



Kimberley Jackson

Only One Road
A STARGATE SG-1 Romance



www.kimberley-jackson.com

Kimberley Jackson

STARGATE SG-1

Only One Road (A Romance)



www.kimberley-jackson.com

First Edition
Published in Berlin, Germany in 2013 by Kimberley Jackson
(KJ Publishing).

Copyright © 2013 by Kimberley Jackson

All characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Warning: This book may contain scenes of violence, or sexually explicit scenes comparable to erotic fiction, and is therefore not suitable for children under the age of 18.

Stargate SG-1 and its characters belong to MGM Studios, Double Secret and Gekko. No copyright infringement intended. No monetary profits are made from this work.

Although the characters have been borrowed, the stories, plots and ideas are solely the work of fiction by Kimberley Jackson.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be altered, rewritten or sold without explicit written consent of Kimberley Jackson.

This work is being published under a Creative Commons license.

This electronic publication may be freely distributed, shared, saved, printed, copied and re-uploaded without consent by the author as long as it remains unaltered, and the author's name is attached to it. This includes the distribution on file sharing networks.

Title Image Background: © tenerum - Fotolia.com | Logo (Stargate SG-1): MGM Studios

KJ Publishing
Kimberley Jackson
Berlin, Germany

<http://www.kimberley-jackson.com>

WARNING:

If you paid money for this, you were ripped off!

No refunds can be given by Kimberley Jackson, KJ Publishing or any person or organization affiliated with her.

Please contact kimberley@kimberley-jackson.com with information regarding whom you purchased this work from, so that legal action can be taken against them.

Chapters

Prologue	6
Unwanted Attention	6
Dances	9
Heat of the Moment.....	20
Sleepless.....	34
Busted	47
Endings and New Beginnings.....	52
About the Author	62

Prologue

How did she end up in this awful situation? How did this good idea turn into a disaster that made her feel nauseous to the bone?

Sam Carter was feeling horrible. Horrible and nervous, and her fingers were clutching the napkin from the table in order to relieve the nervousness somewhere. She needed that, in order to keep that calm look and the smiling expression on her face. It was a mask, but this was the official armed forces Independence Day party, and she was one of the chosen representatives. This was a job. She had to consider it as one. If it just hadn't become so hard; and it was all the fault of this damned McKay guy...

Unwanted Attention

"Jack!" Daniel protested, looking up from his plate of food and keeping the fork in his hand while he was looking at his friend with the usual half-annoyed, half-amused expression on his face.

"Daniel," Jack returned his look, and put one of the French fries from his plate in his mouth. It was one of those rare, calm days where they actually had time to go to the commissary and have lunch together, and as always, the discussion between Jack O'Neill, commanding officer and general of the SG-1, and Daniel Jackson, leading anthropologist slash archeologist of SG-1, got out of hand. The two men, as different as they were, were close friends, even though neither of them would have ever admitted that openly.

Samantha Carter couldn't help but smiling when she saw the stern, mock-ignorant face of her commanding officer, and looked down at her food quickly. Being the correct soldier that she was, she would never dare to openly laugh or even smile about her commanding officer. Even though by now they had built a strong friendship - and emotionally more - and she was sure that he would never hold it against her, she couldn't just shrug years of military training off.

"Jack, you cannot honestly call an artifact that is thousands of years old "a piece of junk"," Daniel started passionately. "That table is probably older than the pyramids, and that world never came in contact with the Goa'ult until about 50 years ago. The secrets..."

"No, Daniel..."

"Jack..."

"Daniel! I am not sending you back on a planet that the Goa'ult may not have been on in the past, but claim for themselves NOW, just to retrieve a piece of junk!" when he saw Daniels outraged expression he lifted his hands. "Fine... a piece of ANCIENT junk. Were you not there on the last mission? You barely got out alive!"

"But don't you wonder why the Goa'ult left them alone all this time? Maybe the writings on the table would give us a clue as to why..."

"Carter!" Jack looked at his 2IC almost desperately. "Care to remind Daniel of how close SG-1 – accompanied by myself as I might want to add - came to getting killed?"

"Actually Sir," Sam looked up, keeping a straight face even though she was highly amused, "I am with Daniel on that one. It would be fascinating to find out why the Goa'ult left the people on the planet

alone, and only returned when the population had downgraded to an agrarian lifestyle. It would also be fascinating to find out how exactly that happened."

Jack shook his head almost desperately. "You know... one of these days I'm going to have to teach you two the real meaning of the word 'fascinating'." He exhaled, and then sighed. "Fine, if you can come up with a strategy to get through the gate, retrieve the ---thing--- and get back, preferably without getting killed, turned into hosts or altered in any other way, I will consider – and I emphasize CONSIDER - authorizing it."

"Oh come on Sir, don't tell me you didn't enjoy a little bit of physical exercise!" Sam joked and Jack look at her somewhat grumpy.

"Not if that exercise consists in running from three dozen angry Jaffa warriors and ducking from the fire of their weapons. Besides, if I remember correctly, you were the one saying..."

"Excuse me..." Their banter was interrupted by an all too familiar voice, and all three of them looked up. Sam sighed inwardly.

"Doctor McKay. I didn't know you were back from Atlantis."

"Yes, along with Dr. Weir and some of the others. Since we have debriefings, we will be here about a month. Anyway... I wanted to say hi, since... you know, given our chemistry and all..." He chuckled somewhat arrogantly and Sam turned her head to look down at her food and roll her eyes.

The other two men watched, with a mixture of amusement and confusion, Sam's rather hostile reaction to the obviously unwelcome advances of the man.

"What do you want, McKay?"

"Well, I just wanted to say hi - and tell you that I cannot wait for our date."

"Our... what?" Sam almost dropped her fork and looked up at him in complete bewilderment. For the fraction of a second she considered the possibility of having switched universes somehow in the past seconds? "McKay, what are you talking about? I am not going out with you!"

"Oh... I know..." Rodney McKay laughed. "I know you would never openly admit your deep lust for me. But it came to my ears that you broke up with your fiancé so I figured... you know... I heard that you were going to be one of this year's donation hosts at the annual Armed Forces Independence Day Party."

"The what?" Daniel interrupted and Sam waved him off slightly annoyed.

"It's that thing, where they auction off people for the evening and the collected money goes to the families of fallen soldiers and the veterans' fund." Jack explained to him, and then turned his attention back to the very unusual scenario in front of him. He hardly ever saw his 2IC that hostile. Aside from that he could not help feeling slight anger inside when he saw the advances of the scientist with the oversized ego. He knew, he had no right to, since they had not in any way discussed their relationship. That however did not keep him from wanting to wring the man's neck.

Sam nodded and explained, "They asked me if I was willing to be one of this year's hosts, and I agreed." Then she turned her head back to Rodney. "What did you do, McKay?"

"Oh, I placed my bid and I am sure nobody will outbid my bid, because... in all humility... it is quite high."

Sam just stared at him, her eyes slightly narrowed, when she, in her mind, thought of all the ways that she could possibly kill this man using just her fork.

"Well..." Rodney smiley brightly. "As I said just wanted to say hi and... oh! Wear something nice. You know, I really always had the hots for women in red dresses. Plus you have quite the body, so go for some cleavage and..." When Sam got up abruptly with a dark stare, he stopped and looked at her, taken aback for a moment.

"Whoa..." Jack interfered, having gotten up as well, when he recognized the 'ready-to-kill' expression on the face of his officer, and slowly leaned over, placing his hand on Sam's shoulder. "Let it go, Carter."

Sam looked at him, then back at McKay and relaxed visibly. She realized beating the leading scientist of the Atlantis expedition up in the middle of the mess hall probably wasn't the smartest approach of the problem.

"Well then, Blondie." McKay smiled. "See you on the third of July, which is in - oh, exactly one week! I can't wait."

"Yeah," Sam nodded. "Me neither." It was obvious irony, but McKay didn't even notice. He was convinced as ever that she was secretly having the hots for him.

"I knew it! Maybe we could even spend the night after the auction at my place if you..."

"Doctor McKay," Jack interrupted him darkly, his face showing his command authority and something else – something very dangerous. Daniel noticed it with fascination. "We were having a briefing here, so if you don't mind, we'd like to continue."

"Oh, of course..." McKay nodded and smiled, then looked at Sam. "Well, I guess I see you then, blue eyes."

Sam watched him leave the mess hall with his usual overly self-confident stroll. She let out a tortured moan and nearly stabbed her fork into the steak on her plate.

"Wonderful."

"What was that all about?" Daniel asked interested. "Did you and him..."

"Daniel! No!" Sam interrupted him before he could even say it. "No. Not even if he was the last guy on the face of earth – or the universe."

"Then how..." Daniel asked, and again Sam didn't let him finish.

"I met him back when Tea's pattern was lost in the Stargate. One of the first things he said to me was that he had always had a thing for 'dumb blondes'." Sam explained, and Daniel winced and commented "Ouch".

"Yes, and he was even convinced that he had made a compliment. However, ever since then he's been convinced that there's some kind of mutual attraction between us, and that I have a hard time keeping my hands off of him. Don't get me wrong, he is a good scientist. He can even be a nice person if he is not a complete... jackass."

"You didn't tell us you were invited to be a host on this year's Independence Day party!" Daniel commented, his eyes still lying on Jack's face with interest. Jack stared back at him when he became aware of Daniel's amused look and mouthed a "What?" silently. The archeologist simply grinned at

the response and looked back at Sam, who was completely unaware of the silent discourse since she was staring down at her plate, steaming inwardly.

"I didn't want to make a big deal out of it. Initially I didn't even want to do it, but they were persistent, and it's for the veterans after all, so I couldn't say no," she commented.

Jack now turned his eyes away from Daniel, and looked at the woman under his command, "So they can just put a bid in on you?"

"Yes, the winners will be announced in the beginning, and I will be the date for the evening for whoever won the bid on me. It is highly professional. Mainly like a meet-and-greet. I expected to spend the evening with a boring scientist who is eager to discuss his research with me. It is really mainly about the donation." She sighed. "At least it was. Now that I know that McKay placed a bid, I guess the thing is going to get a lot more painful."

Dances

The large festival room was beautifully decorated, and looking very formal for the event. It was big, with round tables lined up around a small dance floor and a stage, where an announcer had been entertaining guests ever since she arrived.

Sam was looking at the announcer, who was just now giving a long speech to greet everybody to the event. She knew it was probably going to be another one of those boring long speeches that she hated on events like these. And it only helped to lengthen the time of her torture. She saw the aides going from person to person in the room, informing the respective winners of the auction, and she braced herself when she saw McKay, who was waiting impatiently for the aides to reach him, wave at her from the other side of the room.

Great, she sighed. This was going to be a nightmare. She despised the scientist. But even more she despised the fact that the make-up artists hired for the event had dressed her up like a Barbie doll. And most of all she despised the fact that she had no chance of getting back out of it.

Because this was essentially a publicity event with the sole intent of promoting the great successes of the armed forces, she had to leave the choice of dress and make up entirely up to them. When she had looked in the mirror after her transformation, she had not even recognized herself. Her body was wrapped in a black dress that was tied right under her breasts (which were pushed up cleverly with a push-up bra, that made her look ridiculous in her opinion) with a tight sash and then flowing over her hips to her upper thighs, revealing her perfectly long legs. She had to wear incredibly high heels that had made her feet hurt after only 5 minutes of walking. And her hair! They had managed to style her usually untamed short hair in a fashion that made her look like an 80s pinup girl.

Objectively speaking, she had been both amazed and embarrassed by how they had made her look, but it was bugging her the most that she would be looking like this for Rodney McKay – who, undoubtedly, would spend most of the evening hitting on her, touching her – dancing with her. She shuddered slightly. Why of all days did they have to choose this one to reduce her to her physical features, when she would have to spend the evening with a fellow scientist who neither respected her professionally, nor as a woman?

Sam was so lost in her vengeful thoughts that she didn't even notice the presence of the tall man who was walking up next to her seat now. She almost jumped when she heard the low voice right next to her ear.

"You look like you could need some entertainment."

She gasped and turned her head in surprise, immediately recognizing the voice. "Sir!" She exclaimed with an audible tone of gladness in her voice. Then she almost dropped her glass at the sight of him. He was wearing his dress blues, that emphasized his muscular upper body, and was looking at her with the sexiest smile she had seen him give her since... ever.

"You look ... tense," he teased her with the hint of a smile, and took seat at the same table on the chair right next to her, ignoring her confused, but also interested look.

"I didn't know you would be here Sir! I didn't see you before."

"Wasn't here before, I just arrived a few moments ago." He informed her and then looked at her, taking in her every feature, and smiled slightly.

"What?" Sam asked after a short moment, smiling back somewhat insecurely, her fingers at the glass with champagne that was standing in front of her on the table.

"Nothing," he answered amused, not taking his eyes off of her. Damn, they had done a good job. She was looking like a walking sin. The dress did nothing to hide her perfectly in shape figure, and revealed those incredibly long legs, and her breasts – damn. Easy there, he reminded himself. After all he was here in order to help a fellow officer, not to make advances on her.

"Well, Sir, I think I will have to leave – unfortunately." Sam remarked with an apologetic smile and started to get up. Jack raised his eyebrows.

"Oh?"

"Yes, I can see Dr. McKay waving at me - he has been for quite some time. I don't want to give him the satisfaction of having to come get me. I want to keep at least one tiny ounce of dignity after he practically forced this date on me and the make-up department put me in this ridiculous outfit." She winced.

"Hey," Jack caught her wrist as she was slowly walking by him, and she stopped instantly, looking at his hand touching her arm with a mixture of shock and thrill. They touched so rarely – and even if they did it was hardly skin on skin, and not in the context of a social event – that his touch both electrified and scared her.

"S-sir?" she asked, insecurely, not pulling her hand out of his touch however.

"Sit down," he said gently. Upon her merely staring at him with her wide, blue eyes, he had to chuckle. "That's an order."

"Um, yes, Sir," she nodded, remembering that he was her co after all, and sat down on the chair to his other side, simply because it was closer than the chair she had used before – in these shoes every additional step had become hell. Then she looked at him expectantly. "Sir?"

He simply passed her a small piece of paper in an envelope, while his eyes were fixated on the speaker who was still speaking about this year's donations. She took it and opened the envelope. After she had pulled the small white card out, she gasped, and her brain took a moment to register the meaning of what she was reading:

Colonel Samantha Carter – Leading Astrophysicist

Winning Bid: General Jack O'Neill

"Sir!" She gasped and looked up at him. "I... you... um... how did you..."

"All I did was make a donation to the veteran's fund," he commented dryly, with a sparkle in his eyes. "After calling the officers in charge of the auction and inquiring to know the exact amount of McKay's bid."

"But Sir..." Sam looked slightly guilty. "Isn't that against the rules?"

"Not that I am aware of. McKay doesn't have to pay; only the winning bid does so no need for guilt." Then his eyes twinkled with humor. "I do however expect an entertaining evening with the leading astrophysicist of the Air Force!"

She couldn't help but smile openly at him. "Well Sir, I can't promise that. You tend to get bored when I talk about science."

"Carter." He said, drawling her name slightly. "Do you seriously want to tell me that science is all you can have a casual conversation about?" Upon seeing her face, he sighed, suspecting that actually it was. "Do me a favor, and forget that I am your CO tonight. No 'Sir's, no alien talk, and no science. Understood?"

"Yes, Ssss..." she winced when he looked at her in mock reproach, and had to laugh softly at her own almost-slip. "I'll do my best."

They spent the next half hour in silence, listening to the rest of the boring welcome speech. It was the same as every year, honoring the deeds of the Armed forces abroad and praising the heroisms of its member. The speech seemed so oblivious to what they were actually doing every day, and how often they had saved earth, that it was simply not interesting to either of them. Finally, when the speaker left the stage, followed by a short round of applause, the entertainer of the evening, a singer with her band, took stage and started her program of singing slow songs to lure couples onto the dance floor.

"So, what are your plans for Independence Day?" he finally broke the ice, and Sam looked up from the glass that she had been desperately holding on to during the past half hour.

"I actually don't have any. Cassie is spending the weekend with friends up in Canada, so, I think I will just stay home, curl up on my couch and watch movies. What about you... Jack?" she hesitated a short moment before saying his name, not sure if it was inappropriate in this context. He shot her a surprised look at the use of his name, but then his mouth turned into a gentle smile, and he held her eyes deeply.

"Essentially the same. Except for the cheesy movies."

She nodded, and smiled at him nervously, then turned her eyes back on her glass. She really didn't know what to say to him, because simply his presence was making her feel insecure. She couldn't forget that he was her commanding officer. There were so many lines that were dangerous to cross with him, especially in the light of how she was feeling about him – and her insecurity about whether he was still feeling the same as he had four years before. Sam had never asked him why he and Kerry had broken up, and he didn't speak about the whys. He had simply let it slip one day, when she had made a comment about her, that he wasn't seeing her anymore.

"Wow," he finally said amused. "You weren't kidding, when you said you're bad at this."

She winced apologetically. "I'm sorry, Sir!"

"Ah, ah, ah! Carter!" he said in a reproaching manner. "Tell you what, for every time you call me Sir or General tonight, you have a drink. You need to loosen up."

She narrowed her eyes, and then watched as he was signaling one of the waiters.

“What would you like?”

“Um... vodka martini?” she offered, and he relayed her order to the waiter, who rushed off to get the desired drink. Sam followed him with her eyes and then looked back at her superior officer.

“You look beautiful tonight, Sam.” His voice was low, his tone playful, and she couldn’t help but feel flattered by the comment.

“Thank you, so do you. Not... beautiful of course. Handsome.” Way to go, Sam, calling your superior officer handsome. That definitely crossed a line! She hurried to add, “but not in an inappropriate manner. Not that I...”

“Sam,” he interrupted her.

“Good, Sir. You look good is what I meant.” She realized too late that she had slipped again, and after she was just shooting him a happy look about having saved her statement, her eyes widened in shock. “Jack! I mean Jack! Oh God, I’m so sorry. I’m trying!”

It was visible that she was really putting effort into this – albeit failing miserably. He chuckled, and just at that moment the waiter returned with her drink. He thanked him, and then put the glass in front of the young woman. “Drink up, all of it.”

At first it looked like she was going to contradict, but then she took the glass and downed the contents at once, feeling the strong alcohol run down her throat and leave a pleasant burning sensation that was warming her up.

After that, he engaged her in a light-hearted conversation about their surroundings: the singer, the other guests and the other officers who had been auctioned off. McKay had won another auction and one of the poor male scientists now had to bear with his obnoxious manners and his arrogance. The poor guy looked like he was about to run out of the room any minute.

After a while, Jack noted with delight, that the young woman was becoming more and more relaxed, even daring. She was openly holding his eyes, smiling, and she even responded to some of his flirtatious comments with an equally provocative answer. It was obvious to him that she was more at ease, and less over-thinking; and in some moments he was actually beginning to wonder whether she was making attempts at flirting with him.

Knowing Carter however, it wouldn’t have surprised him, if this soft lick of her lips while she was looking at him, or the way she touched her neck with her hands while listening to him, were entirely subconscious.

After all she was a geek, who could spend hours in a lab and notice the slightest alteration in frequencies or whatever – he on the other hand had a lot more experience with people, and mostly with women. Before his marriage with Sarah he had actually been quite the ladies’ man, and he had learned to pay attention to the subconscious signs of physical attraction.

Eventually, Carter excused herself for a moment to go to the restroom. He looked after her when she was walking towards the restrooms, and couldn’t help but admire her outfit. Damn, the army’s hired make-over artist deserved an award. Not that he didn’t appreciate her usual look, but this version of her was just feminine, sexy, hot. Yes, hot. And so damn f*ckable. He winced and took a sip of his drink.

He shouldn't even be thinking about her this way. This was Carter, his kick ass 2IC whom he'd come to respect over the years, not just as a scientist and a soldier, but also as a woman. But then again, he defended himself in his thoughts; it was not like he just wanted to have sex with her. No, sex, was just one – granted a very pleasurable one – of the things he wanted to share with her.

Sam looked at herself in the mirror of the luxuriously designed ladies room and sighed, leaning her hands onto the cool surface of the wash counter. She felt like she was making a big mistake just engaging in her CO's dangerous game. She was not oblivious to the fact that their conversation was probably a bit too casual for the event.

She was sure that it was visible to the entire room that she was in love with him, and that was not a good thing. That was what started rumors, destroyed reputations and ended careers. She had to get herself together and become the professional again.

However, that was easier said than done, and the soft spinning that she felt in her head from the alcohol certainly wasn't helping. She splashed a bit of cold water into her face, and then returned to the table, hoping to have regained her composure.

Jack O'Neill smiled when he saw her approach the table. Damn, she was looking even hotter from the front, he thought, and before he could process his own intentions he had gotten up, and reached his hand out to her. "Dance with me?"

His question took her a moment to register, and eventually she nodded, albeit reluctantly, "Okay." This answer sounded more like a question, and he raised his eyebrows quizzically.

"Unless you would rather..."

"No," Sam replied quickly with a soft, albeit insecure, smile. "Let's dance."

She put her hand in his outstretched one and allowed him to lead her to the dancing floor where a few other couples were dancing already. Unexpectedly, he spun her around slowly and pulled her into his arms – with an appropriate amount of distance between them.

She giggles softly at the surprise of having suddenly been spun around as well as finding out that he was actually good enough a dancer to guide her body and making her (who was actually rather bad at dancing) follow his movements. Of all the things she knew about him, she would have never thought that he could dance.

If only her heels weren't so extremely high, and her feet hurting so badly that she felt like stumbling every second.

"Carter..."

"Sir?"

Ignoring her repeated slip of calling him by rank with a sigh, he looked at her in a mixture of fascination and confusion, "Relax. I am not fond of taking the female part while dancing, so can you let me lead?"

She blushed and tried to relax, her mind desperately trying to guess where he would step next, so that she could follow. It wasn't that she couldn't dance at all, but the last time she had formally danced with somebody had been at her prom, and after that she usually engaged in close body dances with men or avoided social events that required dancing all together. In addition to that, by now, her feet – or rather legs - were starting to kill her.

It was a mess. This should be a pleasant and joyous occasion; she was dancing with her CO whom she was incredibly in love with – had been for years – and she couldn't even dance.

When she stepped on his foot the next moment, she muttered what sounded like a curse and broke free from him in a desperate surrender to her apparent inability to dance - even though he was gentleman enough not to let his face show any sign of her slip.

"I'm so sorry!" She stepped away from him, her face displaying the embarrassment she felt inside. "I... This... is just a bad idea, Sir."

She was already turning around to walk back to their table, when his hand grabbed her upper arm and pulled her gently back against him. "What do you think you're doing?" he murmured against her hair close to her ear.

"Going back to the table, before I accidentally break your foot or seriously hurt you otherwise, Sir?"

"Running off the dance floor mid-song, colonel? You have any idea what that will do to my reputation?" he asked her in mock offense, and after staring at him blankly for a few seconds, she couldn't help but smile faintly.

"It's not you Sir. I haven't danced formally in ages, and frankly, these heels that they put me in are killing me. I keep stumbling, my feet hurt, just now I stepped on your toes – and frankly, right now you must think I am the clumsiest..."

"Sam," he said gently, and pulled her against his body, closer this time so that his chin was touching the strands of hair that were hanging into her face. His left hand took hers gently, while his other hand slipped around her waist, holding her firmly against him without the necessary formal distance between their bodies. They were almost in full contact, as they were just swaying on the dance floor without any complex dance moves, his arm holding her securely against his body, while at the same time giving her the chance to lean against him for balance. "How about this?"

"Much better, Sir," Sam replied, gratefully. "Except for my shoes which are still killing me."

"You could always just lose them," he offered with a sexy smile and then bend to her ear to tease her. "I promise I won't step on your toes."

The way he whispered the words gently against her skin in a deep, sexy voice, while at the same time his hot breath hit the sensitive skin of her neck made her shiver. She leaned her forehead against his shoulder and chuckled softly at his words which were a clear pun at her earlier misstep.

"What can I say Sir, I am good with guns and combat – and science. I'll have your back in the field, but on the dance floor I'll be the one you have to watch..."

Oh hell, yes, you are, but for a different reason, he thought quietly without saying it. And he was absolutely sure that she was not even aware of how beautiful and sexy she looked. Anything that went beyond her little gadgets and calculations in her lab, she seemed to be completely oblivious about. But then again, that was part of what he loved about her: her dedication, her excitability about things that he found absolutely boring, her passion about science – while at the same time being a kick-ass soldier and loyal person that had shown hundreds of times that he could absolutely count on her.

"Well... I would offer you a training session on the dance floor, but I think the other guests would find that pretty disturbing," he joked and again she laughed softly, her head now leaning fully against his shoulder.

"I appreciate the gesture, Sir."

"Carter... is it that hard for you to not call me Sir?"

"Would be easier if you weren't wearing your dress blues," she admitted, and he nodded.

"Ok... point taken," he noted with a chuckle.

They remained silent and just swayed to the music. The singer on stage, a young girl who had recently won one of television's casting shows, was switching from blues to romantic music now, and her soul-like voice filled the room.

At the change of songs, Jack stopped dancing and looked at the young woman in his arms.

"We can go back to the table now if you want."

"I don't know," Sam replied reluctantly and with the hint of a smile. "I was just getting the hang of it. Unless you want to..."

"Not a chance," he interrupted her before she could even finish and pulled her back against his body, even closer than before so that their bodies were now brushing against each other. On second thought, he mused, this had probably not been the best idea. He was holding her so close in his arms, that her breasts were touching his chest and her scent filled his nostrils, and he was having a hard time concentrating on the music and getting his body and trail of thoughts under control as it was.

They just swayed on the dance floor to the music, as the singer kept performing more and more songs and gradually as the evening processed, turned to the very slow songs. Neither of them counted the songs, or stopped their dancing, and by the time the singer had reached "Smoke Gets in your Eyes", they were swaying in full body contact, with Sam's arm around his neck, her fingers gently stroking the hair at the back of his head every now and again, and his hand lying slightly lower than what would have been appropriate. But nobody was watching them, or even paying remotely attention to them, and it was not like they were being inappropriate. It just seemed natural, and neither of them minded.

Her head was lying against his shoulder, and they had been quiet for a while, when Jack finally bent his head a little. His skin brushed that of the young woman and the hint of a smile played around his mouth. "Are you thinking about quarks?"

She couldn't help but burst out in soft laughter. "No, Sir. Why do you ask, are you?"

"Carter," he replied in a tone that by itself told her, how ridiculous that idea was. "You were just being really quiet."

"And that automatically means I am thinking about science?"

"It usually does."

He was right and they both knew it. Sam shook her head. "No, Sir, I was just..." Yes, what had she been doing? Focusing her entire self on the feeling of his body against hers, and how warm his body was, and how the touch of his hand through her dress made her skin tickle in just the most sensual way. All of which was inappropriate to say. Hell, it was even inappropriate to think – or feel! She couldn't believe she had permitted her mind to be lulled in to the point where she allowed herself to cross that dangerous boundary.

"Just what?" The gentle tone of his voice brought her back into reality, and Sam froze and loosened from his arms.

"Thinking that my feet can't stand this anymore," she replied with a more neutral voice, having returned to her professional soldier self. "Do you mind if we return to the table?"

"No, sure," he replied. "The room is clearing out anyway; I think they might expect us to leave soon."

"Well, Sir, this was originally intended to be a two hour event."

"I feel cheated," he replied with a boyish mock-insult in his voice, and she looked at him and raised her eyebrows.

"Sir?" She was just about ready to apologize to him for having been such lousy company, when his next statement surprised her.

"There wasn't even cake!" he explained his outrage and she couldn't help but start giggling. "What? For the amount they expected you to pay to get in, you would imagine that they at least serve cake!"

"Well, there is a buffet over there," Sam offered, looking over at the far side of the room, where waiters were already cleaning the first plates off the buffet. "I doubt there's cake though. I saw salmon and caviar."

"But no cake!" he kept insisting. "Somebody should write them a letter about that."

They kept chitchatting and joking lightly, while they left the building, walking side-by-side next to each other. It was warm outside, despite the fact that the sun had almost set.

"Thank you, Sir," Carter said finally when they were standing outside on the wide stairs that led into the entrance hall. When she saw him raise his eyebrows in question, she clarified, "You know... for saving me from an evening with McKay."

She gave him a smile: one of those whole-hearted Carter-smiles that he always tried to provoke from her. "Gladly. Anytime. And hey, I got to dance with you, so it was worth it."

She chuckled softly, but kept her eyes locked with his in an intense look. "I would have been better if they hadn't made me wear the most impractical shoes for the event."

"I don't know..." he replied back and looked at her legs. "They do one hell of a job at making your legs even longer, which works especially well in combination with that rather short dress, so if I had to judge – yeah, worth it."

She cocked her head to the side slightly and looked at him in one of her mock-annoyed glances. He smiled flirtatiously and leaned in slightly.

"In case nobody told you, you look gorgeous," he rasped. He noted how her body tensed slightly as he approached her, and she dropped her eyes.

Jeez, Carter, he thought. How much more obvious was he supposed to be in his flirtations? He had broken up with Kerry (well, actually she had broken up with him, but who cared), and he had made that fact known to her. He had assumed that, after she had shown up in his backyard and started stuttering Carter-style about her doubts about a marriage with Pete, she had been willing to take the next step. Maybe he had misunderstood her signals. Maybe she had given up on him after they were interrupted by Kerry coming out of the house. After all she had started saying something along the lines that if she didn't tell him then, she would never... Or maybe she had actually just wanted to talk. He could only guess.

Ever since his break-up, he had been throwing her bits and pieces of information, signaling that he was open to whatever suggestion she had concerning their relationship – or rather the lack thereof.

But she kept avoiding the subject in that awkward Carter-eske style. The ball was in her court. He couldn't make the first move, not without risking being court-martialed for harassment or coming towards a subordinate. Not that he believed she would report him, but he was more worried what it might do to their friendship if he had completely misunderstood her.

He retreated from her body and turned towards the parking lot. "Now, let's hope the streets are not too crowded with the holiday travelers," he noted. "Otherwise the way home will take forever – relatively spoken," he remarked with an amused side-glance at her, noting with satisfaction that she failed at suppressing an amused little smile – the way she always did when he tried to talk 'physics'.

It was the only reason why he even still tried to do it: if he succeeded, he impressed them both, and if he failed he caused those little smiles of amusement on her face that he absolutely adored. Although he wasn't able to determine what he preferred: her smiling, or her staring at him in absolute astonishment mixed with pride about the fact that he had listened to her.

"Are you going up to your cabin over the holiday, Sir?"

"No, no, actually I was thinking about just getting some stuff around the house done. You know... things like filling up the fridge, smaller repairs. Do you have a ride home?" he asked, and she nodded.

"Yes, Sir, I came in my own car, and only had one drink so I'll be fine."

"Alright." Another moment of awkward silence. Then he decided to try one last time. She was Carter after all; maybe she didn't realize that the ball was in her field. Hell, maybe she didn't even know that there was a ball – figuratively spoken. She barely seemed to notice anything besides... quarks.

He kept looking at the parking lot, blinking towards the reddish light of the setting sun. "Hey, since you don't have anything planned tomorrow, and I don't have anything planned tomorrow – wanna have dinner tomorrow evening? You know, go to a place that has cake and make up for what we missed tonight?" he said in a light, joking manner, and she looked up at him slightly confused.

"Seriously? ... Um... yes, sure, why not... Are Teal'c and Daniel coming too?"

"Um..." He turned his head, baffled at her answer. Somebody should really shake some sense into this geek-woman. "No, actually it would be you... and me." Upon seeing her face become more serious with slight awkwardness displayed on it, he shrugged and added, "And of course all the strangers at the restaurant. A many-people meeting if you wish – of which you would probably only know me."

"Um," she interrupted him hesitantly. "Like... a date, Sir?"

Yes, Carter, like a date! "Um... no. No, not at all," he replied and saw her relax visibly. "Just two people... friends if you wish," he gesticulated between them to indicate the relationship, "spending a relaxed, fun evening together."

This was never going to work unless he was faster than her busy, constantly over-analyzing brain. He wanted her to be relaxed, easy, fun Carter that he knew, and not some kind of nerve wreck who was over-thinking every part of her behavior. He had been with enough women to know how to woo them – but as long as she was overthinking, she was effectively blocking all his woo-power so it was time to try a different approach. Although the kind of hesitation she displayed at this very moment was probably not speaking in his favor, he thought quietly.

"Come on, Carter. We have served together for what, 8 years now? We've been out eating before."

"Okay," she finally nodded. "No, you're right, I see no reason why not, Sir. I'd be glad to."

"Great. 8pm okay for you?"

"Yes, absolutely. Where are we going?" she asked, while they were slowly walking down the parking-lot now.

"Not telling you, let me surprise you," he smiled.

"Okay, but how will I know what to wear then?"

"Wear something nice, but something that you're comfortable in. No shoes that cause you pain... or other pieces of fashion that you don't like," he said, gesticulating towards her shoes and appearance. "It's not gonna be anything too fancy, just some place with... cake. You know me..." His matter-of-fact statement made her smile and turn to him.

"I'm looking forward to it, Sir," she smiled openly at him. Her smile, and the way that the evening sun lightened up her face made her look absolutely radiant, and for a moment he just smiled back at her, his eyes locked with hers intently.

Until she turned away slightly awkwardly and looked at the other side of the lot. "Alright, my car is parked over there so..."

"So..." he continued, "I'm gonna come get you at your house tomorrow at 8."

"Yes, Sir."

They looked at each other, and Sam was desperately thinking of something else to say, when he turned around. "See you tomorrow, Carter."

She watched his back as he was walking away from her, and then slowly turned around to stroll towards her car, clutching her little purse with her hand. Good God, she had agreed to go out to dinner with her commanding officer, and it would be just them. He was right, they had gone out eating or drinking dozens of times before, but it had never been just them. There was usually Daniel and Teal'c around.

Ever since her father had died, she hadn't been sure how to behave towards him. She had wanted to confess to him in his backyard, and it had taken all of her courage to work up the nerve to actually go there – and it had ended in a disaster.

She was sure that he knew what she had been about to say – there was something in the way he had looked at her, first in confusion, and then his expression slowly changing to utter astonishment - until Kerry had interrupted them. Then it was nothing but awkwardness. She hated awkwardness. And she hated dating and feelings. She was not good at it – she had never been. Sure, she had no problems finding men willing to date her or going all crazy over her, but usually things had a tendency to turn out disastrous, mildly put. Either they ended up dead, or turned out to be aliens, or they simply weren't her type – which didn't prevent them from keeping trying.

But Jack O'Neill was her type. He had been for years, even though her analytical mind had not been able to come up with one logical reason for why that was the case. They had nothing in common, their interests were completely different, they enjoyed different pastimes and even television shows, and yet, for some reason, she enjoyed his company more than she had ever enjoyed anyone else's company. Maybe exactly because of their differences: whenever she started to overthink, he distracted her with one of his jokes. When she saw things too seriously, he offered an interesting new point of view. Besides, it was very easy for her to be around him.

She just couldn't think of a reason for why he would be into her. She knew he had been a few years ago – a feeling that went far beyond just physical attraction. He had actually deeply cared for her – a fact that had completely and utterly surprised her back then. Not that she didn't like him, or find him

attractive, but he was the kind of man that usually just didn't go for a woman like her, but for the Kerry-type. Kerry was the naturally sensual type; the kind of woman that seemed to ooze sexual attraction naturally. She, Sam, was the geek-type who preferred an evening spent in the lab with some Goa'ult artifact to going out with people, or meeting someone. She was awkward in personal situations. What could he have possibly seen in her in the first place? And more importantly, she really wasn't sure whether he was even still interested in her?

So talking to him about her feelings had taken everything, every little ounce of courage that she could work up. She wasn't sure what she had expected when she went to his backyard. But practically running in on him and his new girlfriend had definitely not been on the list. And even though he had been there when her father died, and had promised her to always be there for her, they had never talked about the incident again. Not even, when they had all gone up to his cabin to go fishing.

He had been friendly towards her, even more so than before, but he had also kept a certain distance – and in all fairness, so had she towards him. They had had fun, and talked – like friends would. Friends; no more and no less.

So Sam really wasn't sure where he was emotionally – or where she was for that matter. Did she really want to risk maneuvering herself into another one of those dead-end situations that she had been in with Pete in the end?

In a way, her experience with Pete had been important, because it had made clear to her, who she was, and what her priorities in life were: and family and kids were not necessarily among them, at least not at the present time. And she couldn't imagine that this would change in the near future.

'You can still have everything that you want,' his father had told her shortly before he had died. She wasn't sure that he was right.

Sam sighed and started to walk a little faster towards her car, when a voice held her back.

"Colonel Carter... Sam!"

Sam stopped and closed her eyes when she recognized the voice. God, what had she done to deserve this? Putting on the best fake smile that she was capable of, she turned around. "Doctor McKay..."

"I just wanted to let you know that it's a pity we couldn't spend more time together. I just saw you walk out and figured – you know - a bit of small talk." He laughed, and then stopped again, when he realized, that she was looking at him with a hint of annoyance now. "It's a pity I didn't win the bid on you."

"Yes, I don't know where to start expressing my sadness," Sam replied ironically and sighed. "Listen, McKay, I'm tired and if there was nothing in particular that you wanted..."

"Oh, no, just wanted to say hi. And tell you that you look amazing. I mean, I've seen stunning and sexy before, but tonight, you... I mean... look at you..." He pointed at her body. "That's..." Upon seeing her death glare, he bit down his undoubtedly very sexist comment and said "...very nice."

"Thanks." Sam replied with an audible trace of irony in her voice.

"I couldn't help but notice that you and General O'Neill..." He waved his hands around awkwardly. "I mean... you seemed rather close..."

"I've served with the man for 8 years, McKay. We've saved each other's lives countless times, of course we are close," Sam interjected annoyed.

"Yes, sure... okay. So... there's nothing between you two? I mean... I don't want to intrude, but since the General is essentially one of the people signing my paychecks I would really not want to... you know... step on his toes, " he babbled on, and then finally concluded with a smile, "So, can I still hope?"

"McKay! General O'Neill and I are colleagues and friends, no more and no less. And as for your last question: no you may not hope, McKay. You are insufferable," Sam said angrily now.

"Ah, as fierce as always," McKay chuckled and posed in what he thought was a sexy way.

"Okay, Rodney, let me make it very clear for you. I will not date you, kiss you or go out with you. Ever. We do not have any kind of relationship, especially not that kind, and there is no mutual attraction between us. The only way for you to get me to go out with you would involve drugs and mind control techniques, so..."

"Oh..." he said, and then looked at her almost hopefully. "Would that be an option? I mean, are you into that kind of..." Upon seeing her face, he shook his head. "No... of course not. A joke!" He laughed awkwardly.

Sam closed her eyes warily. "Listen. I really need to get home now, so... as always, a pleasure talking to you."

With these words, she simply turned around and walked to her car.

"Oh, okay, Colonel. See you! Maybe sometime soon?"

Sam didn't even answer anymore. As soon as she was in her car she leaned back in her seat and closed her eyes. God, she couldn't stand that man. He was a sexist, disgusting pervert with a very weird idea about women and relationships in general.

Then her mind drifted back to the evening, her dance (or rather dances) with the general and their last conversation about their dinner date tomorrow evening. Relax, Sam, she willed herself and corrected silently: It is not a date.

He himself had stated that it wasn't a date, so it was complete appropriate. There was nothing wrong with two friends going out to eat and spending the evening together – even if they were subordinate and commanding officer. Not a slightest bit wrong. It was just like another night out with the guys.

Heat of the Moment

Just like another night out with the guys...

With that mindset, Sam prepared for the evening. There was no nervously fidgeting through her wardrobe to find something nice to wear or spending much time worrying about her exterior appearance. She was actually looking forward to the evening. It had been quite a while since they had enjoyed any non-work related spare-time, and even though work had been rather calm during the past couple of months, she craved some fun time on earth.

Considering, that it was a rather warm summer day, she opted for a light summer dress, which was not too short to make her feel exposed, but not too long to make her feel like her own grandmother, a short black jeans jacket to wear over it, and some flat black ballerina shoes which she could walk in comfortably. When she checked her own appearance in the mirror at 7.45, she was happy with the way she looked. The dress was suitable for both, fancy places and fast food restaurant, and the jacket

and shoes added a bit of elegance. Her make-up was natural, yet underlining the natural beauty of her complexion and making her look more radiant.

When the doorbell rang, Sam was completely done. She slipped into her shoes and then opened the door with a radiant smile.

“Hi!”

“Hi,” Jack replied back, just looking at her for a few moments speechlessly before realizing that he really shouldn’t be doing that, if he didn’t want her to be awkward again. “You... look great.”

“Thanks Sir, so do you. No uniform today?” she joked. He was wearing jeans and a shirt, both looking casual, but not so casual that they couldn’t go out and dine at a nice place. He chuckled.

“No formal attire required. You know me. I’m too lazy to shop for tuxedos and since all formal events are usually Air Force-related it would be a waste of money anyway.”

“Well, Sir, your dress uniform suits you. Um... give me a moment, I just need to get my purse. You can come in if you want.” She opened the door wider and then turned around to go through her things. He waited patiently, and strolled along her small hallway, amazed at how natural it felt to be here, waiting for her and preparing to spend an evening in private.

“So,” he finally started, following her into the living-room where she was putting some things into her purse. She was standing with the back to him which gave him the opportunity to admire her long, smooth legs. “Did McKay harass you last night? I saw him run after you when I was driving out.”

“Um... yes. That guy is strange, I think he honestly asked me if he was allowed to drug me to go out with me.” She turned around with her purse all ready now and shuddered slightly. “That conversation was something else. Not so weird for a conversation with McKay though, I’m afraid.”

“If you need me to talk to him, you let me know.” His voice was gentle, and concern was written all over his face.

Sam shook her head. “That won’t be necessary, Sir, he is annoying, but he’s harmless. He wouldn’t know what to do with a woman even if she was lying drugged before him – which is not necessarily a bad thing. Besides, he will return to Atlantis in a couple of days anyway.”

“Ready?” Jack asked finally and Sam nodded.

“All done.”

“Good, let’s go!”

They left the house and went to his car. After he had opened the door for her and let her in, he got in himself.

“So, where are we going, Sir?”

“There’s this little place that has the best pizza in town. Plus the cake is delicious. You like Italian, right?” he asked, concerned for a moment, until he saw her nod.

“I love Italian.”

The evening started out nicely and calm. The food was delicious and they both enjoyed their time together. Vaguely, Sam realized, that he seemed to touch her much more often than usual tonight – nothing outrageous, just the occasional hand at her waist when he was opening a door for her, taking her jacket and brushing her arm slightly, or offering his hand when she got out of the car. It was

entirely un-like their usual interaction together – but then again, they had never really done a lot off-base together. Well, at least not alone together.

They engaged in light conversations, and reminisced about old times when they still went on missions together a lot more frequently. Ever since Jack had been promoted to general, he usually did not accompany them through the gate – although there were times, when he couldn't stand the boredom of his paperwork anymore and decided to go with them – much to their joy. Especially since the Jaffa rebellion had succeeded, the travels through the gate had become a lot mellower, sometimes even to the point of feeling like short vacations.

"You remember that time with the time loop machine?" Sam laughed at the memory and took a sip of her beer. "Of course you do, all I remember is one day. All you remember is what: 3 months?"

"Hell yes," he replied. "And every morning anew it started out with me sitting at the table and Daniel waiting for me to answer that damn question which I still don't have any idea about what it was in the first place. Talk about hell." He chuckled slightly, when he added, "After that I was a lot more careful to listen to the science babble of you and Daniel, ya know... just in case!"

Sam giggled softly, her body bent forward slightly. She realized that their eye contact was a lot more and a lot deeper than what would have been appropriate, but she didn't really care. Her mind was at ease (probably due to the fact that this was her third bottle of beer – not that she was drunk, but it helped ease her up), and she was enjoying the time with him. A lot more than she should be!

"Well, Sir, you never answered the question of what you did either. Remember, when Daniel mentioned, that you could have done anything without fearing consequences?" Her voice had an intimate edge to it that added a sexiness that made him swallow hard.

"Oh... Carter..." Jack chuckled and gave her one of those glances that made her smile nervously.

"What? Did you do something evil?" she asked and took another sip of her beer. "Come on, Sir! The secret's safe with me."

"Well... for once I played golf."

"Golf." She repeated in a rather disappointed tone, staring at him disbelievingly.

"Yeah... through the gate."

"Through the..." she repeated and then started smiling brightly. "No, you didn't!"

"Oh come on, admit it, has it never crossed your mind to do that? I mean, I can honestly say I hold the world record in intergalactic golf." He smirked with a somewhat boyish pride, and Carter couldn't help but giggle again.

"Well, Sir, there's that. I will certainly keep that in mind for next time I'm stuck in a time loop." She leaned her head on her fingers and looked at him. "So what else?"

"Um..."

"Come on Sir, it was over 90 days. Golf couldn't have been all."

His look became more intense, and he leaned forward as well, his eyes never leaving hers.

"I learned pottery. Oh, and I rode a bike through the SG-C. You should have seen Hammond's face." And I kissed you, he added quietly, not sure if he could (or should) drop that one. She might be

offended or hurt knowing that he had this intimate memory of her that she knew nothing about – not to mention that it would severely cross the line.

“Tell me, Carter, if you were in a time loop, and you knew you could do anything you wanted and it would all reset to the start - what would you do?” he asked in a somewhat low, sexy voice, not letting go of her eyes. She looked at him thoughtfully for a moment.

“I honestly... don’t know.” She started, and then suddenly her face lit up. “Oh, yes I do! Remember that time machine that we acquired and we said we would never use again? I would make use of it, and go back in time to meet – I don’t know, maybe Einstein. Of course, I am not sure if that would even be possible, going back in time in a time loop. It might be that the entire process of going back in time would automatically disrupt the time loop – which would then lead to a paradox, because if it disrupts the time loop, that means there isn’t a time loop anymore, which means technically I wouldn’t go back in time in the first place and...”

“AH, Carter!” Jack interrupted and shook his head. “You’d meet Einstein, let’s leave it at that.”

“Sorry Sir!” she winced slightly and smiled. “I can’t do anything about it, I start analyzing.”

“What else – and no science booyah this time! Anything you could do without consequences and without anyone ever knowing. You know, all ranks aside – since technically I am the general now and - ya kow - could have your ass for gate-golf and such,” he replied with a boyish smile, and took a sip of his beer, never taking his eyes off her face.

“Um... I would... um...” Her expression showed that she was thinking hard for a moment. The possibilities were endless: forbidden physics experiments, slapping McKay real hard – or even better, feeding him lemons. Suddenly her mind shifted to another scenario: kiss General O’Neill; hell, who’d stop at kissing... If she actually was in a time loop with one-hundred percent certainty that everything would reset anyway, she could just as well walk into his office in the sexiest outfit she owned, and just see where it went. If she were in a time loop and knew that there would be no consequences to her actions, she might work up the courage - oh, bad train of thoughts. She blushed slightly and looked away quickly. “I.. I really can’t think of anything else, Sir.”

He had well noticed the blush on her face, but let her off the hook for now. Instead he engaged her in a light, harmless conversation – as he had done the previous evening, but now his entire being was focused on her. Sitting opposite to her gave him the opportunity to hold her eyes intensely, and hang on her lips for every word she said. The table was small and intimate, and not at all a comparison to the setting of the previous night.

He had heard often from the women that he dated, that he could make them go weak in the knees just with the power of his eyes, and the way he used only his eyes to flirt with a woman. And now he wanted to see how it would work on her: his always-in-control, overly-into-science Carter.

And as far as he could see, the experiment was going better than expected. She was visibly relaxed, became a lot more playful in her comments and even threw one or two flirtatious comments back at him. Slowly their conversation became fluent; all the initial uneasiness on her part given their ranks and her insecurities vanished; both of them were laughing and joking, sometimes even whispering to each other.

Occasionally, their hands were brushing on the table – the first time it happened was purely accidental, but when Jack noticed that she didn’t pull her hand away or flinch, he made sure it happened more often, on purpose. Until finally his hand was fully lying on hers, while he was listening to what she was saying, his thumb caressing her skin every now and then. He could see that her face

was flushed, her pupils dilated, and her entire being focused on him. She was absolutely into him; every part of her body told him so.

Therefore he was not surprised to find her agreeing when he eventually asked her in a low and very sexy voice if she wanted to take a walk on the promenade near the restaurant, where there would be fewer people around. It was not that he had any ulterior motifs; he really just craved a more intimate atmosphere where they didn't have to be so careful about what they were talking about or faced the danger of being seen by fellow officers. However, he also didn't want to give her enough time to think about the possible implications of his statement, or over-analyze her own behavior. He half expected her to turn down his offer awkwardly and start talking about inappropriate behavior given their ranks, when she surprised him by smiling softly and nodding, "I'd love that."

After he had paid the check (and refused to let her pay for her share), they went to the doors and stepped out into the warm night air. Jack put his hand at the small of her back to guide her out the door, and Sam couldn't help but feel every touch of his hand somewhat intensified.

As they slowly strolled out of the restaurant, and along the promenade that went along a small canal, their hands brushed every now and then, but neither of them intensified the contact. The cool night air was bringing Sam back to her senses, and she felt slightly uncomfortable, not knowing what to expect or say – or what he expected. But when Jack picked up the conversation again, she visibly relaxed while they were slowly walking side by side along the promenade, looking over the calm water that reflected the lights of the malls and buildings from the shore on the other side.

When they had reached the balustrade that separated the walkway from the water, they leaned against it slightly and looked out over the water in silence for a moment, before Sam turned her head slightly to look at the man next to her.

He was tall, and she had always loved that about him. It was hard for a woman as tall as she was to find a man who was of the same size, not to mention taller. After a while he turned his head with a light smirk playing around the corners of his mouth.

"Something on your mind?" he asked, letting her know that he was quite aware of her staring. Damn, he was so sexy, when he did that: just looking intensely and giving that half-smirk of his. She was so lost in admiring him, that her turning around fully to face him happened almost automatically.

With growing interest he turned towards her too, noticing the way she was studying him in a very intense way, completely lost in her thoughts. Yet it was the expression on her face that intrigued him most – sensual, soft and her eyes filled with a feminine sparkle that he rarely ever saw in them.

Her next move caught him entirely by surprise. It was not that he didn't welcome it, but he simply hadn't expected it.

Before she could rationalize her thoughts or find reasons not to, she took a small step forward and, placing her hands against his chest, put her lips against his in the most tender and almost shy kiss he had ever received.

A lot of women had made their passes at him, but most of them were seductresses by nature who did not hesitate to use their bodies in a sexual way, and their kisses were always loaded with passion and showing that they knew exactly what they wanted from him.

Her kiss was different: slow, sweet without any rush, and absolutely honest. Her lips were soft and warm as they moved across his, and suddenly his senses were surrounded by her scent, her warmth,

her entire being. He didn't move, mostly due to surprise, but also because he feared that once he touched her, the spell would be broken and she would simply disappear, leaving him with the realization that he had only been dreaming. It was not a dream. However, before he could deepen the kiss in any way, she had withdrawn her lips and body from his.

"Um..." she started, and he stared back at her with a puzzled look, his mind still somewhat drugged from the intoxicating feeling of feeling her body so close against his. Why had she stopped? What happened?

Then he saw her eyes clouding with the revelation of what she had done, and her body tensed up.

"Oh, God, Sir! I'm sorry... I really shouldn't have...!"

Okay, what exactly in his behavior had prompted her to think he was minding, he wondered? Before she could turn around fully, he grabbed her wrist and pulled her back into his body which caused a little gasp of shock from her before his lips found hers almost the instant her body was in contact with his.

Many women had complimented him on his kissing skills, and told him that he was an outstanding kisser. He didn't know if it was true, but he relied on the accuracy of that statement now when he started to seduce the woman in front of him with his lips. Initially, her body was stiff against his, and he could feel her little shocked intake of breath at this almost predatory move. Therefore he started the kiss out soft, gently enticing her to open her lips for him to deepen it. When she did, he took full control of the kiss. He alternated between gently running his lips over hers while softly sucking on them, and engaging her in passionate open-mouthed kisses that showed how much he wanted her.

Soon he had her moan softly into his mouth, her fingers clasping the material of his shirt and her entire body pressing into him to feel him against her.

He turned slightly, so that her back was leaning against the cold railing and she was pinned against it with his hands on either side of her on the metal, while his lips were working their magic. He was seducing her, taking her lips hungrily and then savoring the kiss again in what seemed like a slow, endless game, until she was reduced to soft whimpers and moans against his body, her hands lying on his chest and her fingers desperately holding on to the fabric of his shirt.

Vaguely, he was aware, that they were out in the open and pretty much in sight of the main window front of a much frequented restaurant. A change of place was in order, since he wasn't keen on being seen by one of the soldiers working at the SG-C while making out with one of his subordinates in public. He broke the kiss softly, looking in her eyes. She looked back at him from behind a cloud of desire and need, her hot breath coming fast against his mouth, mingling with his.

"Come with me," he rasped against her lips and pulled her gently into the shadow of a group of nearby trees. She gave an aroused little whimper, when he pushed her a little harder than intended up against the tree, and resumed the delightful task of making love to her mouth with his tongue.

"Oh... God, Sir..." Sam whispered in between two kisses. Damn the man could do things with his mouth that she never dreamed about. Her head was spinning from his scent (or probably rather the combination of beer and his scent), his nearness and the way he tasted. She wanted him to never stop. And she wanted more – so much more.

Jack thought he was about to lose control when she made the sexiest, most wantonly sound against his lips that he had ever heard from her – or any woman for that matter. He didn't even care that she called him Sir – hell, for all he cared, she could call him by his rank and have him order her around; it didn't matter. All that mattered were those sweet lips against his, the sexy little sounds that escaped

her lips and the way her body moved sensually against him. After years of denying himself the pleasure of touching her, feeling her and kissing her, it seemed that now that he was finally doing so, his body was not only unwilling, but completely unable to let her go.

He had wanted to flirt with her, but his main aim had been to prompt some kind of reaction that would lead to them finally talking about their relationship. Never in his wildest dreams had he imagine that she might just come onto him in a way that, albeit being somewhat shy, had been the hottest way any woman had ever hit on him.

Pressing her into the tree with his body, he moved his hands to her waist, ministering her lower body closer against his with one of his legs gently pressed in between hers, and then running his hands back over her buttocks to hold her in place. He was rewarded with another one of her moans and took that as encouragement to keep this sensual game going. Vaguely, he became aware of the fact that they were probably a bit too old to dry hump against a tree like teenagers – not to mention the fact that they were respected air force officers behaving inappropriately in public – and parted his lips from hers with the intention of stopping this. However, when he saw the expression in her eyes, her lips softly parted, and her hands coming up to rest on his cheeks, he couldn't uphold this intention, and gladly gave in when her lips met his anew. It was just kissing after all, who cared. He knew he didn't at that moment.

Besides, they had saved the earth countless times. They deserved a bit of kissing.

Gently he buried his hand in her short hair and then, after breaking the kiss shortly, he pulled her head back to expose her neck to him. Then he bent down and started spilling hot, searing kisses down her throat and the side of her neck, desperate to taste more of her skin, and keep her writhing against his body in helpless passion as she did.

Her mind was swept off the ground and there didn't seem to be one rational thought left in her brain-cells. She was not the kind of woman who just started to hotly make out with a man in public like this. Yet, she didn't care that they were out in the open and any minute somebody might walk by who could see them. All she knew was that she wanted to feel more of him against her.

Her hands flew down to the hem of his jeans and under his shirt. She felt his muscles tremble against her touch and his soft moan vibrated against the over-sensitive skin of her neck, when she made contact with the naked skin of his waist, and became more courageous, pulling his shirt up slightly in the subconscious hope to feel more of his naked skin against her.

They were quickly going out of control, both of them, with the passion inside them having boiled for such a long time that once it took over now, it left them breathless, trembling and not able to stop touching, caressing or feeling what they had denied themselves for so long.

It was only when they suddenly heard voices approaching, that they both froze and broke their kisses, their minds instantly on alert and their bodies pressing into the shadows of the trees further. Somewhat breathlessly, they watched two business-men walking by, and discussing some kind of work-related issue. They were so absorbed in their discussion that they hardly cared for anything around them, and therefore didn't notice the rather disheveled (and guilty) looking couple.

Once they were far enough gone, Sam couldn't help but start giggling softly and buried her face against Jack's chest to muffle the sounds. Jack smirked into her hair and then bent to her ear.

"How about we move this somewhere less populated?" he rasped into her ear, and Sam shuddered with excitement against him. She knew the implications of the question, which was basically an intelligently phrased version of "my place, or yours". Normally that was not her style. She took her

time with the guys she went out with: no rash decisions, and definitely no make-out sessions on the first date. It had been that way with Pete, and with Jonas. She needed time to get used to the thought of intimacy. But somehow it was different with Jack. Kissing him felt like she had never done anything else in her entire life – and never wanted to. She wanted him. Badly. Therefore, before her brain did even have the chance to intervene, she had made her decision.

“Lead the way,” she whispered sexily against his lips, before pressing another hot open-mouthed kiss against them. Reluctantly, Jack pulled away from her, and then took her hand to pull her along the promenade to the parking lot. Once they reached the car, he unlocked the passenger side and pressed her against the cold metal for another deep, seductive kiss that reduced her to moans and sighs, before he opened the door for her.

“My place okay?” he asked when he got in driver’s seat, and she nodded, her mind still drugged from his kisses and his lips on her skin. It was all that he needed, so he started the car and drove off the road, putting all effort into concentrating on the traffic and away from the woman of his dreams next to him. Last thing they needed now was him getting into a traffic accident.

Sam leaned back in her seat and looked at the road ahead dreamily. She couldn’t believe that she they had actually kissed – well, actually they had done more than kissing. Last she had made out with a guy like that was... actually she didn’t think she had ever made out with a guy like that. No, her relationships had always been very in-control, and rather void of passion. Spur-of-the-moment sex had hardly ever happened, and even if it did, she was usually not entirely in it with her whole heart. This was entirely different with Jack O’Neill.

General Jack O’Neill.

General...

Oh... God...

It slowly sunk in on her drugged mind, what she was about to do! She was about to have sex with her commanding officer in a heat-of-the-moment-way. They had not even talked about feelings, or their relationship. This could not possibly lead to more than a one night stand and a lot of trouble. What was she thinking?

True, this was Jack, whom she had been in love with for years, but ever since her father passed away, they had never again talked about feelings, his statement of being there for her ‘always’ standing in the room rather ambiguously.

And now she had signaled him that – yes, what exactly? Oh God, had he taken her reactions the wrong way? He didn’t think she was just in this for the sex, did he? She wasn’t sure she’d be able to stand having sex with him, and then watch him just walk away from it. She had expectations, but was it fair of her to do this without him being aware of that?

What exactly was this that they were doing anyway? So far they had done nothing but heavily make out in the public. And she had started it for crying out loud. She had signaled a superior officer that she was willing to have a sexual relationship with him. In no way had she indicated towards him that she had feelings for him.

Oh, this wasn’t good. She had not only crossed the line to insubordination. This could only lead to difficulties in their future professional relationship.

On the other hand, this was Jack, he would never take her advances the wrong way, would he? A lot had changed since they decided to keep things ‘in the room’. He had been in a relationship, and so

had she – even more, she had almost gotten married. Wasn't she a fool if she assumed that ever since four years ago, nothing had changed?

And even if they considered a relationship, where would that take them? She had just broken up with Pete two months ago, because she knew, the role of being the wife and mother didn't fit her. Did she really want to go down that same road again with him? HIM of all people. It was true, her deep feelings for him had been a concern in her break-up with Pete as well, albeit a minor one. The feelings that she had for Jack O'Neill went beyond anything that she had ever felt for another man, and regardless of whether they would end up together or not, it had just not seemed fair to Pete to marry him under those circumstances and doom him to always be third most important concern in her life: right after her work and Jack. She had been in love with Jack for so long that she really didn't want to screw this up and for some reason she knew she would.

Did she even have the right to hope for a serious relationship when she was the one who was not willing to give up her work for him? Her father had told her that she could still have everything she wanted, but she never felt that this was true – especially not at this particular moment. As a woman, there was always at some point the choice between work or a relationship. Could there be an in between? Would he be okay with that?

Not to mention their build up expectations: what about the sex for crying out loud? He probably expected great sex after so many years of waiting. She didn't have great sex. She was not like Kerry or one of the women that he was usually into. She was not feminine, and passionate and sensual. God, she didn't even have much experience. Sex with Pete had been okay at best. That was it. Sex for her was not the reason why she entered a relationship. She needed to connect with people on the mind level.

Sex was only secondary – and definitely nothing earth-shattering or mind-blowing. And before Pete – hell, it had been years since she had slept with a guy before Pete. She usually ended up with the McKay types: scientists and nerds who gathered their knowledge about women from porn movies or talk with other nerds; except for Jonas Hanson, who had been a loser in his own way. And even with him the sex had been average at best.

And now Jack expected this mind-blowing sex from her and would probably be disappointed once he learned that she was just not... Kerry. It had always seemed to her that to women like her, sex was something that came natural, whereas she simply didn't know what to make of it.

He would be disappointed, the situation would be awkward – their working together would be awkward. Hell, how were they supposed to continue working together? Not to mention the court-martial if anybody ever found out.

Her mind went into overdrive and she started feeling mildly sick.

By the time, he drove his van into the driveway of his house, her initial sick feeling had turned into full-fledged nausea. After the car had stopped, and he had gotten out to open the passenger's seat door for her she felt ready to throw up.

He smiled when he opened the door, and held his hand out for her to get out. She took it, her hand (and whole body) trembling and got out of the car. He turned, wanting to pull her with him gently with their hands still entwined, but she moved only very hesitantly and then stopped. Their hands lost contact.

Jack stopped and turned around, realizing instantly that something was wrong. He had noticed the trembling of her hand, but had mistaken it for desire – now looking in her face and seeing how pale

she was, it became clear to him, that she was afraid to the core. Scared. That was an expression he rarely saw on his tough, rescue-the-world, 21C Carter.

"Hey, you okay?" he asked softly and approached her, but she took a few steps back, holding her hands up defensively and ready to push him away. He stopped instantly, giving her the space her defensive body language was asking for.

"I... no, not really... I think... this is a mistake... I think I really can't do this... I should go..." she stuttered and turned around to the car, only to then realize something else.

Damn, she didn't come in her own car. And she could hardly ask him to drive her back now, could she? Messed up! The entire situation was messed up. "Um..." She half-turned again awkwardly. "I... I will just call a cab and..."

"Hey... hey..." Only now did he step towards her, and stopped her gently by turning her towards him, only touching her shoulders with his hands. He could tell that she was seriously freaked and he had no idea what he had done to cause this. Damn, they hadn't even spoken in the car. "Sam... do you mind telling me what's going on?"

"General!" she said with a trembling voice, not able to look up into his eyes, and he narrowed his eyes at this formal address. "We can't do this... I can't do this. I'm sorry if I sent you mixed signals about... I don't know what I was..." She felt tears build in her eyes and desperately fought them back. She would not cry! Not now. That would only make a bad situation worse. "I crossed a line and... I really don't mean to play games with you or something but..."

"Hey," he said again softer this time, and then half-joked, "If I remember correctly, the line-crossing was mutual. And I can definitely think of a few games I would really love for you to play with me," he punned her phrasing of before, and winced when he saw the expression on her face.

Okay, mental note, he thought to himself, flirtations and sexy-talk in an attempt to lighten the mood on freaked-out Carter: not a good idea.

She looked even more miserable than before and her mind was obviously desperately trying to come up with something to say. This was turning into one hell of an awkward moment, and he was determined to stop it before it got there.

"Listen, Carter," he used his military address of her on purpose to bring them back to familiar territory. "Why don't you tell me what's going on?"

"Sir, this was a mistake," she announced desperately.

"Okay," he stated, neutrally, his tone conveying neither agreement nor disagreement, because he wanted to know what was going through her head first. "Care to elaborate?"

"Um... this... Sir. Us. I'm not good at this. And I really didn't come tonight because I planned to end up... doing this."

"Noted, and neither did I," he nodded and narrowed his eyes. "But I need a bit more information on what went wrong just now. Humor me."

"Well Sir, I'm not sure what you expect from tonight, but we're probably not on the same level... besides there's quite a chance I will disappoint you. I am no Kerry."

"Huh..." he said simply, still staring at her, then when she looked at him expectantly (and obviously expected him to understand her now and react somehow), he affirmed the obvious, "You don't say."

She kept staring at him in silence and then finally shook her head. "I really should go now, Sir... I'll just..."

"Okay, wait a minute. What did you mean by that last thing?" For a split second he wondered if he had accidentally called her Kerry in the spur of the moment earlier. But then again, Kerry was so far in the past for him that he wasn't even thinking about her anymore, so why would his subconscious do that? True, he had begun to have feelings for her, and her breaking up with him had somewhat devastated him, but he had gotten over it rather quickly. Besides, didn't Sam know, that it has always been her for him?

"See Sir, I saw her and she fits your type. I mean she is exactly like the type of woman you go for. She was beautiful and feminine, and she had that sensual sexy thing going..."

Was it just him or was this conversation getting weird? "Carter?" he stopped her babbling, indicating that he didn't follow her.

"What I am trying to say Sir, I am none of these things. And also, I am not willing to have a sexual one night thing. I know I signaled the opposite earlier, and I'm really sorry for that, but my career means too much for me. Things would inevitably be awkward at work – not to mention we could both face the threat of court-martial if things ever got out. Not that I plan on it getting out or something, just... I think it's best if I just leave."

Completely dumbfounded he watched her walk around the car, while his mind processed her words. 'Not willing to have a one night stand' – what did she think that's what he was after? "Hey, Carter!" He hurried after her and stepped into her way. "Don't... I will not let you call a cab at this hour. I will take you home, if that is what you want, but first we should talk."

"I thought we just did?"

"Yeah, but I made the rookie mistake of letting your busy genius brain overthink in the car on the way here – and apparently you came to entirely messed-up conclusions," he joked and when she didn't react he pulled her gently into his arms. "Come here. What on earth brought those thoughts on?"

"Um..." She didn't know what to say, her body still rigid in his embrace.

"Tell you what," he said gently against her hair. "Why don't we get inside, I'll make us coffee and we talk about this, and then later on I will drive you home." When he felt her hesitant, he reaffirmed, "Really just talk, Sam. Get it out of the room; something that we should have probably done earlier." He let go of her and walked towards the house. She didn't move, just hugged her own body with her arms, still unsure of whether she should agree to this offer.

When he had unlocked the door he turned around. "Come on in?"

Her mind was screaming to just leave. It was an awkward situation, and she hated awkwardness, especially when it came to personal relationships. This was exactly why she usually avoided them. But he was right, they needed to talk about this, so she eventually nodded. "Okay."

Slowly, she walked towards his house, unsure of whether the situation was just getting better or worse. Once inside, she closed the door behind her and hesitantly walked along the hallway and down the stairs into his living area. She sat down on his couch and shivered slightly, her body still tense and nervous.

When he arrived with two mugs of coffee a moment later, Sam gave him a weak, grateful smile. "Thank you, Sir. Again I'm sorry for all this."

He sat down on the couch next to her and put the mug down on the little coffee table in front of his couch. Then he leaned back and looked at her. She was tense – mildly put. Sitting there with the coffee mug in her hands, while she stared down into the black liquid, he was seriously worried that she might destroy the cup as tightly as she held on to it.

Damn, he knew that she was somewhat awkward when it came to personal things – or rather flirtations and intimate relationships. He had just never thought that she would be this borderline shy about it. He had to admit that, after all of the women he had dated throughout his life – who had all been sexual predators in a way – her shyness was absolutely intriguing and if he hadn't already been head over heels into her, she would definitely have his attention now.

"Listen," he eventually started out, and then emphasized "Sam" while looking at her. She looked up at him. "I don't know what impression you got from what happened earlier, but I thought it was rather self-evident, that I am not into this for a one night stand."

"Oh..." she started and then looked at him confused.

He looked at her with equal confusion. She didn't really think that, did she? God, had he lost his touch at making his attraction to a woman clear, or was she just that oblivious to his signals. "Anyway, you apparently got the wrong impression, so let me clarify: I am not. I thought this date made it clear, but then again, I should have considered that you didn't understand my other signals during the past months, so, my mistake again."

"Um, Sir...?" she started, but he shushed her with one of his "Ah" sounds. She was already addressing him as Sir so why not pull rank on her.

"Shut up, colonel, I'm not done yet. Secondly, I have absolutely no idea where this Kerry-thing came from, or what she has to do with us, but let me put it this way: I am glad you're not her. Is she my type? Hell, I don't know. It didn't go so well, as you might know, and part of that is your fault." Her eyes grew wider, and he hurried to clarify. "She told me, that I had a particularly big issue she couldn't live with, and by that she was referring for my feelings for you. And she was right. For the past month I've been trying to get some kind of reaction out of you, without making it so obvious that I risked court-martial. So if you think I was just thinking about this as being something entirely benign like a one night stand, let me assure you, I would not risk my career for that. And let me just further clarify: I want you, Sam."

For a moment she was completely quiet, and he could practically watch the words sink in.

Then she looked at him even more concerned than before. "Which would bring up a new problem, Sir," she stated.

Well, at least she was talking to him now.

"Spill it."

"Sir, I broke up with Pete, mainly because I realized that that's not me: you know, the girlfriend who makes a relationship the priority in her life. I could never give up my career. It's just not who I am. And Sir, even though my feelings for you were a concern as well for my break-up, I have come to realize I might not even be able to do it for you," she looked at him with an open honesty and concern in her eyes that moved his heart. Gently he shook his head.

"I would never expect you to, and I never have in the past, you know that. Besides, you are too valuable and too good at what you do, Carter, the country needs you. It was never an option that you to give all that up. My suggestion was that we give it a try, and see where it goes."

"Yes, but that still raises at least one problem, Sir. You know we cannot date and both keep working for the SG-C."

"Don't worry about that," he replied. "I have given it a lot of thought. Actually it was Kerry who pointed the possibility out to me: I will retire, and negotiate with them to lead the SG-C as a civilian. That would put me out of the command chain – at least officially, which means neither of us can be court-martialed anymore."

She just stared at him, completely perplexed at how easy he made it sound, and at how thoroughly he had apparently thought the entire thing through.

"I mean," he continued on, "if you even still want to give it a try otherwise I am just making a big fool out of myself right now. Which would be okay too. I like making a fool out of myself."

She couldn't help but chuckle and then nodded. "I wasn't sure about how you felt. You never said anything, Sir."

Oh, Jeez, he thought, she had really not picked up his signals. He kept looking at her somewhat worried when she went on.

"I would love to give it a try. Us, I mean."

He held her eyes intensely, and softly started to smile. "Good. Great." After a short moment he then remembered something. "Oh, but there's something I don't quite get. What did you mean when you said earlier that you were not Kerry...? I didn't quite get that."

"Well, Sir..."

"Jack." He corrected gently.

"Jack," she repeated softly, "I had the impression this was just going to be a one-time thing, and I am not good at... that. For me sex is like... dancing. Something I usually do when I have to but it was never really great. Not that it was bad but I'm just not... I mean, it just seems to come naturally to some women. How to flirt, or dance. I am not like that, and never was. Usually types like you don't go for types like me so it was never a problem, but now..." She finally concluded with a wince. "Any expectation you might have..."

"Hey, as long as you don't step on my foot - or more sensitive parts – I am quite convinced we'll be just fine," he offered with a smirk and was pleased to see that she smiled back at him.

Stupid woman, thinking that sexual things didn't come natural to her, he mused to himself. Their make-out session earlier had been one of the hottest he had ever had with a woman, but since probably nothing that he said would change her mind at the moment, but add more pressure to this idea that she had, he decided to simply go with it. Having seen a few of the guys she had been with, he also figured that her perceived failure at sexual things wasn't entirely her own fault, but he kept that to himself as well. No need for ex-boyfriend-bashing on their first date.

"Listen, Sam, I really enjoyed the evening. And I think it goes without saying that I loved kissing you, but maybe we were going a little fast there," he started, and she looked at him with concern written all over her face. He quickly hurried to add, "Oh, no. Not for my sake. Hell, you got me so hot and bothered I speeded a couple of times in the car just to make it home faster. But I don't want you to feel uncomfortable with what we are doing or with the speed we're moving."

"I'm not," she replied hastily. "I just thought that – I mean – after all these years, the expectations are really high and I didn't want to disappoint you. Or end up in the situation where I was with Pete." Her

look became more intense. "The experience with Pete also made me realize what I wasn't willing to give up. Those past years everybody – you even – kept bugging me about getting a boyfriend."

"I never..." he started, and she cocked her head.

"Sir, you explicitly reminded me on numerous occasions to get a life."

"I did," he affirmed with a put-off look, and then after a short pause went on. "I was talking about a hobby, maybe a dog... something to get you out of that lab every once in a while. Didn't say the word 'boyfriend' once!"

"Oh, I guess you didn't!" She stared at him, and the expression on her face showed, that she had to admit that he was right. Not once had he urged her to get a boyfriend. "Well, Sir, maybe not you then, but other people – like my dad, or my brother. So when my brother set me up with Pete, at first it felt good – and it was convenient and simple, not at all complicated like most intimate relationships, but the more the relationship progressed..." She sighed, really not wanting to go into Pete-issues now. "...well, in short, it seemed like I became more and more unhappy. I know, everybody always kept thinking that I was unhappy in the beginning, but the truth is: it was the other way around. I am happy in my lab."

"I know you are," Jack replied seriously. "Strange as I find it, I've seen the sparkle in your eyes when you get to experiment with things, or find something you don't understand."

"But Sir, I won't be able to give that up. Not now – and frankly I don't know if I ever will be. Not even for you..."

"Carter," he pulled her against him and looked deeply into her eyes, noting with delight how her breathing became just a hint faster. "Why don't you shut that pretty little head of yours off, and stop overthinking. I'm not asking you to marry me – although I'm not saying that won't be an option in the future. And even then, I would not want you to stop being that kickass soldier and ingenious braniac that you are. You can be married and still save the world, ya know."

"Yes, Sir, but I also don't want you to give all that up – not for me, because then, if things go badly..."

"Oh fer crying outloud..." he burst out and she shut up.

"Overthinking again."

"Yeah." He sighed.

"Sorry Sir."

"Can't we just settle this by saying that we will work something out? Together? Something that agrees with the both of us? Let's just tackle the issues if and when they arise." His thumbs were gently stroking her waist as he was asking her this question, making her skin tickle slightly wherever he touched her.

"That works," she replied, her voice sounding somewhat breathless from the delightful distraction that his gentle touch provided her mind with.

"Good." He kept stroking her skin through the material of her dress, noticing her reaction to his touches with pleasure. Very slowly he moved his face closer to hers, studying every part of her features and watching how she lost herself in his touches. She held his eyes, and her hands came up to touch his face almost shyly. Her fingers brushed along the rough skin of his cheek in a gentle caress, and slowly, very slowly, she brought her lips closer to his. For a little while he did not move at all, allowing her to proceed at her own speed and remaining in control. And she took her time, her

lips lingering for what seemed like an eternity a mere inch away from his, with their breaths mingling. When she finally brushed his lips with hers, he had to really restrain himself to not pull her into full body contact and devour her with his mouth.

And he was rewarded for not doing so, because her somewhat hesitant initial caresses soon turned into a sensual, deep exploration of his mouth. There was no rush to it, yet it conveyed a certain urgent passion that threatened to consume them both. Whenever either of them started to turn the kiss into something more demanding, however, Sam withdrew her lips from his, not far enough to fully break apart, yet just out of reach so that their lips were brushing in butterfly touches. They kept this pace up until they were both breathlessly clinging onto each other and occasional sounds of pleasure filled the room. That was when Jack finally broke apart from her.

He was determined not to take it all the way with her now. Granted, he had been willing to do so a mere hour ago, but that was before their talk, and before she had told him about her fears – and the fact that she was under the impression he was only interested in a sexual affair with her. No, they would take their time; he was not willing to rush her into this.

Gently, but firmly, he held her in place with his hands on her waist, when she tried to reconnect their lips.

“I think I should prepare the guest room for you; put sheets on and stuff...unless you still want to go home?” he rasped against her lips.

“Um...” she started, taking a moment to turn her brains back on in order to understand and answer his question. He smirked softly. Carter with a muddled up brain was just something he enjoyed way too much – and it also flattered his manly pride that he was actually able to do that to her. He, Jack O’Neill, was actually able to reduce Colonel Sam Carter, braniac and super genius extraordinaire, to a state of unintelligible sounds. He was sure, that set some kind of a record...

“Um... sure, the guest room is fine.” Sam finally nodded, trying but failing miserably to keep her voice from shaking.

Guest room? She had to work really hard to hide her disappointment. Now who was playing with whom here, she wondered quietly, while she was trying hard to get her physical reactions back under control.

Sleepless

Sam looked at the digital clock next to the bed and sighed.

1 AM...

And she was not the least bit tired. She had been tossing and turning for the past hour, trying to go to sleep, but she couldn’t. It was not the bed, or the room – both were very comfortable, more so than her own. But her mind just wouldn’t let her rest. There was the conversation of earlier, the realization (and enthusiasm) about the fact that they had officially decided to try dating (which slowly and fully dawned on her now), and of course the memory of kissing him, and the way they had made out in the shadow of the trees. God, she wanted so much more. And he was only a few rooms away...

Unable to lure her mind away from the delightfully erotic images that flooded her consciousness at the thought of Jack, most likely very sparsely clothed, in the next room, Sam eventually cursed and got up. She needed some kind of distraction, because she was sure she would not be getting any sleep if she remained in the state that she was in. If she hadn’t showered just an hour previously, she

would have considered taking a very cold shower. But not only was that not going to make any difference, it would also possible wake up Jack – and all because she could not keep her thoughts in check, dammit, she growled inwardly, and looked down at herself slightly concerned.

She was only wearing one of Jack's Air Force shirts, since she hadn't brought anything to sleep in of her own. How could she, the possibility that she might end up spending the night at his place hadn't even crossed her mind. The shirt was covering her down to the upper thighs, so she deemed it sufficient enough to walk around. Who was going to see her anyway? Jack was asleep (at least she assumed he was) and the chance of meeting somebody else in his house at this hour was very slim. She padded to the door on bare feet as quietly as she could.

After she had opened the door, she walked just as quietly through the hallway and down the stairs into the living area, noting with slight confusion, that the door to the porch was wide open. She approached it and looked out. In the bright moonlight she could see Jack sitting on one of the lounge chairs with a beer in his hand, flicking stones into the barbecue. He was only wearing his jeans, and his dog tags, which were shining slightly as they reflected the light of the moon.

"Sir?" Sam announced her presence carefully, trying not to startle him. An unsuccessful attempt, as Jack almost jumped on the chair, his entire body signaling that he was in alarm mode for the fraction of a moment - an instinct that owed its existence to years in black ops and in the field on SG-1. When he saw her at the door, his features relaxed immediately.

"Jesus, Carter!"

"Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you." She said with an apologetic smile.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, trying to draw his eyes away from her long naked legs; legs that went on forever, and then vanished under his wide light blue air-force-shirt; legs that he had admired for years under those baggy BDU pants that were standard issue for SG-1; legs that he had fantasized about for so long being wrapped around his hips while he... Bad train of thoughts, he stopped himself mentally, and cleared his throat.

"I mean, why are you not asleep," he clarified and took another sip from his bottle of beer, if only for the simply reason to draw his eyes away from those legs and his mind out of those fantasies.

"I can't sleep. I didn't expect to find you out here."

"I couldn't sleep either. I figured the cold night air would help." Actually, he had already had a cold shower, which hadn't helped much to draw his fantasies away from the beautiful woman sleeping only a few rooms away from his, and so he had tried to bring distance between them – unsuccessfully. And at the moment, the sight of her bare, perfectly shaved legs, her slightly disheveled looking hair, and her smile didn't help. "The stars usually help me get sleepy. You know... just thinking about how many we have visited – I know!" he interrupted himself, before she could do it, "you cannot actually see many of those that we have actually been to, but it is still comforting."

She smiled at him, and then looked up at the stars herself. "Yes, it is. And actually a couple can be seen through a telescope."

"Do you want one of these too?" he asked, signaling towards the beer, and she nodded.

"Sure, why not." Yes, why not. She would be sleep-deprived anyway, so nothing that another beer could mess up more. And maybe it would help in getting her tired.

She watched him get up from the chair, and really had to fight herself to draw her eyes away from him. Damn, he was looking sexy with a bare chest. He was well-muscled, despite his age, and his skin

was tanned, the scars which covered his skin here and there only adding to the overall picture. Quickly she drew her eyes away and back to the stars above. What was the matter with her? She felt like her entire body was taken over by hormones as if she was a teenager. Get a grip of yourself, Carter, she scolded herself internally.

Sam stepped out of the doorframe, when Jack came towards her to go into the house to get another bottle of beer for her. When he passed her by, she felt a surge of heat radiating from him, and his scent reached her nostrils: a mixture of fresh shower gel and him; something that made her long for him even more. The need to feel his body close against hers became overwhelming, an emotion which made her wrap her arms around her own body in an attempt to hold on to the last bit of reason that was left inside of her.

They had agreed to take it slow. They needed to take it slow. Well, he didn't, as he had stated earlier, but she did.

Or did she?

It was true, she had been concerned and overthinking the situation in the car, but since they had made clear afterwards that they were both at the same point (namely wanting a relationship) she felt a lot more at ease. Plus she had openly told him what she was not willing to sacrifice for him or their relationship, and he was not only fine with it, but had agreed. Sure, they could take it slow – but then again, they had been taking it slow for the past four years. They had fought together, slept in the same tents on missions, seen each other at their worst times, and at their best, and they had even spent time together privately. There was actually not much that she didn't know about him – or he about her. The only aspect that was missing to officially make them a couple was the aspect of intimacy.

And she was more than ready for that. At least her fantasy life was. Granted, she was still a little bit nervous about it, but that was not because it was going too fast for her. More likely, it was due to the fact that they had taken it so slow with so much yearning and so many fantasies during the past years remaining unfulfilled, that she was worried, his built-up expectations were too high. And that was definitely nothing that 'taking-it-slower' would cure. So why not just get it over with.

She winced at that thought and mentally slapped herself for the phrasing. 'Getting it over with' was hardly what her body (or her mind) were asking for. She needed to feel him close to her, kissing her, his naked skin pressed against hers as they...

When he returned a few moments later with another bottle of cold beer, and held it out to her, her body was already in overdrive from the sexual fantasies that she was having about him in her mind at that moment; fantasies which, now that she was allowed to have them, seemed to be completely beyond the control of either her mind or her body. Almost desperately, she took a huge sip of her cold beer, then another one, feeling the bitter, sparkly liquid run down her throat.

"I can get you another chair out here if you want," Jack remarked while he put another unopened bottle on the small garden table. He hadn't even noticed her almost desperate gulping of the beer, since he was busy not looking at her and keeping his own mind in check. After having promised her that they would take their time, he was determined to stick with it.

Without answering his question, Sam strolled to the table and put her own open bottle down next to the one that he had just set there.

Then she closed the distance between them, her hands coming up to gently touch the tanned skin of his chest and the soft hair curling there – right under where his dog tags ended. Her hands were cold

from the bottle which had come fresh out of the fridge, and that increased the feeling of the hot skin of his chest against her fingers.

His body and mind reacted similarly, and he caught his breath when she was suddenly so close, and her cold hand coming in contact with his warm skin felt like an electrifying surge.

Completely lost in the touch, she kept her hand still for a few seconds. He looked at her, intrigued and his breath started to come a little faster, when her fingers moved over his skin in the gentlest caress.

Damn, what was she doing? Didn't she realize that his body was in sexual hyper-drive anyway and he was only one heartbeat away from grabbing her and taking her right here on the ground of his porch until she was screaming his name? Or maybe the table... chair would be an option too. He had to stop these thoughts – and more importantly stop her from whatever it was that she was doing.

"Sam," he warned gently, and then anything else he wanted to say was cut off by her gently wrapping the chain of his dog tags around her fingers and pulling him towards her mouth, before her lips softly claimed his in a sweet, yet desire-filled kiss, a little sigh escaping her lips the instant they came in contact with his.

At first he thought he was dreaming, when his mouth suddenly was on hers, and her lips were gently claiming his. But then the reaction of his body made it rather clear to him that this was far from being a fantasy. After giving her a moment to explore his lips, he reached out his hands and grabbed her waist, pulling her body into full contact with his own and deepened the kiss. The needy little whimpering sound that this move caused her to make into his mouth was the sweetest sound he had ever heard coming from her, and it confirmed to him that he wasn't the only one who was in sexual deprivation.

Her fingers moved over his shoulders and down his arms, clasping his biceps while she passionately engaged in the sensual game that his lips and tongue were playing with hers. He tasted heavenly, like beer mixed with wild nature and something that was just uniquely him. It was addictive, and the more she tasted him, the more she wanted. When oxygen became a serious issue, they broke apart, and his lips immediately started to move along her chin and jawline to her earlobe. Enjoying how her breath sped up and she gasped softly when he bit her lobe gently, he took her reactions as encouragement. His hands moved down over her hips, desperate to feel her skin against her. When he was finally touching the silky skin of her upper thigh, right under the spot where the shirt ended and naked leg began, she arched her body against him in a passionate plea for more. He withdrew from her skin momentarily and stopped his sensual assault on her body.

"Sam," he rasped sexily into her ear, and then looked into her eyes, slightly distracted by her fingers gently playing at his neck, "how far do you want to take this?" When she looked back at him with an expression of complete oblivion in them, he clarified, "All the way?"

"Uh huh," she affirmed absently, the fingers of her one hand now running through his hair while she brushed the skin of his chin with her lips in a butterfly touch, and then, slowly, teasingly traced her lips along the underside of his chin and down his throat. "Unless you're still for taking it slow."

His grip on her was harder now, when he felt her teasing his oversensitive skin, and he pulled her hips flat against his to let her feel what was definitely not his sidearm. At her aroused little gasp, he smiled into her neck and then lifted his head to rasp in her ear. "Oh I am all for taking it slow."

"Oh..." she said with a very audible hint of disappointment in her voice, and he could feel her withdraw her hands and arms slightly from him. If his hands on her legs hadn't held her firmly against him, he was sure, she would have moved away entirely.

Smirking against her skin, he held her body close with his hands to prevent her from moving away, then he went on, "Yes, imagine all the things I can do to you while taking it slow." He placed a soft kiss right under her ear, making her moan softly. "But," he went on after having thoroughly kissed and explored the spot, "if you're really not into that, I suppose, we could just go for fast and rough. I'm not entirely against that either. Has its merits." He underlined the statement with a soft nip at her sensitive skin that prompted an aroused little gasp from her. "Or," he then went on, feeling her body shiver against his gently, "if you have a kinky side, I could also be persuaded to explore that. My personal favorite would be tying you to my bed and having my way with you, but that's just me..." While saying that, he had moved his hands up to hers, locked his fingers with hers and then pulled them behind her back, where he securely held them, giving her an impression of what being tied up felt like, while his lips explored her sensitive spot more thoroughly now.

"Oh God..." she moaned when she realized that he was actually dirty talking to her, and she had completely misunderstood his initial 'taking it slow' pun. She couldn't help blushing. He was so far out of her league where sex was concerned, it wasn't even funny. It wasn't that she hadn't fantasized about all the things that he just mentioned, but fantasizing about and voicing them were two completely different pairs of shoes.

"Not sure that's an adequate answer," he teased her with a smirk playing around his lips. He was quite aware of the fact that she was probably blushing and definitely not used to this kind of talk (simply because he knew her too well), but her body language told him that he was not moving into unwanted territory, so he went on.

"You can do better than that." His voice was low, when his lips now moved to the spot where her neck met her shoulder and the fabric of the t-shirt began. She whimpered slightly and bent her head to give him easier access.

"I think..." she started, her eyes closing while she enjoyed the way he kept teasing her skin with his lips.

"Mmmh?" he mumbled, urging her gently to go on.

"I think taking it slow doesn't sound so bad after all – for now." She moaned softly, when he used his teeth again on her skin, only to soothe the spot an instant later with his tongue. "I am entirely open for other options in the future though," she whispered, and moved one of her hands out of his grip to run it along the naked skin of his side and then over his back.

"So," he affirmed hotly against her skin. "Slow it is. Come with me." He loosened the grip on her body, but didn't let go of her hand. With their fingers still interlocked, he gently pulled her towards the door inside the house and through the living room.

"Sir... Jack?" Confused, Sam almost stumbled after him, so suddenly drawn out of the mesmerizing trance of desire that she'd been in. When he unexpectedly turned around to pull her into another searing kiss right in front of the stairs, she practically fell against his chest and her shocked shriek turning into an aroused moan into the kiss.

He had made the mistake to let her overthink once, and he wasn't going to do that again. The best thing to prevent it would be to make it impossible for her to have time to analyze.

When she was just about to deepen the kiss he pulled away from her again, leaving her even more desperate for his touch than before. He saw the frustration reflected in her eyes and smirked, "We're not doing this on the porch. Aside from the fact that I don't want to give the neighbors a show, I'm also not twenty anymore."

Before she could react, he pulled her up the stairs and towards the bedroom. No sooner had she entered that she felt herself pressed against the hard wood of the door with his lips claiming hers again in a passionate exploration. She allowed him to dominate her like this for a moment, to manipulate her body to react to him as he wanted and even draw those aroused little sounds of absolute submission from her.

Then she surprised him by forcefully pushing against his shoulders. His immediate reaction was to withdraw from her, for the fraction of a second scared that he had hurt her somehow – or she had changed her mind. But she followed him and pulled his lips close for another kiss while she directed them towards the bed. He smiled against her lips and then bit her lower lip gently.

“Demanding, aren’t we?” he rasped against her lips and she smiled.

“I’ve fantasized about this for the past hour, Sir.” The way she purred “Sir” against his lips had to be the naughtiest fulfillment of his wildest dream, and with a low growl he shoved her almost roughly onto the bed. She fell onto the mattress with a shriek that was muffled by his mouth reclaiming hers, while his hands moved the shirt up over her body. She leaned up on her arms to help him, and then pulled the shirt over her head, discarding it somewhere to the ground next to the bed.

With the exception of her panties, she was naked underneath the shirt and they both moaned when their upper bodies touched skin on skin for the first time, her breasts grazing the soft hair on his chest and the cold metal of his dog tags trapped between their bodies.

He bent down to further explore her neck with his lips, and enjoyed the way that her fingers clasped his shoulders. What had been passionate, almost rough lust in the beginning was now turned into a gentle, playful exploration of her body by him. After all, they had agreed on taking it slow, and he enjoyed how he could make her whimper softly or arch her body against him with his touches, caresses and kisses.

Although in his adventurous years, he had cared more for the quick experience of the numerous sexual encounters he had had with different women in bars or other shady establishments, he had always appreciated learning what they liked, how they reacted, and which caresses made them go crazy. Sex had always been - but the older he got, the more it seemed to become - an all-senses experience for him. He enjoyed the sounds, the visual experience and sometimes even the dirty-talk. Experience told him that most women appreciated this aspect of the sexual encounter.

He ran his lips down her neck and over her collarbone in the sweetest, slowest caresses possible, making sure that all her senses were focused on what he was doing with his lips. And they were, he could tell by the way her body shuddered softly against his every now and then. When her hands moved down along his sides to the waistband of his pants, and tried to open them and push them down his hips, he gently grabbed her wrists and pulled them away.

“Not yet,” he rasped against her skin. “This won’t last if you touch me.”

He muffled her protest with another hot open-mouthed kiss that soon turned into a playful battle for dominance and left them both panting and wanting more. Gently he urged her to move further onto the bed, until he was able to stretch out next to her, his body leaning over her without crushing her with his weight. That also gave him the opportunity to explore her naked skin in soft touches that made her shudder against him in need. He enjoyed the way she softly moaned into his mouth, her fingers clasping his arms tighter when he hit a spot that was especially sensitive to his touches.

Then suddenly, using her arms and weight, she turned them around in one smooth move that owed its existence to years in close-combat training. He moaned in a mixture of surprise and thrill. As much as he had enjoyed slowly exploring her skin with his lips, take-control Carter was definitely a turn-on.

"Sorry," she whispered seductively in his ear, having straddled his waist and leaning over him. "But you are mistaken if you think that I will let you have all the fun, general."

God, that woman! He would never be able to hear her say Sir or General again without thinking about that absolutely sexy, seductive undertone in her voice. Well, two could play that game.

"If I remember correctly..." His statement was interrupted by him groaning slightly, when her fingernails scratched gently down his chest. "...I outrank you, colonel."

"Maybe I should follow orders then," she flirted back, becoming more courageous in talking, while kissing slowly and sensually down his neck. Sighing softly, she stretched her back, and arched into him. The feeling of having him so close, under her, was intoxicating, and for a moment she stilled, her face buried against his neck, to allow her body to fully comprehend and react to what they were doing.

Jack's hands ran softly over her back and waist, before his thumbs hooked into the waistband of her black panties. He groaned, when she hit that particular sensitive spot on his neck, and then moved to let her lips hover over his, just out of reach, while she whispered in the sexiest tone she was capable of, "I would hate to risk you bringing up charges of insubordination against me."

She loved playing with him. She had dreamed of touching him and feeling him this close for so long, and now she just wanted to revel in the feeling for a moment, explore his skin, lose herself in his closeness and feel him react to her touches. She leaned in and brushed her lips very lightly over his, barely even touching at all, her tongue flicking out and tasting his lips, and then, whenever he tried to deepen the kiss, she moved her lips out of reach and started the game anew. It was maddening.

Eventually he had enough, and rolled them over so that he was fully on top of her, his hips cradled against hers in between her legs. Her initial protest died in his mouth, and when he turned the kiss into a very sensual exploration of her mouth, he could feel her start to writhe against him and thrust her hips up slightly, wanting more. Gently, he pinned her down, thus holding her in place, which effectively prevented her movements. He was sure she wasn't even aware of it, but if she kept it up, their 'taking it slow' sex would definitely be over faster than he intended. He lifted himself up into a kneeling position and pulled at her panties.

"Off," he commanded, and she looked at him for a moment shocked, but excited at the same time by this blatant abuse of his command voice. But then again, she had initiated this game earlier. "Now, colonel," he emphasized, and she complied. With trembling hands she pulled her panties down her legs, and only a few seconds later, they joined the shirt on the floor.

After he had moved back over her with one of his legs now pressing against her center, his lips reconnected with hers. The rough material of his jeans were rubbing against her most sensitive parts and eliciting deliciously needy sounds from her. He loved the way she was becoming more and more undone by moving her hips against his leg, and smiled when her frustration grew. He was well aware that his ministrations were sufficient enough to ease the pressure building in her, but not nearly enough to make her come, and the instant she realized that, she began to be frustrated and tried to entice his body to move with her.

"Something wrong... colonel?" he rasped in her ear sexily, using her rank shamelessly just as she had done before. "You seem a bit... what shall we call it... edgy?"

He knew damn well what he was doing, and he enjoyed it. Damn him! She let out a frustrated little whimper and tried to alter their position by hooking one of her legs under his with the intention to push him back onto his back. She failed because he saw it coming, and the attempt caused him to chuckle against her collarbone, before he nipped at her skin sharply. "Just a hint: I'm two levels above you in close combat."

He moved his lips further down over one of her breasts, smiling at her frustrated whimper.

After a short while, he moved his lips back up to her mouth, his body shifting to the side so that most of his weight was next to her now. Enjoying the languid kiss, he moved his hand softly down her body, grazing the skin of her upper thighs and hips, before he pressed his palm against her center. She moaned into his mouth, her hand flying down to clasp his lower arm. Whatever her initial intentions had been (and he was pretty sure that she was about to pull his arm away), they dissolved when he let his fingers play at her opening, and then gently entered her with one of them while pressing the pad of his thumb against her clit at the same time.

She made a high-pitched little sound into his mouth, and when her breathing started to become a hint faster, she broke the kiss out of necessity and turned her head to the side. He smiled against her cheek, and then slowly let his lips trail a path down to her neck. "Like that?"

He was mesmerized by the expression of complete abandon and desire in her eyes, and was tempted for a moment to try and see if she would let him make her come like this. But he had other plans, and so, after a few moments, he bent to her ear and rasped, "I am going to go down on you."

He started nibbling at her earlobe gently, enjoying how her fingers clasped his arms even more, and her head fell back slightly at the erotic image he evoked in her.

Then her body froze for a moment when she realized that this was not one of her fantasies; this was real. She couldn't let him do that, not in reality, it was too... intimate, especially for the first time.

"Wait..." she whispered somewhat half-heartedly and out of breath, but the next moment arched her back when she felt his teeth nip gently at the sensitive spot under her ear, his hand between her legs still teasing her in the most sensual manner.

Slowly, he let his lips travel down her neck along her collarbone and down over her breasts, where he spend minutes kissing and licking her nipples, before moved further down along her belly.

"Wait...S-sir... Jack..." Sam protested again weakly, and her hands tried to pull him back up. She could have succeeded if her body had agreed with her mind's objection, but the truth was, her body reacted to every single one of his touches with absolutely delightful feelings of pleasure and need; her body wanted him to have her in any way possible, curious of whether reality could be as intriguing as her fantasies. Her mind however, was well aware that this was not fantasy. Again she tried to pull him back up.

He stopped teasing her with his fingers, and instead took her wrists in his hands gently, pulling them against her sides where he firmly held them. Then he continued his sensual journey down her body. His lips ran in butterfly kisses over her abdomen, and then along her hips down over her thighs. She was still trying to free her hands but he kept holding them firmly, as his lips traveled up her thigh.

"Stop, Jack... please don't..." Her insistence – which almost bordered desperation – made him falter for a moment. Although her entire body signaled to him that she was very much enjoying what he was doing, there was a certain kind of urgency in her voice that alarmed him.

"Problem?" he asked gently, placing another kiss on the sensitive skin of her inner thigh right above her knee.

"I can't... I never..." Her body shuddered when his lips made contact with her skin anew. "Jack!"

He released her hands and moved up to engage her lips in a sensual kiss, and then whispered close to her lips. "Don't like it?" Her answer was a gentle whimper, her fingers clasp his waist, when his tongue sensually licked over her neck, and sent shudders of pleasure through her entire body.

"No, I do. It's just..." Her voice trailed off when his lips locked on her sensitive spot and lingered there, just teasing her with his lips and tongue. He understood instantly what the problem was, and gently whispered into her ear, "Just relax, okay? Feeling... no over-thinking. Just turn that sexy little head of yours off for a moment."

"Sir..."

"That's an order," he rasped against her lips in the sexiest voice he was capable of, and she lifted her head to bring them in full contact with his, and engage him in a series of hot kisses.

Eventually he broke away and resumed his caresses on her thigh. Slowly, he moved his lips along the sensitive skin of her inner thigh, his sweet caresses urging her to relax and enjoy what he was about to do. She closed her eyes, her hands clasping the bed sheet under them. She couldn't let him do that... he couldn't do that. Not the first...

She gasped when his lips found her most intimate center and then moved in to close over her clit, before he very languidly started to use his tongue to explore her thoroughly. Her initial instinct to push his head away had caused her hand to fly to his head, but his caresses felt so incredible to her, that instead of pushing him away, her hand did the opposite without her even realizing it.

He continued his slow and gentle kisses for quite some time, until he could tell by her reactions that she was comfortable with what they were doing. Slowly, his lips began to be more curious, his tongue more insistent.

He had been with enough women to know exactly how to go down on a woman, and he was learning fast about her reactions and when to alter his caresses from sucking to gentle flicking of his tongue, to barely even touching her, and back to harder sucking and licking. Her sounds of pleasure and her hand fisting in his hair encouraged him to go on. When her resistance had fully subsided and the fingers of her one hand clasped the sheets on the bed while the other one was buried in his short hair, he opened her further to him, placing her legs over his shoulders.

He took his time with her, enjoying pushing her all the way close to the edge and then keeping her there by sucking and licking her just soft enough to keep her from going over. Then he reduced his touches to barely even existent, with only his hot breath taunting her sensitive spots until she had come down enough for him to start all over again. He repeated this until she was ready to beg him, yes almost pleading with him, to just let her come, her mind not able to believe the fact that he was able to do this to her. She never begged. Ever.

For the first time Sam thought, she understood why the term eating someone out was appropriate. God, the things this man could do with his mouth. She had never been like this before, or felt like this before. Usually she didn't like guys going down on her, because it made her feel exposed and very vulnerable – not to mention most of them had been somewhat ignorant about what they were doing, which had ended in either frustration for both of them, or her faking pleasure.

Yet, at that moment she could hear her own voice desperately asking him not to stop while all reasonable thought seemed to be erased from her mind. He pushed her to the edge again and again and again, licking her, sucking her and kissing, until she thought she was about to go insane.

“Please Jack... oh god... don’t stop... Sir... don’t...” She was so close, and absolutely entranced by the sheer realization that it happened so naturally. It didn’t take work on her part: no tricking her mind, no faking, no thought – just feeling.

She expected him to stop again any moment, the hand in his hair trying desperately to hold him against her and the other one clasping his arm now, and she was sure if he did it again she would be ready to kill.

He didn’t stop, which caught her entirely by surprise.

Her fingers around his arm clutched him almost painfully, her mouth opening in surprise and a soft, almost shocked shriek escaping her lips when she came hard against his mouth, her entire body shaking against him. He held her close, drawing out her pleasure with his lips and tongue in caresses that drew all kinds of sexy little sounds from her lips, until she had come down from her erotic height and was lying panting and breathless in the sheets. For a moment she felt unable to move any part of her body, but the more pressing need seemed to be that there wasn’t enough oxygen.

When she found her breath again, she slowly became aware of her surroundings and that this was in fact reality, and not one of her fantasies. She moved one of her hands over her eyes and whispered an almost desperate “Oh God” that conveyed her feelings of embarrassment.

Having recognized that her brain was starting to overthink again, Jack moved up to capture her lips in a short kiss. Her initial embarrassment turned into new arousal at the unexpected kiss, with which he let her taste herself on his lips.

“Stay with me Sam, don’t overthink,” he murmured in a break between two kisses. He enjoyed how her body responded to him almost instantly, and he held her close until he felt her return the caresses with equal passion.

After he had moved his body over her smaller one, they just reveled in that feeling for endless moments while they lost themselves in a series of sweet and tender kisses. There was no rush to the caresses. They just played with each other, teased and tempted each other with their lips while their hands were roaming lazily along their bodies.

Eventually, Sam let her hands travel down to Jack’s jeans. She fumbled a short moment, becoming frustrated, when she couldn’t get her brains to work properly enough to be able to open them, but instead her fingers ended up uncoordinatedly pulling at the material. He smirked against her lips and moved back slightly.

“Having trouble there?” He pushed himself up shortly to remove his pants and was glad that he had not even bothered to wear underpants after his shower earlier.

When he moved back over her, he couldn’t help but tease her, “Very disappointing, Carter. You can get a Stargate to work, but you cannot figure out a Jeans zipper?”

She hit his shoulders in mock indignation and was just about to throw a witty remark back at him, when she finally felt him skin on skin with no barriers of clothing between them, the feeling erasing any reasonable thought in her mind, leaving her to moaning softly. After he had settled, she pulled him down to her face with her hand at the back of his neck, caressing him gently.

"You know... I am pretty sure hitting a superior officer is considered insubordination." He murmured before he indulged her in another sensual kiss, his hands stroking gently from her hips down her naked thighs at his sides, and eventually hooked under her knees and pulled them up slightly. He was rewarded with an absolutely delightfully needy sound from her at this new angle that put her hips in direct contact with his. The need to be inside of her became almost overwhelming for him, but he wanted to make sure that she was back in the game first.

Slowly, he moved his mouth along her jawline to her ear, making sure to caress all the sensitive spots that he had discovered earlier. He enjoyed the way her hands were running over his back softly and every now and then pressing him against her when she especially liked what he was doing.

Sensually, she moved her hands to his head, and turned her face to bury it at his neck, her tongue darting out to taste his skin, right before she gently bit his earlobe which caused him to moan lowly into her neck. It pleased her that she was able to do this to him, and get him to the brink of losing control. Her fingers were gently playing over his skin, down his spine, tracing every scar on his back, and then along his sides to his front. When her fingers lightly grazed the skin of his abdomen his hips twitched against her and he quickly caught her hand in his, immediately knowing what she was going for.

"Not a good idea, unless you want this to end very awkwardly," he whispered, and she chuckled softly and then let her lips play at his earlobe.

"Well, that's rather disappointing, after you got your playtime before."

"So you want playtime?" he responded back flirtatiously, and looked into her eyes while he slowly guided himself inside her warm and welcoming body. He moved carefully, sensually, making sure that he didn't hurt her and they both moaned in unison at the feeling of completion.

It took a moment for Sam to get used to him, and to recover from the sensory overload her body was in. He was feeling so good against her, inside of her with his warmth surrounding her. Her fingers were clasping his arm almost painfully, and her short little breaths hit the skin of his neck. He waited a moment, needing time to get his body under control himself. Feeling her so close to him after so many years of repressed love and sexual desires that he only allowed himself to live in his fantasies was almost too much for his body.

When she arched her back softly and thereby changed the angle of her hips, causing him to slip even deeper into her and her to moan lustily at the feeling, his fingers grabbed her hips and stilled her, his frustrated groan vibrating against her neck.

She froze, thinking that she had done something wrong and he hurried to clarify, "Just... a moment... if you want this to last."

"Oh..." she whispered, the realization dawning on her and she stilled, her fingers running through his hair while her lips started running along his cheek playfully. When she dragged her fingernails gently down along his spine, he growled in her ear. "Sam..." he warned, which caused her to smile.

"What, Sir are you telling me you can fight Goa'ult but you can't handle this?" she threw his earlier Stargate/jeans zipper remark back at him, and then gasped when he bit her neck sharply, immediately soothing the pain with his tongue and lips latching onto the abused skin. Her hips bucked involuntarily against him, causing them both to moan. "Sorry..." she whispered breathlessly, her head falling back when he didn't stop the caress. "Oh God... Jack..." When he started to gently thrust into her, her eyes fell close at the exquisite feeling he was causing in her, her internal muscles tensing up intuitively.

"Easy Sam, just relax..." he whispered into her ear, and then thrust into her again slowly, swallowing her moan in another hot open-mouthed kiss. Her body intuitively responded to his movements, and she enjoyed the feeling of power she had over him, knowing that she was doing exactly the same to him that he was doing to her. Almost automatically they fell into a sensual rhythm. There was no awkwardness to it, not even conscious planning, they just moved with instinct and Sam was in awe at how good they were together even at this.

Soon, their bodies demanded for more than sweet, almost teasing love-making, and they gave in to it, allowing themselves to eventually feel the feelings that they had been forbidden to feel for so long, and to touch the others body in the sweet ecstasy.

"Wrap your legs around me," Jack gently ordered and she complied almost immediately, gasping at the new angle which allowed him to thrust deeper into her and elicit lusty sounds of pleasure from her every time he did so. Eight years of fantasies didn't even come close to the reality of having her that out of control under him, while he made love to her in the most passionate way. He wanted to see her come for him, and this time, he wanted to watch her as she did so.

"Come for me again." His voice was hot against her skin, and the request drew a little whimper from her.

"I have never..."

"No thinking," he muttered. He didn't care if she had never been able to have an orgasm twice before, her entire body reacted to him and he knew that it was physically possible. But he also knew that she would be too shy to tell him exactly what she needed him to do so he would have to go with instinct – which really wasn't that hard.

One of his hands moved between them to gently flick her still over-sensitive clit, while he sensually captured her mouth in an almost rough, hard kiss. She bucked up against him the instant his finger came in contact with the bundle of nerves, making an aroused squealing sound against his mouth. He repeated the move, harder this time, and was rewarded with another little shriek. He knew, that she still had to be a little sensitive and felt her body trying to evade his caress, but he didn't relent. Over and over again, he let his finger move over her most sensitive spot, syncing the movement with the pace in which he was thrusting in and out of her, until she broke free from his lips panting heavily. Her lips fell open in a silent amazed "oh", and her eyes fell close at the incredible sensation that started pulsing through her body anew.

"God, Sam..." Jack muttered hotly against her lips, the sight of her almost enough to bring him over the edge. He knew she was close: the way her breathing sped up, the way she panted his name and the way her brain was so completely muddled that she alternated between "Jack" and "Sir" senselessly. He himself was close, but he was determined to hold out until she had shattered in his arms.

And she did, more beautiful that he could have ever imagined it in his fantasies. Her soft scream filled the room and her hands desperately held on to him while her entire body was shaking with pleasure, pulsing with the completion of a need suppressed for so long.

When he felt her contract around him, he could control himself any longer, and came hard, his head buried at her neck, breathing in her scent as the strands of her short hair tickled his skin. Sam, who was equally breathless, moved her hand up to his head, pressing his shaking body against her.

For minutes they just stayed in that position, enjoying each other's closeness and the feeling of being skin on skin. Then eventually Jack lifted slightly, realizing that he was probably crushing her under him

given the fact that his entire weight was resting on her – not that she seemed to mind if the expression of absolute bliss on her face was any hint.

Her eyes were closed and only fluttered open now that he was moving.

“Hey,” he said gently and she smiled at him; that breathtaking smile that always made his heart skip a beat.

“Wow.” She whispered, her fingers coming up to touch his cheek and wipe a drop of sweat away. The way she was looking at him with an expression of absolute awe and delight made him smirk.

“Yes, definitely,” he agreed and rolled off of her onto his back, pulling her body against his chest. “That was incredible. Really not what I expected after your speech.”

His hand stroked lazily over her back and along her spine. Her fingers were gently caressing his chest, and playing with his dog tags.

“Well, Sir, definitely not what I expected either. I have never... I mean...” she turned her head to hide her face against his shoulder. “Wow.”

“Better than one of your lab experiments?”

She couldn’t help but start giggling and then smiled at him. He pulled her even closer against him and then pulled the covers over their rapidly cooling bodies. He didn’t want her to catch a cold – or worse, leave to get dressed. Gently he wrapped his arms around her, his face buried in her hair so he could smell her scent.

“We didn’t use protection,” he suddenly realized, and mentally slapped himself for being so inconsiderate. “Jeez, I’m sorry... didn’t even think about...”

“It’s alright.”

Her interruption made him frown. “It is?” he asked confused.

“Yes, I’m on the pill, and with our constant health checks, we’re pretty safe.”

“You thought about that?” he asked raising his eyebrows and she chuckled.

“It occurred to me briefly,” she affirmed, her hand still gently stroking his chest.

“And when exactly was that?”

“At some point between the bedroom door and the bed...”

“Carter...”

“What?”

He sighed in mock desperation, and shook his head. “We really have to work on your constantly busy brains – at least when we’re in the middle of having sex.”

She smiled against his skin. “I don’t think that’s possible Sir, I can’t help it.”

“Is that a challenge?” he asked with a half-smirk, raising his eyebrows. “Cause you know how much I love to set records.”

“Oh God.” She started giggling against his skin. With a smile he pulled one of her legs over his hips and closed his eyes, completely engulfed in her scent and warmth. This was definitely a feeling he could get used to really fast.

"Sir?"

"Mmmh?"

"I'm really glad you asked me out."

"I'm glad you agreed to come. Kinda had me worried there for a while yesterday," he murmured against her forehead.

She was feeling sated, happy and relieved. The insomnia from earlier seemed to be entirely gone, and she could feel her body demanding for rest. Her mind was slowly drifting off into a comfortable state of sleepiness and when Jack felt her visibly relaxed against him he allowed his eyes to fall shut as well.

"Jack, do you mind me sleeping here?" she eventually asked drowsily when she had almost drifted off, realizing that she didn't even know whether he wanted her to sleep here or would rather prefer if she slept in her own bed. His answer was but a soft mumble. Before she could wonder anymore whether she was supposed to take that sound for a yes she had drifted off to sleep.

Busted

Of all the ways to wake up, this definitely had to be the most wonderful one, Jack decided when he woke up the next morning to find a sleeping and deliciously naked Sam Carter curled up against him, her skin almost shining white in the light of the sun that hit the bed through the curtains in front of the window. Lazily he bent down and placed his lips on her naked shoulder in a gentle kiss, then another one, his index finger gently running along her arm.

Then he moved his hands over his eyes and blinked a few times against the bright light that shone through the window on the other side of the bed, where his alarm clock was standing.

7 A.M. he finally recognized.

Time to get up. He looked at the sleeping woman again and then decided, that it wouldn't hurt to be a little late – for both of them. He would text Siler to cancel all his appointments before noon. And SG-1 didn't have a mission scheduled for today, just a briefing in the early afternoon, so Sam would be fine (considering that he was her boss).

At that moment, his alarm went off, and he cursed and sat up in bed to reach over to turn it off. Sam moaned slightly and stretched, then turned to snuggle up against him again.

"What time is it?" she mumbled sleepily with her eyes barely open, her short, blonde hair looking completely disheveled. It was so unlike the military woman that she usually was, that he couldn't help but smirk and admire the view for a moment. For years he had entertained fantasies of what it would be like to wake up with her in the morning, but nothing had ever come remotely close.

"Go back to sleep," he whispered gently and pressed a tender kiss to her lips. She moaned softly into the kiss, and then, when he got out of the bed, she raised her body slightly, her arm holding the blanket over her naked chest.

"I need to get in early today. I was planning an experiment on the..." she started, still half asleep, and Jack, who had just buckled his jeans, interrupted her with a half-smirk.

"Not today, Carter. Sleep. That's an order."

"Yes Sir." She dropped back into the pillows, and was almost immediately out again. For a moment he wondered, whether he found it disturbing or not that she was following his orders so willingly even in bed, but then he settled for the latter.

After all, they had been in this mode for eight years, and it would take some time for her to stop addressing him as 'Sir' completely. Just as he had to get used to not addressing her as 'Carter'. It wasn't that he considered himself as her superior in private – it was just the woman he had come to love: Carter. What name he addressed her as seemed to be so benign, at least to him, that he had never thought about it. He knew, it was the same for her. She had never been afraid to contradict him, even in the field – even though she had been respectful about it. But her addressing him as 'Sir' had become so much of a habit, that he almost expected hearing it from her.

Quietly, and lost in thoughts, Jack grabbed a towel and left the room.

He had just finished showering, and was standing in the kitchen with a cup of coffee and the morning newspaper in his hand, when a knock at his front door disturbed him. Slightly confused, he looked at the clock and then opened the door.

"Daniel!" he greeted the completely awake and apparently excited archeologist, who was impatiently waiting for him to open.

"Jack," Daniel greeted and stepped into the house without waiting for an invitation. "I need to talk to you!"

"Good morning Daniel. How are you? Come in..." Jack spoke the redundant invitation to the empty spot outside his door where Daniel had been standing, and closed the door. Daniel looked at him somewhat annoyed and sighed.

"Good morning Jack. How are you? How did you sleep?" the archeologist offered with obvious sarcasm in his voice and Jack answered in an equal tone.

"Good. Good. Can't complain. What's up?"

"It's about that mission to P4X-364."

"Oh for crying outloud, Daniel! It's 7.30 in the morning! Can't this wait until I'm in the office?" he exclaimed, watching as the young man walked down the stairs into his living room, a folder with papers stacked under his arm.

"Normally, yes. But I was taking a closer look at one of those artifacts that we brought back and we have to go back there!" The young man opened the file and put the pictures onto the table right in front of Jack, whose face was looking growingly annoyed and uninterested while he took a sip of his coffee.

Eventually Jack raised his eyebrows, "What exactly am I looking at here... at 7.30 in the morning... before breakfast... Daniel?"

"I was looking at this all night last night, and this is definitely a piece of technology in there. You see the scripts here, there and there?"

Jack looked down at the photos, then lifted his eyes again to look at the man. "All night?"

"Yeah."

"You need to get a life," Jack replied sarcastically, ignoring the fact that Daniel rolled his eyes at that comment. He was about to turn around to head back to his kitchen, when the archeologist pulled out

more photos. He kept babbling on about artifacts, technology and how some civilization could not have had that kind of technology yet. Eventually, Jack interrupted him.

"Daniel... what in my facial expression tells you that I am interested in all that... baloney?"

"Um... don't you understand?" Daniel replied, putting his spectacles further onto his nose. The absolutely blank stare of his friend and superior told him, that Jack did really not comprehend the meaning of his findings. "Jack, this means that another species, much more advance than we, or the asgard must have been to that planet, and intervened in its evolution."

"Ah," Jack replied. "And you want me to...?"

"Authorize another mission to the planet!"

"No Daniel, we've been there! It is too dangerous, since the Goa'uld..." Jack started, but the archeologist interrupted him briskly.

"Especially because of the Goa'uld, Jack. There are not many left, so they shouldn't pose too much of a threat! We don't know, what kind of superior technology there is, but do we really want the Goa'uld to have it?" he argued passionately now.

"What if they already have it, Daniel?" Jack argued back. "Ever thought of that? We don't know how long they've been on that planet already. For all we know it could be years! And they could use that technology against any team I send there!"

"We don't know that!" Daniel shook his head. "How can you be so-so-so damned narrow-minded sometimes. Don't you see the possibilities in there?"

"Daniel. No. I don't care for the possibilities, as long as you don't give me proof that the necessity outweighs the risk."

"Then let me go alone!"

"Listen, Daniel..." Jack replied with obvious annoyance in his voice now. "I haven't even finished my coffee yet, and I really don't want to have this discussion now!"

"Just think about it, okay? I'm sure Sam will want to have a look at the technology, maybe she can find out what it was used for and then..."

"Then we will talk about it. Reasonably," he hurried to add. Hell, there used to be a time when people actually listened to him. Ever since he had become general, he seemed to have to discuss a whole lot more often than before.

"That's all I'm asking," Daniel replied. "I will write a detailed report about..."

Daniel stopped in the middle of the sentence, which prompted Jack to look up from the pictures which were still spread out all over his living room table.

"About?" he asked and then noticed that the young man was staring practically wide eyed and slack-jawed at the stairs that led down to the living room. Jack followed his eyes, and noticed Sam standing on the stairs, hair disheveled, an absolutely gorgeous, sleepy look on her face and only wearing his navy shirt that he had given her last night which did nothing to hide her long, naked legs.

She looked just as shocked at Daniel, who now rearranged his glasses. Apparently he didn't believe his own eyes.

"Um... Sam..." he greeted her, slightly embarrassed, and she nodded visibly awkwardly.

"Daniel."

Then she looked at Jack, her eyes pleading for help quietly. "Um... Daniel..." Jack started, but was interrupted.

"What's...?" Daniel turned his head and looked at Jack, then pointed at Sam with an open mouth and then shook his head. "You know what, I am not even going to ask," he then announced, picked up the pictures from the table and put them back into the folder. When he was finished, he lifted himself up to his height, before eventually shaking his head. "No, I can't. I have to ask... what's going on?"

"Daniel, it's not what it looks like," Sam offered, and Jack raised his eyebrows.

"Oh, I think it is exactly what it looks like," he announced dryly, and when he saw Sam's wide eyes, he sighed. "Come on, Carter, you're in my living room half naked only wearing one of my shirts. He can do the math."

"Jack! ... I mean Sir!" she corrected herself and then buried her face in her hands.

"Jack?" Daniel looked from her back at his old friend with a facial expression that demanded an answer.

"Sit down Daniel," Jack commanded and got up. He went up the stairs and vanished in the kitchen. The archeologist did as he was told, and was feeling slightly awkward as he desperately tried not to look at his barely clothed, very attractive looking colleague. IT was true, years ago, he had had a minor crush on her, which might have resulted from the simple fact that he was the only other person on the team who could remotely understand his science talk, and whom he could have actual intellectual discussions with.

However, it was no secret (at least not between the team members of SG-1), that Sam Carter had feelings for his friend and their team leader Jack O'Neill – and that his feelings towards her were of an equal nature. The instant that had become clear to him (through a rather cryptic but insightful comment that Teal'c had made on one of their missions), Daniel had stopped considering her a potential date in his mind. After all, Jack was one of his closest friends. And in a way, he and Sam had become even closer ever since he regarded her like a sister. Seeing the awkwardness displayed on Sam's face made him equally awkward.

Eventually, Jack returned from the kitchen with two more cups of coffee, one of which he handed to Sam, who took it with a thankful smile. The other one he put in front of Daniel on the table.

"So... you and Sam?" The archeologist started.

"Yes." Jack affirmed dryly.

Daniel nodded quietly. "Since when?"

"Yesterday."

Daniel nodded again. Then his face lit up. "That's great!"

"It is?" Sam asked with an audible hint of confusion from the stairs.

"Well, yes, isn't it?" Daniel asked equally confused, looking from her back to Jack, who sighed.

"Daniel, the thing is, technically we could still get court-martialed for this. I was planning on talking to Washington today about my resignation, so we can make it official. Until then we're committing a criminal offense."

"Oh." Daniel nodded. "Well, if you're afraid that I will say anything... don't worry. I'm happy for you, and I never understood this stiff stance the military had towards personal relationships."

"Thanks, Daniel," Sam said with a soft smile.

"You guys didn't really think I would rat you out, did you?" he asked with a slightly insulted undertone and looked from one to the other.

"No, Daniel, but we actually didn't plan on anybody knowing about this before things were – well, official. So you bursting in like this kinda surprised me a little bit," Jack replied.

"So," Daniel said with a wide smile, "you're actually thinking about retirement?"

"Yes," Jack replied and sighed. "Listen, Daniel, I don't mean to throw you out but I was actually planning on taking Carter out for breakfast and..."

"Oh, I understand!" Daniel replied, with a little too much enthusiasm and a smirk, and grabbed his file with the pictures. "I will just talk to you about this later."

"I appreciate it, Daniel!" Jack replied. Daniel nodded and smiled at both him and Sam and then left through the front door, yelling a cheerful "See you two later" on his way out.

"Wow..." Jack eventually said. "He is enjoying this way too much."

Sam couldn't help but giggle and looked at Jack, who got up now and walked towards her. She got up from the stairs and wrapped her arms around him, her back against the wall, when he leaned in to kiss her. He tasted delicious, like morning coffee and oh so sweet passion. She lost herself in the kiss, until eventually Jack bent down to her ear.

"Slept well?"

"Mmm, very," she affirmed with a dreamy tone in her voice, sliding her arms around his hips to draw him closer.

"Are you hungry yet?"

"Not particularly," she replied back, and then added almost shyly. "Not for food at least."

"Really..." he asked with raised eyebrows, his eyes locking with hers intently. "Ya know... it's funny, I remember somebody telling me last night that they really don't enjoy sex very much."

"Well Sir, I have decided that maybe I should conduct some more experiments before I reach a final conclusion," she replied close to his lips. "Of course, I would be in need of a test subject for that."

Leave it to her to turn science talk into dirty talk that sounded sexy even to his ears. "I entirely blame you for the fact that this kind of talking has become a huge turn-on," he said against her lips, "Eight years ago it would have done nothing at all for me!"

"I remember," she smiled, her hand gently touching his cheek while she cocked her head up to look at him almost cheekily. "You behaved like a jerk. I was amazed you actually never took me up on that arm wrestling challenge."

He bent to her ear and then rasped sexily, "I can think of other challenges instead now, if you're up for experiments."

She giggled when he grabbed her wrist and practically dragged her back into the bedroom. Breakfast would have to wait for another hour or two.

Endings and New Beginnings

"What are you trying to say, General O'Neill?"

Jack flinched when the voice of General Hammond on the other end of the line sounded anything but happy.

"I will not accept your retirement."

"With all due respect, Sir," Jack started, "I have already made my decision."

"Your proposal to lead the SG-C as a civilian is unacceptable and I can honestly not see any way to convince the committee of the usefulness of such an agreement. Furthermore the SecNav will not be pleased either, nor will the president." Hammond continued. "Hell, Jack, what has gotten into you? I have always known you wouldn't be happy with a desk job, but..."

"General Hammond – George, this is really not about that. They are strictly personal reasons."

"Would you care to explain that, General? What difference would it make if you were leading the SG-C as a civilian?" Hammond demanded, and Jack sighed. He had to be really careful here.

"Sir, it is Colonel Carter. We would both like to pursue a relationship that is not permitted in our current chain of command, at least not without ending both our careers and ending up in prison."

There was silence on the other end, and for a moment, Jack thought that the call had been disrupted, when eventually he heard Hammond's voice again.

"I see. Are you sure about that, Jack?"

"I have never been surer about anything in my life, General."

"Okay... listen. This might be a bit more complicated. I am not sure that the president or the committee will be happy to hear that you have an intimate relationship with a subordinate..."

"Actually Sir, there is no relationship whatsoever yet," he interrupted the general with the convincing lie. It was a fine line that he was walking, he knew that, but if he and Carter both insisted, that there was no relationship between them yet, and they had merely discussed the subject over dinner, neither of them risked being court-martialed.

"I see, but it will still be a little bit more complicated than that." General Hammond replied calmly. "Give me a couple of days, to resolve the matter."

"Yes, Sir."

"And Jack? Please hold that letter of resignation back – just for a bit longer."

"Understood, Sir."

~~~ About 3 days later ~~~

Sam checked her uniform for what felt like the millionth time, while she hurried along the corridor of the Stargate Center towards the briefing room. She had been summoned to a meeting not only with the General, but also with a representative of the committee present as well as some Air Force Generals that came directly from the pentagon's office in Washington. Someone flying in from Washington plus Woolsey - that could not be good. She nearly ran into Jack at the next corner and looked at him slightly worried.

"What's this about?" Her voice betrayed her concerns and nervousness and he shrugged.

"No idea."

"Do you think they know?" she hissed quietly a moment later, after checking that they were alone in the hallway. Jack shook his head gently.

"No, how could they?" He looked at her, and sighed. There was guilt written all over her features, from the way she tensely walked, over the way she nervously played with her fingers, up to her face which basically read 'I've committed a criminal offense'. He stopped and grabbed her shoulders. "Relax Carter, and don't look so guilty for crying out loud. It's gonna be fine."

"Yes Sir."

They went up the stairs to the control room and then further up into the briefing room where General Hammond and a senator along with Mr. Woolsey from the committee were seated and waiting for them already.

"Ah, General O'Neill, Colonel Carter, please come in. Be seated." Mr. Woolsey greeted them in his usual strange mixture of civilian cheerfulness and superior grumpiness.

They both sat down at the far end of the table and then Mr. Woolsey opened a file in front of him. "General Hammond has briefed us about the – um – situation you're in, and after a long and extensive discussion, we have reached an agreement that satisfies both the committee and the current administration." He pulled two smaller files out of his folder and then handed them over to them. "Due to the sensitive nature of the subject, we have reached the conclusion that we cannot allow both of you to keep working here. Please don't consider this punishment," Woolsey hurried to inform them, "This is merely a precaution meant to protect both your careers – which are way too important to both the air force and the committee, I assure you."

"What is this?" Sam asked, shooting Jack a confused side-glance while she opened her file.

General Hammond smiled. "We have provided both of you with an option for reassignment. Colonel Carter, your help would be invaluable at area 51, where we examine most of the artifacts retrieved from other work. You're the most qualified for the job. General O'Neill, I have suggested you personally to be the new liaison officer for the Stargate program in Washington D.C., and they have taken up my suggestion. If you want the job, it's yours."

"Please be assured," Woolsey stated again with a smile, "that we understand your situation, but it is impossible for you to keep working in a chain of command if you plan to pursue a more personal relationship in the future. That would inevitably lead to conflicts within the establishment. We want to prevent those kinds of conflicts and make sure, that both your decisions regarding your work remain objective, impartial, and uninfluenced by feelings which you might have for each other."

Jack inhaled angrily, his first instinct being to tell this arrogant little committee clown, that their decisions had been uninfluenced despite their feelings during the past years as well, but a warning glance from Carter stopped him. Inwardly he had to admit that she was right. Rubbing it in their faces, that they had had feelings for each other – and worse of all, that they both had been aware of the other's feelings for all this time – was probably not going to make their point.

He looked down at his file, and then looked over at Carter. She looked at him just as clueless.

"Generals, Mr. Woolsey," he finally started, "thank you for the opportunities, but Washington, Sir? Area 51? Either way, one of us is going to be halfway across the country and that is not an ideal..."

"They are both 9 to 5 positions, Jack," General Hammond informed him with a smile. "with weekends off, and the option to use the Prometheus' or Daedalus transports or navy air transports whenever

possible. Within 2 seconds up to 30 minutes, you could be wherever you wanted to be. The navy is willing to pay for your expenses, as well as a completely furnished home."

Carter and O'Neill both looked at each other. Then Jack cleared his throat.

"In that case, General Sir, I will accept the position."

"What? No!" Sam interrupted and looked at him. "With all due respect Sir," she added quickly, remembering they were in a work-setting. "You love the SG-C and your job here. I cannot let you give that up! General Hammond, I will accept the position."

"What the...? No way, Carter! You are much too important here, besides you love your job just as much as I do!"

"Yes, Sir, but I will be just as happy working at area 51!"

"And who is going to get our asses out of trouble when the SG-C is about to be blown up again?" Jack asked, more forceful now. "No, General Hammond, Sir, I will accept. The decision has been made."

"Excuse me... Sir!" Sam looked at him – actually glared might be a better description - and Jack winced inwardly; whether she had said Sir or not, this look sure qualified for an insubordination charge.

"General Hammond..." Jack started, holding her eyes in a dark, warning look, "could we have a few moments, please? In private?"

"Um, Sure, General," Hammond offered and pointed towards Jack's office. "Take all the time you need."

"Carter! My office! Now!" Jack commanded in a deadpan voice, as he got up and hurried out of the room into his office.

Sam Carter followed him, metaphorically steaming, although she realized in the back of her head that her behavior was completely out of line. They were at work after all, and regardless of their private relationship, at work he outranked her. Big time.

However, she was unwilling to just let him make the decision on this subject; after all it concerned the both of them.

Woolsey followed the two of them with his eyes, with a shocked and very intimidated expression on his face. "Wow..." he commented when the door was closed. "And you're telling me those two want to be romantically involved?"

"Carter!" Jack snapped, as soon as both doors to his office were closed as well. "Are you out of your mind? You were seconds away from forcing me to throw you into the brig for insubordination! Don't forget that officially we only have a work relationship at the moment!"

"You are right, Sir," she agreed, calming down now. "And I am sorry for that, but I had to voice my disagreement with your decision."

Voicing, my ass, he thought quietly, but decided to let it go. Instead he changed the subject, "Yeah, about that: There is no way I am going to let you..."

"Let me?" she interrupted him, and then hurriedly added a belated, "Sir". "We might have a problem if you think that you have the power to "let me" do something!"

"Colonel!" Jack snapped, "Did I give you permission to speak, yet? Let alone interrupt me?"

"Sorry, Sir!" She saluted briskly. "But I really don't think..."

"Ah... Carter!" He silenced her. She pressed her lips together and remained silent. Despite their relationship she had no doubt that O'Neill would not hesitate to send her to the brig for insubordination if she pushed him too far. And he would have every right to, she knew that. However, this was a decision that affected both their lives – not only professionally, but also personally, and she would not allow him to leave her out of it.

"You are too valuable here," O'Neill eventually started to reason with her. "I can be replaced by another general, but I would be able to sleep a lot better at night if I knew that you were still here to keep an eye on all of those nutjobs down in the science labs."

"Permission to speak freely, Sir?" she asked, her voice calm and her tone reasonably now, and he nodded.

"Go ahead," he said, sitting on the edge of his desk now.

"I don't think this is your decision alone to make... Sir! This involves me as much as you, and not only our professional lives, but more than that our private lives as well."

He nodded. "You're right."

"You are really doing a good job at the Stargate Center, Sir, and frankly, the program needs you. I can still be consulted, even if I am at area 51. You however..."

"I can be replaced by somebody else, who will do their job just as good, maybe better," he interjected gently. "In Washington I might be able to raise some interest for the program."

They both sighed and looked at each other. "Great," Jack nodded. "Here we are... I promised you it wouldn't come down to this, and I meant it, Sam. I cannot - hell, I don't want to let you sacrifice your career for me. That is the one thing I promised you, and I intend to keep it."

"Jack," Sam replied softly. "It would not really be a sacrifice. Actually the job at area 51 is quite attractive. I get to play with all the amazing technologies that the SG teams bring back from off-world – something that I always complain about not being able to do here. And the job brings much fewer risks – which would be good for Cassie. Ever since Janet died, she is worried sick about me. So maybe it is time for me to change career-wise, at least for now."

He looked at her seriously, scanned her face and, after a short moment, eventually burst out, "Ah fer crying outloud, Carter, don't give me that! You love this job. You love going through that gate, and I don't know who you are trying to fool here, but..."

"Yes!" she snapped with an angry undertone again. "Yes, I do love it and so do you!" Then she sighed. "But to be honest, I love you more," she added almost whispering.

He raised his eyebrows and looked at her like he hadn't heard her right. "What?"

He really shouldn't be surprised to hear that from her, given their past, and all that had happened, but ever since their date three days ago, they had barely had time alone together, and none of them had said the L-word up until now. It was not that he didn't like hearing it – on the contrary. But hearing it from her in this context was definitely and absolutely not acceptable.

She realized how her statement sounded and winced, closing her eyes, "Okay, that came out wrong."

"Oh no! No! No! And again no! Are you saying, you are sacrificing your job here for me, Carter?" He got up and started pacing up and down. "This is exactly what I promised you would not happen."

This... whole thing!" He gesticulated around and then grabbed her shoulders. "And it is exactly why I won't let you do it."

"Well Sir, what would your reason be?" she asked, holding his eyes desperately. "Don't tell me you're looking forward to having a desk-job in Washington, I know how much you hate the paperwork. You can barely stand the paperwork here."

"But I wanted to retire anyway. What's a few more years in Washington?"

"Yes, but you wouldn't even consider it, if it weren't for me! Neither Washington, nor retirement. So inevitably, at some point, when you become unsatisfied with your decision – and knowing you, I am sure you will - it would fall back on our relationship."

"So, I guess we reached an impasse then?" he interrupted her with his blank question, which was more a statement of the obvious than a serious question.

"Yes, Sir," Sam affirmed sadly.

"There's a third option, you know. We could both keep working here and... return things to how they were – maybe for another year or two until they will let me retire," he offered softly, his eyes reflecting his fear that she was going to agree to this option. He wasn't willing to go on even another month like they had for the past four years, keeping their feelings locked up in some kind of imaginary room. It felt like an entire mountain range was lifted from his heart when she shook her head.

"No, Sir, I don't think that's an option. At least not for me." Her eyes locked with his, and momentarily he could read fear in them. Fear that he was going to end it here and now. Fear that he was going to choose their careers (or rather hers) over their relationship. Fear that he would break up with her.

"Glad we agree at least on one thing," he replied, making sure that she understood that breaking up was not an option for him. The hint of a smile played around the corners of his mouth and she smiled back weakly.

At that moment, a knock interrupted their conversation. Jack got up from the edge of his desk and then impatiently snapped "What?" towards the door.

The door opened, and Daniel peeked in. "Hi Jack! Sam!"

"Daniel, not now!" At Jack's impatient tone, Daniel raised his eyebrows.

"Um, Jack, actually I didn't even want anything from you. Sam, if you're done here, you're needed down in the lab. Something about irregular radiation readings from one of the artifacts SG-9 brought back that they need your input on, before they start the experiment," Daniel said, and Sam nodded.

"I'll be there as soon as I can," she replied somewhat sadly, and hearing her tone just as edgy as Jack's had been, he opened the door wider now and stepped in.

"Everything okay?"

"No, Daniel, not everything is okay!" Jack said snappily, his eyes telling his friend and the base's regular-pain-in-the-butt archeologist to leave – a notion which apparently was lost on him, for now Daniel came in fully and closed the door behind him.

"What's going on, guys?"

"They offered us reassignments," Sam replied. "One of us has to accept, if we want to be together - and we cannot decide who will."

"Oh." Daniel nodded, putting his hands in his pockets. "I take it, it's mandatory?"

"If we want to be together, it is," Jack said, and Daniel nodded again. Then he shrugged.

"Well, why don't you compromise then?"

"Daniel..." Jack said, still somewhat snappily. "I thought, we just said that this was the problem. We cannot decide who of us will accept."

"Yes, but that would not be a compromise, would it? And since you obviously cannot agree anyway upon who gives up their job and who doesn't, there's really only one thing you can do."

Jack growled. "Yes, we both keep our jobs and either return to the way we were, or keep our relationship a secret with the constant threat of a court-martial hanging over our heads. I really wouldn't care if it was just for my career, but I am not willing to risk Carter's. So the only option seems to be to return things to how they were."

"Or..." Daniel started looking up at the ceiling with narrowed eyes. "You could just both accept the reassignments – at least for a while. That way neither of you will feel that they – or the other one – is making more of a sacrifice. And who says that those reassignments will be permanent? I mean, you're in the military, aren't you constantly reassigned?" Both of them stared at Daniel literally open-mouthed, which made Daniel frown. "Right?"

Slowly, both Sam and Jack averted their eyes from him and looked at each other. A soft smile played around the corners of Jack's mouth, and he folded his arms. Sam smiled back, her face lighting up. Neither of them said a word, but their silence and the expression in their eyes and on their faces said more than an entire speech could have.

After a long moment of silence, Daniel nodded, and pulled one of his hands out of his pocket to turn and open the door.

"Alright, since that is obviously resolved, I will just wait down in the lab, Sam. As soon as you're done here... um..."

Realizing that his words were lost anyway, he shrugged and stepped out of the door. He had just left the room and was about to close the door, when Jack's voice reached him.

"Thanks Daniel, you're a genius!"

"Glad to be of assistance – as always." Daniel commented, somewhat ironically, and with these words he shut the door.

"That is exactly why he got so many women on different planets, and was chosen to ascend - twice," Jack announced jokingly, and Sam couldn't help but giggle. Then he asked, "Well, what do you think?"

"I still think you should stay in command of the SG-C – but at least his option would resolve this discussion. And as Daniel said, who said that they are going to be permanent reassignments?"

"We could just pretend they were mandatory," Jack added, and smiled boyishly like he had just outsmarted the entire secret service. Sam chuckled and nodded in agreement.

After a moment, Jack looked at her with concern in his eyes, "Are you going to be okay with that? I mean, working with all the eggheads at area 51 and not being involved in the live action deal?"

“Actually, yes.” The expression on Sam’s face reflected her growing satisfaction with the arrangement. “I will get to work with all the technologies – a lot more than I get the chance now. And I might even have the time to start some of the research involving Goa’uld technologies that I always dreamed of. Plus, frankly, Sir, it might be a good thing, if for a while neither of us is in any immediate danger. I know it’s what we signed up for... we both know that... and I’m okay with that in general... but...” She looked at him, suddenly not knowing how to express her feelings because she felt what she was going for was one of the stupidest clichés out there.

They were soldiers. It was part of the job – a calculated risk – that every trip through the Stargate might be their last. It had not been a problem for her to live with that thought in the past. But over the course of the previous years, she had lost so many friends, she had lost her father – she had almost lost Jack a couple of times, and almost died herself just as often. And now, that they had just started dating, she desperately longed for something to count on; some kind of safe haven that she did not have to fear of losing any minute.

She was a soldier. Even remotely having those kind of thoughts seemed to be incredibly selfish given that their job was to protect earth. But after all that they had been through, after all they had done for the world, after all this fighting to keep earth and its inhabitants safe, didn’t they deserve just a little bit of safety as well?

Jack was looking at her intently, knowing quite well what was going through her mind, and when he realized what she was hesitant (yes, nearly afraid) to express he nodded gently. “I know, Sam. If we want to make this work, we need time where we don’t have to worry about each other dying, at least for now.”

She exhaled relieved, happy that he understood her without words, and nodded. After another moment of silence that was spent with them just looking at each other Jack eventually lifted.

“Alright then! Let’s give those clowns our answer,” he straightened out. “Colonel!”

“General!” She saluted and then went to open the door into the briefing room.

Jack stepped out behind her. “General Hammond,” he stated gravely, “We have reached an agreement.”

The older man smiled openly. “I am glad to hear that.” He held his hand out to their seats at the end of the table, signaling them to sit back down.

“With your permission, Sir, we will both accept the reassignments.” Jack replied, while he and Sam sat back down.

For a moment the four men looked at them somewhat baffled, and then eventually General Hammond nodded. “Wonderful!” he announced. “Congratulations on the new jobs and... well, you know.” He smiled at them, implying their new relationship, and then closed the files on the table in front of them.

Mr. Woolsey nodded, “Not what we expected, but congratulations from me as well!”

“You will find all necessary information in your files. General O’Neill, your job starts Monday one week from now at 9am. I will see you in Washington. Colonel Carter, I will make sure all the necessary arrangements for you are made on area 51. I would prefer if you stayed here for a few more weeks, until the general’s replacement has arrived. He might need a bit of time to take over the job, and it would be good if some familiar faces could make sure the transfer runs smoothly.”

"Of course, Sir," Carter nodded. "If you don't mind me asking, General Hammond, what will happen to SG-1?"

"Well..." The old man sighed and got up. "It seems like there will not be much left of SG-1. Teal'c is on Chulak most of the time trying to organize the new Jaffa government, and with you gone, only Dr. Jackson remains – who, I am sure, will welcome the opportunity to devote more time to his studies of the ancient's language. I would not be surprised to find his request for a transfer to Atlantis on my desk very soon. With the Goa'uld and replicators largely out of the picture, it seems there is not much left to do anyway. In due time, we will probably form a new SG-1 team, but until then SG teams 2 through 15 will have to do."

"I understand," Sam nodded.

"Well if that is all..." The three men lifted from their chairs. They saluted, and then watched Woolsey and the second general walk towards the door. Hammond stayed behind for a moment longer, and, when the others had left the room, looked at them seriously.

"General O'Neill, Colonel Carter, a word please?" He directed them into Jack's office. The two of them followed the General inside and watched as he closed the door. Then he turned towards them with a serious expression on his face.

"I hope you both understand that this is an absolute exception that you two owe to your exemplary service in the past, and the fact that the president still feels that he owes you something."

"We understand, Sir," Jack replied and nodded. "And we're very grateful."

General Hammond looked from one to the other and then went on, "There's another thing: I advise you to be discreet about this. Don't forget, officially, the transfer doesn't happen until a week from now; until then you are still in each other's chain of command. And after your transfers I don't think it would benefit either one of you – especially not your careers – if word got out that this was a necessary transfer due to your relationship. Officially, I put "personal reasons" into the file, so I think it would be better if you both came up with a reason other than having a relationship."

"Yes, Sir," Jack nodded, but Sam looked at him somewhat bewildered.

"Sir, with all due respect, but how long are we supposed to keep this a secret? It is going to be hard as it is with the distance between us, but having to keep this a secret?"

Before Jack could answer, Hammond stepped in and smiled, "Don't worry, Colonel. This wasn't meant as a permanent suggestion. Just give it a few months – maybe half a year. Just not right away. You have made a few enemies in Washington in the past – both of you – and I would hate seeing them turn this into a black spot on your records that might hinder promotions in the future or, worse, end your careers all together."

"Yes, Sir," Sam nodded. "I understand. Thank you Sir."

"Well..." Hammond nodded at both of them. "I have a meeting with Woolsey coming up, so I should probably not keep him waiting. He tends to get impatient very quickly. General..." He narrowed his eyes and looked at Jack. "...I trust you to behave yourselves until your transfer."

"Of course, Sir. You know me." The instant he said that and saw the general raise his eyebrows, he winced. Bad example. "We will behave, Sir." Jack hurried to assure, and with a smile the general

turned around, shaking his head in amusement. They both watched as Hammond left the room and closed the door behind him.

"He expects us to behave, yet he closes the door..." Jack remarked dryly and turned around to look at the beautiful colonel in front of him. Sam smiled at that comment, and was just about to throw a witty answer at him, when he unexpectedly closed the distance between them and pulled her close into a deep kiss, that muffled her shocked little shriek. He slightly dipped her down to turn the kiss into a long, languid and passionate seduction.

"So..." he then murmured against her lips after he had thoroughly explored her mouth, and she was left breathless and painfully aware that she had another six hours of duty ahead of her, before they could be alone, "not exactly how I dreamed it to end up."

"Well, you know what they say, Sir, life is not perfect," Sam replied smiling, her fingers playing with the hair at the nape of his neck.

"True," Jack nodded. "But I really don't feel like complaining about the outcome."

"Neither do I, Sir," she smiled and Jack winced.

"Carter, will you stop with the Sir already?"

"Sorry, S... Jack." Then she pulled him into another searing kiss that was only interrupted by the base-alarms going off and Daniel storming into the office without knocking.

"Sam! They... oh my God... guys... I'm sorry!"

"One of these days I'm gonna kill him," Jack muttered against Sam's lips and then let her go. They both straightened out immediately. With a somewhat grumpy expression on his face, Jack looked at the archeologist. "Daniel?"

"Jack?" Obviously still taken aback by having stormed in on his two friends kissing, Daniel could merely stare at him.

"Why does it sound like red alert out there?" O'Neill finally asked snappily.

"Sorry... um... Sam! Felger just blew up half the laboratory with the artifact in the radiation experiment... He didn't want to wait for you, because he thought he had it under control," he informed them.

"That damn..." Jack didn't speak the rest of his curse out loud, but instead asked, "Did somebody get hurt?"

"Um, luckily not, they realized in time that things were getting out of control."

"Carter," Jack snapped and looked at her. "Get down there, and throw that idiot in the brig for the rest of the day, will ya? And if he resists, shoot him! Or even better, get him up here into my office so that I can do that myself."

"Yes, Sir." Sam nodded and was about to follow Daniel out the door when Jack's voice held her back.

"One more thing... got any plans this weekend?"

"Um..." She froze, just staring at him completely put off by this change of subject, and the way the tone of his voice suddenly had an intimate edge to it. "No."

Jack was sitting down behind his desk smiling. "Would you like to come to the cabin with me? Ya know... celebrate, and get a little bit of time alone together before I leave for Washington? We could leave Friday evening and get back on Sunday evening – that would leave us two entire days for things like fishing, talking – seeing what records I can break."

She laughed softly at his last remark, and her face brightened up. The smile that she gave him made his pulse speed up a little. "I would love that."

"Great, then it's a date." With a smirk, he looked down at the files on his desk, picking up a pen to start working. When she just kept standing there, looking at him, with the alarms sounding all around them, he finally cleared his throat, and looked up at her again. "Carter?"

"Sir?"

"Didn't you have something to do?" he asked with his eyebrows raised while he gesticulated towards the sound speakers in the ceiling, through which the alarm could still be heard.

"Oh! Of course. Sorry, yes Sir!" With those words she turned around and hurried out of the room, leaving a chuckling general behind. If it was that easy for him to distract her, it really shouldn't be difficult to set new records, he mused to himself. Then he remembered something.

"And Carter! Find out what went wrong, and report back!" he yelled after her, not sure that she could even hear him over the alarms. Nonetheless, he added, a little louder, "And tell Siler to turn those damn alarms off!"

Then he leaned back in his chair, and pressed the palms of his hands against his eyes. His concerns had been justified; the SG-C would be doomed after Carter's transfer.

The End (23/07/2013)

About the Author

Kimberley Jackson graduated from Free University of Berlin with a degree in English Literature and Cultural Sciences, with special focus on Native American Literatures, and American Television Shows of the 1990s and 2000s. She lives in Berlin, Germany.

Her stories, which have been around the internet since 2000, have gained numerous fans and subscribers on various different platforms. Her stories have an average of 400 reads each month on fanfiction.net – the biggest platform for television inspired stories on the internet.

Her works have always been published under a creative commons license, a need that first arose out of necessity, due to the nature of her work and her use of characters from television shows.

Find out more about Kimberley, and keep up to date with her stories at

www.kimberley-jackson.com