

~ Be Omen To Me And Oracle ~

(Sequel to "[Who talks Of Victory...](#)")

by romansilence

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TIMELINE: The story branches off in an alternate universe after "Heroes" (Stargate: SG-1, season 7). It's some sort of SG-1/Atlantis crossover.

SEXUAL DISCLAIMER: This story depicts a loving relationship of two consenting adult women. If this kind of love offends you, or you're not old enough, please go away. Additionally, the story starts with a dream about a rape - just so you'd be warned.

PAIRING: Sam/Janet (established relationship), Elizabeth Weir/Teyla (implied).

SUMMARY: After joining Samantha at Atlantis and becoming her lover, Janet has to deal with her partner's nightmares and learns just what a vital part the blonde played in restoring her life after P3X-666. This is a sequel to my story "[Who Talks of Victory](#)" and thus also explains how Samantha did it. It might be better to read it first.

Chapter One: The Dream

Samantha woke with a start. Soft hands were roaming over her body. She opened her eyes and looked into Janet's smiling face. The sight made her relax a bit, just to find that she was bound to one of the infirmary beds. Her arms were held at her side, the wrists encircled by thick leather cuffs that would have held Teal'c. Her ankles seemed to be likewise entrapped. There also were thick bands around her neck and waist.

She strained against them.

Janet leaned forward and whispered in her ear. "You are mine now, Samantha, completely at my mercy. I will take you like I should have years ago."

The blonde felt a wave of anticipation rush through her veins, but at the same time a tiny voice told her that this was wrong, that this was not the way she wanted the first time with the woman of her dreams to be.

Perhaps this also was nothing but a dream but the hands caressing her body and the leather straps chafing her skin were real enough. Janet seemed to know exactly where and how she liked to be

touched, and the bound blonde quickly felt the wetness between her thighs.

There was a predatory gleam in the small doctor's eyes that made Samantha plead. "Please, baby, free my hands. I want to touch you; I need to touch you."

The slap to her face resounded through the empty infirmary, and she was sure that the next day she would wear the imprint of the doctor's hand on her cheek.

"You have been a naughty girl, a very naughty girl," Janet's voice said, "and naughty girls have to be restrained. They have to be punished. So, now be quiet and take your punishment like a good girl."

Something was not right with these words; something was not right with this situation. It was not like Janet, not like Janet at all.

The hands resumed their trek over her body and she slowly stopped caring. She longed to spread her legs but the cuffs and the narrow cot made it impossible.

"Look at me, Samantha Carter, now!" Janet ordered while she stepped away from the cot.

She began to unbutton her lab coat, and it soon was more than clear that she was naked underneath but not totally naked. A harness had been strapped to her groin with a big, protruding, fleshy phallus attached. Samantha stared at it disbelievingly.

Before she knew how, Janet had climbed onto the cot and was straddling her hips. Thumbs and index fingers of both hands pinched her already hard nipples none too gently. She wanted to protest when they suddenly were squeezed. It hurt and it didn't stop, but she didn't cry out. Over the years she had learned how to deal with physical pain, but she pleaded with her brunette captor.

"Janet, please, stop. You're hurting me. Please, stop!"

Her words fell on deaf ears. "You are mine. You get what you deserve."

This was wrong, wrong on so many levels. She had to make it stop. Samantha worked on getting her right hand free while Janet stretched out on top of her. She was heavier than she had expected.

The phallus was at her entrance. Samantha never had been a big fan of penetration, and despite the wetness between her legs, it hurt enough to make her cry out.

Another slap hit her other cheek. She frantically pulled against the wrist cuffs. Janet thrust into her, hard and fast, without regard for her comfort. This was rape! How could it be... Janet wouldn't... Janet couldn't... But she was, and Samantha didn't want this...

With this disconcerting thought she finally wriggled out of the right cuff and tried to push the

smaller woman off of her. The palm of her hand brushed against something hard - and the image of Janet morphed into the heavy-set form of Doctor Warner who laughed at the expression of horror on her face.

One last thrust and he came inside of her. Samantha's fist hit his chin but in her prone position she didn't have enough leverage to dislodge him completely. He climbed down and forced her arm back into its restraint.

"Next time, I'll take you from behind."

Samantha surprised herself with her reaction. For all intents and purposes, she just had been raped and all her mind came up with was to ask, "How did you get your hands on a mimic device? How were you able to change the settings?"

The surgeon laughed once again and whispered in her ear, "I knew that one day it would pay off to play nice with these boring geeks. Felger did it for me."

He once again squeezed her right breast, slipped back into his lab coat and grabbed the chart at the foot end of the bed. He scribbled something while murmuring loud enough for Samantha to hear it clearly.

"Patient still shows aggressive tendencies and has to stay in restraints and under observation for at least another twenty-four hours." He locked eyes with the tall blonde. "Tomorrow night your ass will be mine."

-X-X-X-

Samantha woke with a start. Her upper body was glistening with sweat, her breathing was fast and irregular, and her heartbeat tried to split her skull from the inside.

She looked around. She was in her quarters in Atlantis. It was in the middle of the night. She turned around in the hope to calm herself with the sight of her calmly sleeping lover of three months but Janet was gone.

A wave of panic washed over her and for the fraction of a heartbeat she asked herself if this was not the dream and what she thought to be a dream was reality. Then she saw the light coming from the bathroom and breathed a sigh of relief. Janet was all right; Janet was waiting for her. She knew that she usually preferred to face the first disoriented moments after coming out of a nightmare alone and over the months they had developed a routine about it.

The headache abated and the blonde scientist tried to also calm her frantic heartbeat. Before Janet's arrival with the reinforcements from Earth under Colonel Everett she would have taken a shower and fled to one of the labs. There was so much to discover that two lifetimes without sleep would not be enough to gain even a rough understanding of the technology, but the

brunette had quickly established another 'routine', if one were so inclined to call it thus.

She remembered her surprise seeing the small doctor step through the Atlantis Gate and she knew that she would do anything to keep her safe. They were able to repel the Wraith Attack and make them believe that the City had been destroyed. She also remembered the first time they had had the chance to really talk privately, to let the fact sink in that the brunette had literally crossed the Galaxy and landed in the middle of a war zone, just to be with the disgraced Air Force Officer. Janet had found her in her quarters...

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The blonde was visibly nervous when Janet appeared in her doorway.

"Here, Sam, I want you to read this."

The taller woman scanned the letter with the Presidential seal. "I'm pardoned?"

"Yes, Sam, and if you want to, you can be reinstated in the Air Force with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. And I love you; I'm in love with you."

"You told me that you never could have those kind of feelings for another woman, Janet. What changed?"

"I had a lot of time to think, Sam, and I found that I always felt more for you than what one should feel for a friend, but I buried it deep in my soul. I'm sorry I hurt you. I didn't want to see it and so I let you down when I should have been at your side. I can understand if you don't want to have anything to do with me... or if you have found someone else..."

"I still love you, Jan. I always will, but please let's take this slowly, okay?"

"I thought you would put up more of a fight, Sam."

"Janet, I may have a blonde moment every couple of years, but anyone who gives up their whole life on the off-chance of getting back someone they love must be deadly serious. Damn, Janet, you walked right into a war zone. I could have slapped you when I recognised you in the gate room. I was so afraid for you."

Despite her resolve to go slowly, Samantha pulled the smaller woman on her lap and kissed her soundly.

"So, there's really no one else. I'm glad."

"Why would you think there was?" the blonde asked.

"This Teyla is awfully protective of you. You should have heard how she cut Everett off when we were in the conference room staring at you doing your magic."

"Teyla is my friend, nothing more. Elizabeth would ban me to the outer edges of Atlantis if I would even think of touching her woman," Samantha answered with a smile. "So, how do we pull this don't-ask-don't-tell thing off?"

"We won't have to, Sammy. Look at the next page. General Hammond worked miracles. From now on gays and lesbians no longer will have to hide what they are and who they love. It was put in effect the day before we left Earth."

"Wow! What did Cassandra say about your move to the other side of the universe? Did you leave her with Daniel? Which college did she choose?"

"Slow down, Sam. Cassandra is fine. Yes, I left her with Daniel, in a way."

"In a way? What's that supposed to mean?"

"They're on board the Daedalus, Sam."

The only answer Samantha could think of was to give the doctor another passionate kiss. For the rest of the day they deliberately forgot to take it slowly.

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The sweat was drying on her skin but the memory of her nightmare returned and made her shiver. She stared straight ahead and tried to will it away but lately there was only one thing that could get her out of the grip of the very bad nightmares: Janet's touch and her voice.

Samantha was sure that this time would be no exception, though her beloved in a twisted way had been part of this particular dream. She rose and silently crossed the room to the bathroom door.

Janet had her back to the door; she was sitting on the rim of the big bathtub and sprinkled some bathing salts in the gently steaming water. She impatiently had been waiting for her tall lover. The brunette stretched her right hand backwards and Samantha took it. Janet pulled her closer and she wrapped both arms around the seated woman.

The brunette rose, turned around and kissed Samantha passionately. She made her step into the tub and they both sat down. Without a word she soaped up a sponge and began to wash her lover's front gently. The blonde didn't resist, but she also made no move to help her in any way.

To reach her back Janet knelt between Samantha's spread knees and worked around her. The blonde's face thus came to rest against her chest, between her breasts. She could feel her lover's

hot breath and felt her nipples getting hard but now was not the time to be aroused.

Samantha needed care and pampering to come back to her, not sex. Though over the last weeks the nightmares had gotten less frequent, they still shook the taller woman to the core, and only Janet seemed to be able to break its grip, and only in the privacy of their shared quarters did the proud scientist allow herself the luxury to be vulnerable.

The brunette let go of the sponge and caressed Samantha's blond hair, holding her lover like one would a child. Samantha started to cry, big silent tears. She wrapped her arms around the smaller woman's waist and held on as if for dear life.

The surprisingly open, immediate reaction told the tiny doctor that this night's bad dream had been more violent than she had expected. She never would have risked the blonde waking up alone had she realised.

After having learned very quickly that it was never a good idea to wake her lover, they had over the months developed a routine of sorts. During Samantha's less violent dreams Janet would either pretend to be still asleep and offer the distraught woman the silent comfort of her presence - or, like this night, she would rise and prepare a hot bath for them to wash away the memory of the nightmare.

But this night she had failed. Samantha needed her presence, needed to touch her, needed her touch as a life line back to reality directly after a very bad dream. She had failed her love, Janet berated herself, while she cradled the crying woman in her arms and tried to surround her with all the love she had.

Minutes or hours later, Samantha said, "Please, let me hold you, my love."

Janet quickly complied. She turned around, slipped under the water and snuggled in her lover's arms. This was the part where Samantha had to convince herself that she was real, that she really had chosen to cross the universe just to be with her, to build a future with her. The small doctor let herself be held. She hated to see her strong partner this shaken but she also was gratified that she didn't try to shut her out. Samantha did not always share the content of her dreams and memories with her.

Janet turned her head and looked into the blue orbs. The haunted look was almost gone; so this probably would not be one of the nights her lover chose to open up all the way. But the grip around her torso tightened and Samantha whispered, "He raped me."

Janet couldn't hold the gasp of horror back at her partner's words, and her mind was running a mile a minute with images of O'Neill forcing himself on her beloved.

"In my dream Warner raped me. I was bound to one of the infirmary beds and he was wearing a mimic device. He looked..."

Janet's hand softly touched her lover's cheek. She finished the sentence almost tonelessly, "He

looked like me."

Samantha nodded with new tears glistening in the corner of her eyes. The brunette did the only thing she could think of; she turned and kissed her, gently and demanding at once. She put all her love in this one kiss and finally the other woman responded. Janet was lifted out of the tub and without caring about the trail of water puddles they left in the main room, they returned to the bed.

"Please, make love to me, baby."

"It will be my pleasure, Sammy, but I want you to also make love to me."

-X-X-X-

Brown eyes were locked on blue when they began to touch, exploring the by now familiar planes of the other woman's body with their hands. Finally, Janet pressed the taller woman down on the mattress and straddled one of her thighs. Her hands began to caress her lover's breasts and sides, and when she felt the body underneath hers getting stiff, she guided Samantha's hands to her own breasts.

The blonde slowly relaxed and only when she was sure that her partner would be alright, Janet bent down and suckled already hard nipples. Samantha's hand wandered down to her hips and strong arms pulled her up and to the side, until her centre was resting on top of the blonde curls. Samantha guided her lover's body up and down; making their nether regions rub against each other.

Janet groaned around a nipple but didn't stop her ministrations. Samantha suddenly rolled them around and knelt over her smaller partner. Her lips on Janet's stopped any protest she might have wanted to utter.

The doctor willingly surrendered her mouth and their tongues danced with each other while the blonde gently stroked her firm breasts with most of her weight resting on her other arm. When they finally broke for air, Janet whispered in her partner's ear.

"Please, Sammy, make love to me and let me make love to you. I want to please you while you please me."

The taller woman smiled, her eyes ablaze with arousal, and once again kissed Janet. Only then did she turn around with her knees now next to the brunette's head. Janet immediately started to lap up the juices trailing down the inside of her thighs. Samantha moaned while busy to do the same.

When Janet began to place tiny kisses on her partner's labia, Samantha mirrored her actions. They teased each other, building up a very welcome tension in her lover's body. More than once

Janet backed off, all too aware that this was still about more than getting their release. It was even about more than making love. It was about healing a tiny part of Samantha's self-esteem and self-confidence.

She waited for the blonde's need to become urgent enough to take the initiative and really, when she just was about to redirect her ministrations for the nth time to the outer labia, Samantha began to suckle the brunette's clit. Janet's hips immediately arched into the touch and she began to mirror her partner's actions. It didn't take long for them to come together.

Samantha had just enough energy to collapse at her lover's side, but it was up to Janet to turn around and snuggle in her strong arms. Their breathing rhythms began to return to normal, and the small doctor fought with herself regarding whether she should try once again to get the other woman to talk about the nightmare.

The blonde seemed to read her mind. "It was only a dream, Jan."

She sounded suspiciously as if she wanted to convince herself, so, Janet decided to forge ahead. "Sam, all your dreams have a kernel of truth to them. Please talk to me, and they will no longer have any hold on you."

The blonde knew that her lover was right. Whenever they talked about a dream it didn't return but this was one of the really hard ones.

"Samantha, you are what counts for me. You are who is important. You don't have to try and protect anyone of our former colleagues or friends. I love you, my Sammy."

Samantha closed her arms tighter around her beloved. Her voice was barely above a whisper as she started to talk.

"Warner didn't rape me, Jan, but he groped me. There had been an accident at one of the power conduits and I was brought down to help repair it. The Airman on duty insisted that I wear the handcuffs during work, then someone, somewhere switched on a light or something, and it turned out that the metal of the cuffs were a really good conductor. It burned my wrists and knocked me out. When I regained consciousness I was on one of the infirmary beds, stripped to the waist.

"My hands were free but broad straps held me at the throat, chest, waist, thighs, and knees. Warner looked down on me and said that I would be alright but that he wanted to do some more tests to make sure."

The blonde fell silent. Janet turned in her arms and sought the pain-filled blue orbs. "I love you, Samantha Carter."

"He grabbed my breasts and squeezed them. I told him to stop and yelled for the Airman I knew to be close by. Warner told me that he had sent him to the commissary to get a bite to eat. He pinched my nipples so hard it felt like he wanted to rip them off."

"I'll kill him, if I ever see him again; I'll kill him."

"No, baby, he's not worth it, and believe me, he paid for what he did. General O'Neill spent most nights on the base and he had been alerted to the accident. Before Warner could react to the sound of combat boots ringing across the floor, the privacy curtain was yanked aside. General O'Neill threw him to the floor. He looked at me for a moment and then turned his attention to Warner who began to offer lame explanations. He kicked him in the face and broke his nose. Then he hoisted him up with both hands and slammed him against the concrete wall. General O'Neill told him that he better find a damn convincing explanation for his broken nose and to have his request for transfer on his desk by the next morning. Less than two minutes later a nurse and a female SF undid my restraints and led me back to my cell."

Janet didn't know what to say, so she simply kissed the tortured blonde, and before long they slipped into their customary sleeping position with the doctor draped all over the taller woman.

Chapter Two: Saving A Life

The scientist quickly fell asleep but Janet was still too angry to sleep. She remembered the day Warner had shown up with his nose broken. He had looked like a demented racoon. His report had stated that he had slipped in the shower. It had been a hare-brained explanation at best but his subdued manner had prompted her to let it go for the time being, and then he suddenly had been transferred.

She also was angry with O'Neill. What Warner had done was sufficient to get him completely thrown out of the Forces. The broken nose and the transfer had been nothing more but a slap on the wrist. At least O'Neill had been in time to keep this bastard from going further. However, in Janet's eyes this one action, motivated more by anger and hurt pride than by friendship or concern, was not enough to make her forgive O'Neill.

She also was angry at him for not immediately freeing Samantha from her restraints but leaving it to others to get her out of this potentially humiliating situation. Before Antarctica he would have done anything to protect the tall woman's privacy.

Perhaps Samantha was right in her approach to speak of 'General O'Neill' as if he were a completely different person than 'Colonel O'Neill'. He certainly didn't act like his old self since the Asgard brought him out of the Ancient's stasis chamber.

Instead of allowing her mind to wander further down memory lane and the one single moment in her own life she would give almost everything to be able to change, she snuggled closer to her lover and closed her eyes but it soon became apparent that it would not be that easy.

When she opened her eyes in one of the huts of Nya's village, Samantha had been there and after some prompting had finally told her what had happened the last couple of days. The thorough briefing after their return then had filled in the blanks.

The last thing she actively remembered was the look of horror on Daniel's face when she had toppled over the prone body of Airman Wells. Samantha had told her that she had heard Daniel's frantic cry over the radio 'Fraiser is down!' and immediately ordered to retreat.

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The blonde Major barked an order to a member of SG-5 to get the wounded O'Neill back to the base and sprinted over the hillock towards Daniel. When she arrived at the scene Wells had already been transferred to a stretcher and Daniel was looking down at the crumpled form of Doctor Fraiser. The helplessness and despair in his eyes should have said it all but she had to see for herself.

The gaping hole in Janet's chest prompted her to lose the contents of her stomach. One of Anubis' Jaffa appeared at the other side of the indentation. She ordered the others to the Gate and emptied her whole magazine into the unsuspecting enemy. Daniel was shouting something but she didn't hear him. He tried to pull her away from Janet's body but she pushed him back.

Samantha mechanically inserted a new magazine and shoved the weapon towards the archaeologist who stared open mouthed when she picked Janet up as if she were nothing more than a child and carried her back to the Gate, trusting Daniel to cover her six.

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Back on the other side, she put her on a gurney and shouted for a doctor. Warner cast one look at the lifeless body of his commanding officer and told her that he had patients that still could be saved. He told her to have the body brought to the morgue.

The blonde officer struck him with a right hook that lifted him clear off his feet. Her left hand caressed Janet's pale cheek, and a shimmer of hope ran over her face.

"Carter to Davis, dial the Nox' home world, now!"

"Belay the order, son." General Hammond said from her right. He had come down from the control room as soon as he had seen who was cradled in the blonde's arms. "Doctor Fraiser is dead. Let her rest in peace, Major."

The bald man knew Samantha well enough that she would break down should he even try to offer some comfort now.

"The Nox can bring her back," she answered tonelessly.

"You know the rules, Major. The Nox' home world is off-limits. Please, Samantha."

He later thought that it was his last two words that made her snap.

She drew her sidearm, swirled around and held it against his head. A zat in her other hand she shot the first three SFs who tried to attack her.

Hammond ordered, "Stand down! Major Carter, stop this lunacy. It's not too late. Your judgement is clouded. Give me your weapon."

Without even looking two more men fell to the zat. They had been trying to sneak up on her from behind. "Tell them to leave now; I don't want to have to zat them twice," she whispered.

George Hammond was convinced that his goddaughter never would harm him, so he ordered. "All hands evacuate the Gate room, ASAP."

It took a few minutes for the nurses, doctors, and wounded to file out.

"Davis, dial the Nox! Do it or you will have to train a new commanding officer." The blonde increased the pressure against Hammond's head.

"Janet wouldn't want you to do this, Samantha. She wouldn't want you to throw away your career for a fool's hope."

"I'm not like my father, General. I won't let her die. I won't give up on her. Cassy needs her; I need her. Tell him to do it, now!"

He looked into the blue eyes of the woman he had known all her life but he saw a stranger. He never had seen her this determined. Then he looked down to his Chief Medical Officer's body.

Yes, it might be a fool's hope, the slim chance of Cassandra not losing another mother.

"Sergeant Davis, dial the Nox and close the blast doors to the Gate room." As soon as the shield covered the view from the control as well as from the conference room, he added. "You can put your weapon down now, Sam. Do what you think you have to do. I won't try to stop you."

The blonde didn't move a muscle.

Chevron seven locked, the wormhole was established with its customary kawoosh.

"Push the gurney up the ramp, General."

Samantha sent the gurney on its way and looked at her godfather.

"Go Sam. My thoughts will be with you."

"I'm sorry, Uncle George," she answered with a smile that didn't reach her eyes.

Samantha pulled the trigger of the zat and the General fell onto the ramp just as the protection over the control room window went up. She threw her weapons away and stepped through the event horizon.

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General Hammond pulled himself back to his feet and ordered, "Close the Gate."

The big doors opened and Major Davis from the Pentagon stormed in at the head of a platoon of SFs. He shouted. "Redial the Gate. We have to get her back."

For the second time in less than half an hour General Hammond was forced to say, "Belay that order."

"But, Sir..."

"Major Carter went unarmed. If we charge after her like a pack of rabid wolves the Nox will undoubtedly protect her. Call Daniel, Teal'c, and SG-9 to the conference room. The only chance we have is diplomacy."

Major Davis knew that the General was right but he was confused, so he hesitated. "Now, Major!"

Davis sent a couple of his men to get the requested personnel and dismissed the others; but he still didn't understand.

What Sergeant Siler had told him about Major Carter's actions was so completely unlike the woman he thought he knew that he simply had to find out. "Why did she do this? She could as well have flushed her life down the toilet."

The General smiled at the shocked confusion evident in the younger man's voice. "She's just trying to save the life of a friend, Major."

And in a way it was true. Samantha would have risked something like this or something along these lines even if she were not madly in love with Janet Fraiser.

"This won't help her in a court-martial."

"No, it won't but to quote Master Bra'tac: we'll cross that bridge when we come to the river."

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At the same time at the other end of the galaxy, Samantha was standing next to the gurney and shouted for Nya and Anteus to come and help her. Tears were streaming down her face while she slipped out of her Alice-vest and her uniform jacket. She draped the jacket over Janet's torso and lost herself in the pale face, willing her eyes to open at her command.

When she looked up the two Nox were at the other side of the gurney. "Please help her. Bring her back, please."

The two faeries looked at each other, silently communicating. Nya put her right hand on top of Janet's forehead and nodded, but Anteus said, "She died in a firefight."

"Yes, she died from a staff weapon shot from behind while saving the life of a soldier. Please, bring her back. We need her, I need her."

The blink of an eye later they were in the village Samantha had already seen. They were greeted by an almost grown-up Nafrayu and two other Nox she didn't know.

They put Janet on a waist-high table and began to chant while Samantha paced in front of the open hut. An eternity later, Nya left the others and said. "Come, you will help. She needs you."

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Samantha had never told her what the Nox had needed her help for. It was one of the things the blonde didn't talk about, not voluntarily - and Janet couldn't really fault her. Her own sense of guilt was still too strong. She probably always would berate herself for her lack of courage.

Even when she got the blonde to talk about it, she tended to skirt around the issue or jokingly said that they probably had had enough of her pacing and just had wanted her out of the way. She also proclaimed that she didn't remember it, only in disjoint images that made no sense at all.

Chapter Three: Revelations

When she fell asleep her dreams were like this, disjoint images, flashes of colour, strange thoughts and feelings. She opened her eyes to the darkness of the pre-dawn, abruptly.

It couldn't be! If what she now thought to be the truth really was what had happened, then her curt dismissal of Samantha's feelings had been even more devastating to the blonde than she had thought possible. It couldn't be!

Janet propped herself up on her elbow and studied her still sleeping partner. The tension of the night before was gone, she looked happy.

Janet whispered, "I'm sorry, my love, so sorry."

"What are you talking about, Jan?" the blonde asked sleepily.

"Close your eyes, my love. I didn't want to wake you up."

"It's alright. Why are you sorry?"

"I'm sorry for how I reacted on the Nox' home world."

"There's no need to apologise, baby. I love you, and I will tell you as many times as you need to hear it. Yes, I was disappointed that you didn't share my feelings, but I never was angry or hurt. I knew from the beginning that it was a long a shot, but I also didn't want to lie to you when you asked why I did what I did."

"It was more than that. You knew my feelings better than I did at the time. Why didn't you insist? Why didn't you tell me what you saw in my mind?"

Samantha's eyes showed surprise and shock. "How did you...?"

"I don't, not really. I had a hard time falling asleep and I thought about what you told me about the ceremony of life. I saw something in my dreams but it doesn't make any sense. Please, Sammy, tell me what happened."

The tall blonde propped herself against the headboard and pulled Janet with her. "I was a nervous wreck when they started the ceremony of life. I was pacing but always had them in my line of sight. When they revived Nafrayu all those years ago it had not taken as long. Then Nya told me that you needed my help..."

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Samantha was led to the entrance of the hut. Nya told her to get rid of her blood-soaked garments.

"The blood will disturb the flow of the energy. - We were able to heal her physical wounds but her soul also has been wounded. The presence of a spirit familiar to her will help her."

"What do I have to do, Nya?"

"Take off everything that has blood on it. Come in and stand next to me. Put your hands on her heart and try to clear her mind. Listen to our words and open your heart for her."

Samantha wanted to protest and tell them that she didn't understand their language, but something held her back. So, she did as she was told.

At first nothing happened but then it was as if she were in Janet's mind, as if she could relive her life from the end to its beginning. She didn't see so much of what had happened to her but what she had felt at the time.

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"I knew that you felt more for me than friendship," Samantha answered, "but I also knew that you were afraid. I learned that you were jealous of the Colonel. I felt like an intruder in your mind. I didn't want you to know. I didn't want to influence your decision. I didn't want to put any pressure on you, baby."

"You saw all my feelings?"

"Yes, I think so, but I didn't so much see as feel them, everything from your first scraped knee to the pride and love for Cassy."

"So, you didn't tell me what you felt in my mind because you did not want to do to me what my ex-husband did?! You didn't want to patronize me; you didn't want to make me feel looked down on. You didn't want me to feel as if I'd decide your life for you." Janet looked with big eyes at her partner.

"It was one of the reasons," Samantha answered softly hoping that the love of her life would not ask for her other reasons. "I was attracted to you from the first moment I saw you in the infirmary but over the months your wit, your brilliance, and your compassion let me also fall in love with you."

"When you told me about your husband I knew that I would probably never have more than your friendship but I also knew that it would be enough for me."

"After the ceremony of life, the hours I spent sitting at your bedside, I was thinking how I would react if you had been in my mind this way, if you knew about all my fears, all my regrets, my hopes, and my passions. I also didn't tell you because I wanted to respect your privacy."

"I wish you would have told me. It might have made it easier for me to accept the truth of my feelings."

The blonde smiled at Janet one of those regret-filled smiles she once only had used for work-related losses.

"It also might have sent you so far into hiding that I would have destroyed our friendship."

"I'm sorry that I made you believe that you had lost it."

"It wasn't your fault Jan. General O'Neill didn't leave you any choice."

"I should have stood up for you when you brought O'Neill back and he took over for Elizabeth. Sometimes one has to stand up and be counted. Daniel and Teal'c did. I'm sorry I failed you."

-X-X-X-

They already had had part of this conversation several times over the last couple of months but it evidently was not enough for the brunette to hear that she didn't have anything to blame herself for and that she had done the right thing to keep her daughter safe.

So, Samantha decided that a slight change of tactics was in order. "Janet, please look at me."

Brown eyes found blue which at the moment didn't give anything away.

"I won't tell you that I was not disappointed when you started to avoid me. I won't tell you that I was not hurt when you told me not to waste my weekly phone call on you. It hurt when I was told that you no longer would tolerate my presence in your lab. It hurt very much and I was angry with you, very angry.

"It hurt more than anything General O'Neill came up with. I knew why he did what he did - at least to a certain degree but I didn't know why you acted like you did.

"You were more careful in our interactions, even before General O'Neill took over. You didn't touch me any more, only by accident. But we still were friends. I didn't understand your change of attitude until you told me on my last day on Earth. Then I finally understood and stopped being angry at you. There's nothing to forgive, Janet."

"I love you, Samantha Carter."

"And I love you, my Janet. I loved you even when I was disappointed and angry, and I will never stop loving you."

Samantha sealed her heartfelt declaration with a passionate kiss to which the smaller doctor eagerly responded.

-X-X-X-

Sometime later Janet said softly, "So, the Nox not only gave me my life back. By letting you see my feelings they also made me a part of you. They gave you something no one would ever be able to take away."

"I hope you're not too angry. It was the only way to get your spirit back."

"Angry? Oh no, my love. I'm grateful. I just wish that it would have worked both ways. Then you would be mine the same way I'll always be yours."

Once again the blonde kissed Janet, and when their eyes met she was smiling, one of her genuine, straight from the heart, for Janet-only smiles.

"Are you sure, baby? My soul is not as beautiful, as untainted as yours. Some of the things you'd see will be hard to take," she said with worry in her voice.

"You mean that it's possible, and you would really let me see all the way inside?"

"Yes, Janet, it's possible. Nya gave me instructions. She said that it was not the same as with the ceremony of life but that it would be very similar. I would be truly honoured to let you see my thoughts and memories, to let you experience my feelings, but believe me, it won't be a stroll through the park."

Janet's defensive instincts immediately flared to life. "I won't allow you to do it if it's in any way dangerous to you, my love."

"No, baby, it's not dangerous, except for what you will see in my mind. It requires a special kind of meditation. Nya said that humans have the potential to hear the thoughts or read the feelings of others whenever we want but our souls, as a rule, are too young. They are too busy feeling self-important and unique to listen to the sound of another soul."

"If you really want to do this, I will ask Elizabeth to grant us a couple of days leave. Nya said that it would be easier if we did it somewhere untouched by mortal hands."

"Kajuta spoke of a clearing about three hours walk from the village on the mainland. No one but she is allowed to go there. She said that it holds great power."

"Do you think the Athosian healer would let us use it, Jan? It sounds perfect. Nya said that the power of nature would enhance our own abilities and make it easier to find the harmony we need to do this. But if Kajuta made it into some kind of sacred place, she might not want any outsiders there."

Janet only smiled but it made the blonde forget her worries, "You're so beautiful, baby,"

"Thank you, my love. Kayuta protects this place because she doesn't want the harmony of the place to be disturbed. If it makes you feel better I will ask her if she knows of another place like this but I really don't think that she would object to it. And besides, she has asked to get to know you."

"I'll ask Elizabeth about some leave after breakfast. What would you say to start this day with a shared shower?"

"I would say that it's a great idea..."

Chapter Four: The Athosian Healer

Three days later Samantha guided one of the jumpers over the vast expanse of water that separated the base from the mainland. The Athosian healer had granted Janet's request to use the sacred clearing for a private ceremony but she insisted to first have a private talk with the tall scientist.

The blonde landed the jumper just outside of the village. A young girl, only a couple of years older than Cassandra had been when Janet had adopted her, led her to a hut, slightly bigger than the others at the other side of the village.

"The Mistress is waiting for you, Samantha Carter." Before she could thank her, the girl ran off.

Samantha was nervous. She was a scientist and had never felt comfortable when having to deal with the beliefs of the people they came across during their Gate travels. Simply being in the Pegasus Galaxy didn't make that any easier - though no one they had met until now mistook the Wraith for gods. Janet had told her that the woman was wise but very nice. She swallowed hard and stepped through the open door.

"Samantha Carter. You're right on time for some tea. Sit."

Janet had also told her that the healer always had some tea ready for guests or patients. She took a seat to the right of a low table, instinctively adopting a cross-legged position, a legacy of long hours of kel-no-rem. In the months she had spent locked up in her quarters turned cell at the base the regular meditation might as well have saved her sanity.

A big steaming cup appeared next to her on the table and a tall woman about her age sat down on its other side.

"Teyla and Janet have told me a lot about you, Samantha Carter. Do you think that what they say is true?"

Samantha closed her eyes while she pondered how to answer such a loaded question. Janet had warned her to be as honest as possible with the healer.

"I don't know but I doubt it. Teyla only sees what I am now and though she knows more about me than most people in the city, she can still only judge me by my actions. Janet knows that I carry a burden of regrets, dark deeds, sorrow, pain, and guilt but she also chooses to ignore it. She sees the woman and the scientist but not the part inside of me that loves to be a soldier."

The woman had brown eyes with flecks of blue in them but they gave nothing away.

"Do you think that what you just told me is true, Samantha Carter?"

"I don't know but I doubt it."

This answer brought a smile to her hostess' face.

"Let's drink our tea before it gets cold." The tea smelled and tasted of raspberry and mint. "Take off your boots and jacket; sit comfortably."

Usually it would have rubbed her wrong to be ordered around in such a casual way but this time it didn't bother her in the least. The woman exuded a quiet strength that made her feel comfortable and relaxed. So, she obeyed and retook her cross-legged position. They sat in silence for a long time, and surprisingly Samantha's overactive mind didn't go off in ten directions at once.

-X-X-X-

Without being aware of it she slipped into a light state of kel-no-rem. All her senses were heightened: she could hear the children playing outside, the women at the well and the men on the fields. She heard a group of young women and men practicing with their fighting sticks. She heard Cassandra among them.

The young woman had quickly found friends among the Athosians and had no problem being accepted by them and their parents with the similarities between Hanka and the Athosian culture being as plentiful as they were. The first couple of weeks Janet had been worried that she would lose her daughter to this new and yet so familiar style of life but Cassandra had quickly made it clear that she just enjoyed having the best of both world's.

And, Samantha had to admit that in contrast to some of the Earth personnel in the city, the Athosians didn't treat her like a freak when Cassandra's telekinetic abilities re-emerged as soon as she stepped foot in the Ancient's city.

Samantha opened her eyes and was surprised to find that the sun was about to set. She had spent roughly three hours in the hut. A part of her felt self-conscious about blatantly losing track of her

surroundings, about losing track of the time.

After her mother's death, her father had started to train her, to mould her into the perfect little soldier - and she had done her best not to disappoint him. He was all she had left. The skills he had insisted on teaching her had since saved her life more than once and she had enjoyed mastering them. He had taught her to keep busy, always, but when she had been sitting in her cell she also had learned the value of doing nothing, of day-dreaming.

The blonde decided to go in search of her hostess. The young girl from earlier was waiting outside. "Samantha Carter, the Mistress asks for your company in the sweat-hut."

"What's your name?"

"Rodis, Samantha Carter."

"Please lead me to your Mistress, Rodis."

The girl nodded eagerly, and only when the scientist set out to follow her, did she remember that she still was barefoot. She simply shrugged her shoulders, first at her absentmindedness and then at the fact that she didn't mind being absentminded.

-X-X-X-

They crossed the village and followed a narrow but well-trodden path through the forest. The blonde could hear water flowing nearby and surmised correctly that the sweat-hut would be close to the shore. She had expected to see something like the low-strung structure she knew from Tonani's people but she should have known that the Athosians rarely did things halfway.

It was a one-storey building with three chimneys. A drainage system redirected a part of the river water to supply a tool inside.

Rodis stopped at the door. "The Mistress is already waiting inside. Would you allow me to help with your preparations, Samantha Carter?"

"I would be honoured by your help, Rodis, and thank you for guiding me." Samantha was slightly surprised at her choice of words. It seemed that years of observing Daniel work his magic finally had rubbed off on her.

They entered some sort of ante-room that looked like a cross between a changing room and a shower. Rodis told her to put her clothes on a shelf and slipped out of her own shirt and trousers. The girl then put something on a washcloth and climbed on a low footstool. She rubbed the cloth over Samantha's body.

It was a strange feeling, not uncomfortable, more like a very light peeling which she speculated it

was. The fine sand, or whatever it was, was rinsed off, and the girl led her into the next room.

She offered her a cup of what seemed to be water and nervously explained that usually in this room the hair of the women was braided while they drank at least two cups of water. Samantha wordlessly stepped to the table with the pitcher of water and poured the girl her own cup.

"Here, Rodis, this way you also have something to do while I drink."

"Thank you, Samantha Carter."

"You're welcome, Rodis. Can you tell me what will happen next?" Samantha asked to cover her mounting nervousness.

"I will bring you to the Mistress and then I will leave."

"Are you Kayuta's apprentice, Rodis?"

"No, I'm her servant. I'm still too young to become an apprentice but I learn from her every day. I hope that she will accept me as her new apprentice after my initiation."

Samantha remembered what Teyla one evening during a mission had told them about the structure of her society. When their children turned fifteen they were officially adopted into the tribe - after passing a test. They first had to prove that they could defend themselves and were able to live off the land. It dated back to the days when Teyla's people still had been hunters, hiding in the forest from the Wraith. The second part was a written test in history, mathematics and other more academic topics. The Athosians were not only farmers but traders and it was vital for them to know as much about the world around them as they could, a necessity that had been driven home with the troubles the Genii were causing their friends from Earth. So, they probably would soon have to expand this part of the initiation process; it was too important given the current situation.

The blonde knew that the youngsters had to study very hard to pass these tests. It was a common occurrence that they either failed the physical or the academic part of the test. There was no shame in trying again the next year.

"The healer would not have accepted you as her servant if you were not bright enough to pass the tests, Rodis. I'm sure that you soon will be her apprentice."

"I hope so but I'm not very good at defending myself. I'm fast but I'm not strong enough. Mistress Kayuta always tells me that my strength will grow as I grow older but it's hard to wait."

"I understand. There's something you should know. It's something my mother told me when I was about your age. She said that if you really, really want something with all your heart and never give up, then one day you will get it. You just have to believe in yourself and you must not stop believing in yourself even if it doesn't work out with the first try."

The girl's eyes lit up. "So, if I don't pass all the tests, the worst that can happen is that I'll stay my Mistress' servant one more year. I will continue to learn from her and when I'm finally accepted as an adult I will be a better apprentice for my Mistress."

"I knew you were bright, Rodis. I think it's time to join your Mistress."

"Yes, Samantha Carter. She didn't ask for me. I will take my leave. Thank you."

"I thank you, Rodis. Thanks for your help and for keeping me company."

"You're welcome, Samantha Carter."

The girl opened the small door and closed it after Samantha had ducked through. The tall blonde needed a few minutes to adjust to the steam filled interior. It was stifling hot and she immediately began to sweat.

-X-X-X-

Kayuta was sitting on the ground with her back against the smooth stone wall. "Join me, Samantha Carter."

The blonde sat cross-legged to the right of the woman, her hands resting comfortably on her knees.

"Teyla told me that you humans tend to be uncomfortable when not covering your bodies but you seem to be quite at ease. Why?"

The blonde scientist studied the healer's face and saw nothing except genuine curiosity. "Gate travel can do this. Sometime during the second year of visiting other planets in our galaxy I got over my modesty. We had been captured and had to work in the naqada mines. Our clothing quickly was in tatters. There simply was no way to stay self-conscious..."

"How did you get free?"

"Daniel convinced the princess to let us go. She had taken a shine to him."

"Daniel Jackson. He's an eager student of our history and customs."

"His ability to understand other cultures has saved us more than once in the past. He's a good friend." The blonde decided to cut to the chase, "Janet told me that you wanted to ask me some questions before you would let us use the clearing."

"Janet warned me that you're not very patient."

"I'm sorry; I didn't want to insult you."

"I'm not offended, Samantha Carter. Your mate explained to me why she wants to do this mind-reading or whatever you want to call it but why do you?"

Though Samantha had expected a question like this, she still was very careful with her answer. "Did Janet tell you what happened to her?"

The healer nodded.

"While bringing her back I felt all her feelings, her hopes, her fears, her love. There was nothing held back, her feelings became a part of my own. She became a part of me. I learned that she felt more for me than one does for a friend and that there was a lot of fear connected to her feelings of love. I never was happier in my life, and I want to give her something back.

"I warned Janet that there is a lot of darkness in my soul but I also want her to know, to feel what I feel for her. I want her to feel my love for her. I know it's selfish."

"The need to deepen your bond with your mate is not selfish, warrior. It's a natural development and though I admit that the two of you had a rather unusual start, I'm sure that it will be good for you."

Samantha sought her interlocutor's eyes. "Why do I have the impression that you're not telling me the whole truth?"

"The whole truth is an illusion. It depends on perspective. You're a, what do you call it, a scientist, you should know."

The blonde was completely oblivious to the teasing undercurrent in the healer's voice.

"I'm sorry that I didn't express myself more clearly, venerable Kayuta. What I wanted to say is that I have the impression that you know more about what Janet and I want to do than you're willing to tell. But I'll understand it if you tell me that it's too early for me to worry about..."

Kayuta signalled her to be quiet and she stopped in mid-sentence. "You think too much, Samantha Carter; you worry too much, especially when there's nothing to worry about.

"In the days of old, before my people settled down and began to trade with other planets what you and Janet want to do was called a mind-meld. It was part of our joining ceremonies and though it is rarely done nowadays it still is regarded as a sacred bond."

"So, in the eyes of your people we would be joined, married."

"Yes, Samantha Carter."

"Does Janet know?"

"Yes, she does. Why? Do you have second thoughts?"

"No, I was afraid, Janet would." The other woman raised an eyebrow. "Yes, I know I worry too much."

"Come, let's cool down in the pool."

They adjourned to the next room, the one she had peeked in earlier. The cold water felt heavenly on her overheated skin and she involuntarily breathed a sigh of relief. They talked some more about Janet and Cassandra and her time with SG-1 and when the water began to chill her, the other woman asked her to meditate with her in the steaming room.

"It's voluntary; I already learned everything I needed to know."

Samantha surprised herself when she answered, "I would be honoured to meditate with you, venerable healer, but you will have to guide me. I know only one way to do this, and I don't want to disturb your routine."

"Just do what feels right for you, Samantha Carter. It's not important which way you go to reach your peace of mind. So, do what you always do."

Samantha wanted to ask the woman to call her 'Sam' but knew from her experience with Teyla and the other Athosians that in her culture the shortening of names was highly unusual. So, she simply took her place next to the healer on the smooth floor.

Her breathing quickly changed to the familiar rhythm of the early stages of kel-no-rem. She let herself sink deeper and deeper, just like Teal'c had taught her years ago. It was surprisingly easy - easier than ever even.

-X-X-X-

A few hours later she returned from her inner journey, as always relaxed and rested. She had sensed movement close by and opened her eyes. Kayuta offered her a hand and they returned to the pool.

"Samantha Carter, I have to apologise. I don't know how it happened but I inadvertently slipped into your meditation. I'm sorry for invading your privacy."

"You know what happened in my mind during the kel... the meditation?" Samantha asked with surprise evident in her voice.

Now, the healer looked surprised. "Do you want to tell me that you don't recall your meditation?"

"No, I don't and as far as I know that's pretty normal for what I do. Your words make me believe that this is not normal?"

"Could you tell me more about your kind of meditation?"

"It's called kel-no-rem. I learned it from Teal'c, a warrior who saved our lives during our first mission through the gate. For his race it takes the place of sleep, a dreamless sleep. When I come back from it I feel rested and relaxed. Teal'c said that in a very deep state of kel-no-rem it's possible to have visions of sorts, but usually, no, there are no memories of what, if anything at all goes on in my mind."

"That's strange, really strange."

"Is there something I can do to put your mind at ease, Kayuta?"

"Not at the moment, Samantha Carter. We should return to the village. It's time for you to meet up with your mate, but sometime soon I'd like your help to find out why and how I ended up in your mind without using the usually necessary drugs, and also why you don't remember your meditations."

"I'm at your service, venerable healer. But is it really this extraordinary, you looking in my mind? What Janet and I want to do works along the same lines."

"No, it's different but it also is hard to explain. I'll try to explain it at another time. For now, please call me 'Kay', all my friends do."

"I would be honoured, Kay, but only if you call me, 'Sam'," the blonde answered with a disarming smile.

She was all too aware of what an exception the woman's offer was. Despite their obvious openness, the Athosians were rather reserved in accepting strangers among their midst. Kayuta's initiative, especially after only one meeting was truly exceptional, even more than exceptional.

Chapter Five: The Clearing

They returned to the village where they found Janet and John who had volunteered to chauffeur her to the mainland. They took their morning meal together, not without the Lieutenant Colonel giving a faint imitation of the wise cracks of a certain former Colonel Jack O'Neill. The Athosian healer provided them with enough provisions to last them a week and told them to take their time.

On the way Janet asked. "So, what do you think of Kayuta, Sam?"

"I like her. I think she would do anything for her people. She's the natural balance to Teyla. She's curious but she can be very bossy and stubborn, I think, especially when she's sure that she's right. Yes, I like Kay."

"Kay? Very impressive. She was very reserved when we first met. She later told me that she expected me to be as judgmental as Carson obviously had been when they talked about healing. It took me three meetings to convince her otherwise and only then she allowed me to call her by her nickname. I never expected her to become the good friend she is now."

Samantha smiled and said. "It's more than just a nickname, Jan. By letting us use this shortened version of her name she unofficially accepted us as part of her village, her people. Teyla is their practical and political leader but Kayuta is their spiritual leader."

"I know that it's more than a nickname, Sam. I'm just glad that she accepted you the way she accepted me, though I still don't understand why you never had any contact with her."

Samantha only smiled sheepishly. She had been so fascinated by all the new toys and possibilities that she only had left the city to go through the Gate. Like a kid in candy store, Elizabeth had called it.

They continued their trek in silence, every now and then consulting the notepad where Janet had put down the directions. It took them three and a half hours to reach the clearing and they decided to take an early lunch break before starting on their main adventure.

Right in the middle of their simple meal Samantha had to suppress a yawn.

"Hey, how did you get to be tired already?" Janet teased.

So, the blonde told her all about the kel-no-rem and her conversation with Kayuta.

"That's strange, very strange."

"That's what Kay said."

"No, I'm talking about something else. It's strange that you're tired. Whenever you or any other human does kel-no-rem instead of sleeping they're so full of energy, it's almost frightening. You should be bouncing off the trees."

"But I never felt this way when I did it in my quarters, Jan."

"Humans need sleep, sooner or later. We can substitute sleep by meditation for a couple of days but then our body takes what it needs. You used Teal'c's technique, but not to skip sleep but to compensate for the loss of stimuli in your cell. Basically, it switched off your mind, and the exercises you did afterwards were your way of burning off the excess energy."

"You might have a point, Janet, but how do you know what I did in my quarters? General O'Neill told me that the security cameras were only routed to level 16 and his office. He also told me that you assigned Dr. Saunders to care for me."

"On his orders, yes. Jessica and I hit it off immediately. She's a good doctor, but whenever she had the feeling that she was in over her head with your unique physiology she consulted me. O'Neill saw that you were getting increasingly restless, and he wanted to know if it could harm you in the long run. I gave her the arguments she needed to convince him that it would be good for you and that you needed the exercise."

"So, it's really you I have to thank for the gym equipment, the weights, and the tread-mill. When I wanted to thank General O'Neill he only said that I still was a member of SG-1 and that he expected that I maintain my degree of physical fitness."

"That's one of the things I really never understood, Sam," Janet said while she surreptitiously manoeuvred her upper body to put the blonde's head on her lap while her fingers combed through the soft strands of hair.

"On base he treated you like an arch-villain, like a threat - but he still almost regularly sent you on away-missions. He must have known that you could have ditched Teal'c and Daniel and started a new life away from Earth."

Samantha smiled. "I'm not sure, Janet. I thought about it a lot and came up with two possibilities. One: he knew that I would never run from a rightful punishment. Two: he wanted me to leave and start a new life, with the Tok'ra or whomever else. Perhaps he only did it to keep me from going crazy, or something."

The blonde now was as relaxed as one human being could be and was fighting to keep her eyes open. "Sleep, Sammy. We have all the time of the world. Sleep, my love."

Samantha slept into the late afternoon hours, and they decided to postpone their project Nya had called 'the ceremony of souls' to the next day. At the moment they just wanted to enjoy their time alone.

They left the clearing to soak in a hot spring Kayuta had told Janet about. They made love and finally fell asleep stargazing.

-X-X-X-

After their morning meal Samantha once again warned her about the darkness the other woman possibly would encounter in her mind and asked her if she was really sure that she wanted to do this.

"Yes, my big dumb fly-girl. I really want to do this. Nothing I'll ever see in your mind, no

darkness can ever stand against the power of our love. When Kay told me that this mind-meld, as she calls it, is the most important part of their joining ceremonies, or at least it had been in the past, I saw it as a chance, a gift, as if a wish had come true. Let's do it."

Samantha had tears glistening in the corners of her eyes and answered her lover with a chaste kiss. She explained what they would have to do and say to make this ceremony work. It sounded deceptively easy.

"Empty your mind of all thoughts."

She knew how to do this from her yoga exercises and the few occasions she had taken part in Teal's kel-no-rem lessons.

"Empty your mind of all desire."

Not that easy; the ceremony of souls had to be performed in the nude and to Janet it was impossible to look at Samantha's body and not desire her.

"Sit in front of me and put your left hand on my heart. I'll do the same. We must look into each other's eyes and simply let it happen."

The brunette was convinced that they were doomed to fail. She felt Samantha's accelerated heartbeat under the palm of her hand - and all she really longed to do was to ravish the beautiful woman whose dilated eyes betrayed a similar need.

"Let it happen."

Samantha's voice echoed in her head and her own heartbeat picked up. She was dripping wet; her nipples were so hard they almost hurt. Her chest burned where the taller woman touched her. She began to sweat and her need for her lover was like a big, cramping knot in her groin.

Her only salvation was in Samantha's eyes: they mirrored her desire and at the same time they held her, protected her; and suddenly the words the blonde had taught her and instructed her to repeat over and over in her mind were all she could think about.

"Se y se - er y er - se - er - par."

She didn't know what it meant and she no longer cared.

The universe consisted of blue orbs, beckoning her, swallowing her.

Their right hands sought each other. The circle now was closed.

The smooth skin under her left hand was getting warmer with every heartbeat. The heat spread along her lower arm and travelled up to her shoulder. It coursed through her body while her chest sent a similar energy flow through her partner's body.

She was tingling all over but unexpectedly her heartbeat calmed down and she knew what the words meant.

"Mind to mind - heart to heart - one mind - one heart - one body."

And suddenly she felt curiosity, love, wonder, joy, love, hurt, determination, and pride. With the feelings came images, snapshots, and she knew that they came from her lover's childhood. A wave of pain and desperation told her of Samantha's mother's death. The feelings still were strong enough to permeate the wall behind which her beloved usually hid her emotions. Then there was loneliness and emptiness, all encompassing.

The loneliness slowly abated but it didn't totally disappear, and the emptiness was replaced by determination. And then there were the feelings the blonde had for her. She could feel how her attraction to the small doctor had been replaced by friendship and an unassuming, undemanding love.

Janet felt her pain when she heard Daniel's frantic cry, "Fraiser is down", the shock when she saw her lifeless body. Desperation, hope, fear, and a love so deep it was almost frightening. She felt Samantha's relief when the doctor started to breathe again.

Finally the pain and hurt that had been predominant in the blonde's mind before she joined the Pegasus mission faded and was replaced with contentment tinted with good deal of sadness. And then she had come to Atlantis...

-X-X-X-

Unnoticed by the two women the sun reached its midday point and dipped under the horizon. It rose again and reached its midday point.

It was in the early afternoon hours of this second day that they so much as blinked. Their faces irresistibly drew closer and they kissed.

No; they didn't just kiss. It was much more than that. It was an explosion of hopes and fears. It was more intense than anything either of them had ever felt before.

It was as far from what one would call a mind blowing orgasm as a passionate kiss was from a chaste one or a chef-dinner from hospital food. Their bodies seemed to meld together and their souls It was too much to think about.

"Se - er - par. - One mind - one heart - one body."

"Se - er - par. - One mind - one heart - one body."

They didn't move and yet it seemed as if they were making love. It was like living in a pool of light, relaxing and peaceful.

That's how they fell asleep. And their sleep was undisturbed and peaceful.

They spent the better part of the next day just cuddling and talking. Neither woman felt the need to get dressed. They were comfortable with each other.

-X-X-X-

Janet still had a hard time letting go of the past.

"I'm sorry that I ever let O'Neill bully me into abandoning you, my love."

"You did what you had to do to keep your daughter safe, to keep our daughter safe."

"I should have protested. I should have gone over his head. He didn't have the right to treat you this way... and Warner... he almost ra..."

Samantha silenced her beloved with a kiss.

"It's alright, baby. It's over. General O'Neill stopped Warner. Although I cannot deny that I have been very angry at the General for what he did to me; it's over now. I now know that you never stopped loving me. You only gave in to what was inevitable. Please, stop feeling guilty."

Janet's face was covered in tears and Samantha whispered, "I love you, my Janet. I'll always love you."

She kissed the tears away but the small brunette was not yet ready to let it go.

"I'm thankful that your heart is big enough to forgive me, but how can you forgive him? He was your friend; you trusted each other. You saved his sorry ass more time than I can count. How could he do this to you? He was a vindictive, selfish bastard. Why is it so easy for you to forgive him? Why do you always defend him, Sam?"

"Forgive? That's not the question."

"It isn't?"

"No, it's much more than that. Yes, I resent what he did and said, and though he might not have had the approval of the Joint Chiefs for what he did; it was his prerogative as the base commander, Janet. But that's not really the point.

"I won't let General O'Neill taint the memories of Colonel O'Neill. If I hate him, if I hold on to

my grudge, as morally justified as it may be, in the long run I'll only hurt myself. I don't know what or how but something happened to him when Thor took him out of stasis and removed the knowledge of the Ancients from his mind. It changed him. He even said that fishing was a waste of time."

"The stasis pod could have malfunctioned. Did your team find out how it works?"

"I have Zelenka work on it. I also told Daniel to keep his eyes open while he's studying the library. I really hope we will find an answer soon."

-X-X-X-

They also talked about more mundane things; they kissed and made love. Neither of them had ever felt this connected to any of their former lovers or partners. And now that they knew the other's heart it was as if they had reached a new level in their loving and their relationship.

Janet felt complete.

"Did you know that according to Athosian law we are joined now, Jan?" Samantha asked in a dreamy voice.

"Yes, I know and I really like the thought. You are my mate now. 'Mate': I like the word. It means so much more than just lover or partner. I love you, Samantha Carter."

"And I love you, my mate, my heart, my soul. I love you, Janet Fraiser."

-X-X-X-

In the evening they moved their camp to the hot spring and three days later they returned to the Athosian village and their lives in the Pegasus galaxy where Dr. Zelenka, Samantha's second in command, was just about to contaminate the whole city with a modified Wraith virus.

THE END

Feedback welcome under: romansilence@yahoo.de