threat assessed oddly reassuring.

"Dr Jackson is our resident archaeologist and linguist," Hammond said proudly, taking his seat. "Gentlemen."

"Cultural expert, anthropologist, diplomat, the man who made the Stargate programme possible..." Crawford went on easily, no bite in the words or the tone.

"Budget cuts," Daniel sighed, looking reproachfully at the general. "I work cheap."

Crawford flashed a quick grin but sobered in an instant. "The general tells me SG-11 will be escorting you on a dig in a few days time."

"A survey," Daniel corrected automatically. "The mission to P5R-887 has the go-ahead?" he asked the general. He was slightly regretful that his reaction to the general's affirmative was mainly disappointment at being separated from Jack so soon. "SG-1?"

"Coming with," Crawford assured him.

"I've already sent for Colonel O'Neill," Hammond agreed. "He'll be with us any moment..."

"He's with you now," Jack called out cheerfully, loping up the stairs. His eyes went straight to Daniel and he smiled widely. Then he came to a stop, one hand clenched over the nearest chair back for a moment. "Conn," he acknowledged evenly, taking a few measured paces to drop into the seat next to Daniel, with a quick reassuring look for Daniel's surprise at his reaction.

"Jack! Long time no see," Crawford said lightly.

Jack nodded calmly and turned to the general. "Sir?"

"I didn't realise you knew one another," Hammond said.

"We served together for a few missions," Jack said easily. "Highly classified missions."

Hammond frowned. "I have top level access," he said firmly.

"HIGHLY classified," Jack snapped.

Hammond's frown intensified but he let it drop.

Daniel decided he wouldn't. Maybe Jack couldn't talk about the mission, but that didn't stop Daniel trying to get him to talk about the man. Not that it was a surprise Crawford

and Jack didn't get along; Jack's vast circle of guys he served with and was actually happy to see again had consisted of Kawalsky when he was alive, and Ferretti.

He realised he was instinctively siding with Jack, was on edge even though Crawford had done nothing himself to prompt it. His objectivity was shot where Jack was concerned and it looked like he was going to have to work to get it back, or at least a semblance of it. Sam and Teal'c needed him to speak up where they couldn't. Jack didn't expect him to do anything but his job, but his own feelings and perceptions were more affected than he'd been prepared for. Separating work from their private lives was going to be difficult. He shared another swift, surreptitious look with Jack. Very difficult.

"This is just a preliminary briefing, gentlemen," Hammond told them briskly. "SG-11 is up to full strength again and ready to go into the field now an experienced C.O. has been appointed."

"Correction," Jack interjected. "Crawford has no off-world experience."

"The strategy for a successful insertion remains the same, Jack," Crawford refuted this calmly. "And as you know, I'm nothing if not situationally flexible."

Jack's face tightened.

"It's at Colonel Crawford's suggestion that the rest of SG-1 goes along on this mission, Jack," Hammond reproved him. "A suggestion I happen to agree with. SG-11 needs time to shake down in the field and to learn the requisite off-world protocols. That's where Dr Jackson comes in. I'm aware of the exigencies of the survey," the general reassured him. "That is your primary mission, but I also want you to brief Colonel Crawford and his men on the cultures they are likely to encounter during the three days you'll be on base, and to address any operational issues that arise while you're off-world. Colonel O'Neill will be on hand to advise on tactical issues."

"It will be a good start for the team," Crawford agreed. "Intensive training works most effectively in situ."

"I'll be in command," Jack said flatly. A statement, not a question.

"Of course," Hammond agreed.

Crawford shrugged. "Agreed."

"If that'll be all?" Jack prompted, already rising.

"The full mission briefing will be at 06:00 on Wednesday. Until then, you, Dr Jackson and Teal'c are to assist with SG-11's training," Hammond ordered Jack. "Dismissed."

Jack turned on his heel and marched away, calling back sharply. "Daniel!"

"I'll walk you to your office, Dr Jackson," Crawford's voice cut through Jack's. "I have some questions."

"They can wait," Jack said brusquely. "I need to brief my team."

"I believe Teal'c is preparing for his briefing of the team on Goa'uld technology and tactics right now," Crawford said pleasantly. "Major Carter is busy with some alien device SG-5 sent back and Dr Jackson is right here."

"Lunch," Daniel suggested as Jack glared at Crawford, jaw clenching.

Some of the tension eased out of Jack. "12:00," he agreed lightly, strolling away with his usual insouciance and a casual backward wave.

"We don't get along," Crawford explained carefully once he and Daniel were alone.

"Really?" Daniel asked ingenuously.

Crawford grinned and waved Daniel out. "It's Conn, by the way."

"Daniel." He kept glancing at Conn as they walked down the hallway to the elevator but the man held himself in a way that reminded Daniel of Makepeace, always on edge, always alert. Looking for trouble. Jack was the same, but he was far more sophisticated in his methods. Daniel waited until the elevator doors were closing behind them before he picked up the conversation, wanting to avoid awkward small talk with a man Jack disliked. He got right to the point. "What did you want to ask?"

"For starters, how the hell did YOU tame a ruthless bastard like O'Neill?" Conn asked, looking Daniel over thoughtfully.

Daniel fought the rising tension, stood as relaxed as possible, though his heart was beginning to hammer. He thought he detected honest admiration in the man looking him over so comprehensively. "We're friends," he said calmly.

"Friends?" Conn shook his head in mild disbelief. "You must be the best friend O'Neill ever had."

"Or maybe you don't know Jack as well as you think you do. He's changed a lot since he came to the SGC," Daniel said coldly. "He's nothing like the man you knew."

"He certainly isn't," Conn agreed. "I've never seen him look at any man the way he looks at you."

**FINIS**