Some Ancient medical equipment plays havoc with an Atlantis scientist. Begins and becomes AU sometime between Runner and Duet. McKay/Sheppard minor relationship. MPREG!

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Chapter 1

From the Sea by Iocane

Summary: Some Ancient medical equipment plays havoc with an Atlantis scientist. Begins and becomes AU sometime between Runner and Duet. McKay/Sheppard minor relationship. MPREG!
Categories: Bitextual Characters: Elizabeth Weir, John Sheppard, Radek Zelenka, Rodney McKay
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Chapter 1/8 by Iocane

_beta_: The cool-beyond-words Oran and Marie-France who dragged this story kicking and screaming into a better place. Any remaining errors are entirely mine.

spoilers: Duet

Warnings: M-Preg, mild violence, homophobia.

Notes: Anything with *Italics*’s inside quotes ("[Example.]") is being spoken in Czech. I don't know the language at all and I don't trust the Internet to translate anything correctly so forgive me. I know Elizabeth can speak five languages, for the purposes of this story, one of them is Czech.

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*When you look to the past for life's long hidden meaning*
For the dreams and the plans made in your youth
Does the thrill to achieve match the warm hidden feeling
That lies so still and lives in you
– Air Supply, "Eyes of a Child"

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"All I'm saying – crumbs in laptop, three times cleaning this month," Radek groused, narrowing his eyes at the fact that his boss was nibbling a power bar even as they spoke. The Czech fully blamed McKay for the crumbs currently dusting his keypad.

"They don't do any harm, trust me, those things are designed not to let crumbs and stuff in. It's just some of us are too fussy about a few crumbs and not enough about helping people move ..."

They had discovered a fair-sized Ancient laboratory that, according to the notes they'd translated so far, was mainly used for medical purposes. It hadn't been damaged by time or weather but it was well
off the beaten track of the normally used parts of the city. Radek, Rodney, several other scientists and a few marines were now clearing out anything that looked useful or marginally interesting for study later. So far, most of the freestanding devices had been relocated to labs nearer to the area where the scientists worked. Radek and Rodney were loading the last cart while Radek's laptop downloaded all the data for later translation. Like the viral lab that had claimed the lives of several expedition members, this lab's notes were kept separate and not accessible through the central database.

"Hello, hello." Rodney's voice had an interested 'and what do we have here' tone that made Radek turn.

"You activated it?" Radek smiled a little. Rodney's own gene therapy wasn't as effective as he wanted, and he didn't activate or operate things as well as he'd like. Radek was glad for his boss when he truly got to be the first to make something work like this. It almost made up for his own lack of the gene.

Rodney's thrill at actually activating the unknown device was shown in the fact that he didn't snap at Radek for his question. "It's heavier than it looks, give me a hand?"

"[Wuss,]" Radek said with a smile and nod, moving closer to take hold of the machine. They transferred it to the cart, then looked around, finding that to be the last thing to move.

On the way back to the lab, Radek wrote off the sudden, sharp pains in his abdomen as probably something to do with the strange off-world food he'd been eating lately.

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"And you say it's not your stomach, exactly?" Carson Beckett's blue eyes moved between Radek and the device he held over the other man's torso.

"No. Not my stomach. I've had food poisoning before – here and on Earth. This does not feel the same." He winced again as another wave of pain hit, though it didn't double him over anymore as it had done earlier that day and all night before. The pain medication was working, at least.

"Alright, I'm going to do a few more tests – these readings aren't making any more sense."

Radek watched the doctor vanish between the curtains and sighed. Yesterday, after he and Rodney had finished moving the last of the equipment from the Ancient's lab, Radek's pains had begun to get worse though he'd tried to ignore them. Rodney had eventually sent him to his quarters to sleep, noting how pale Zelenka had looked – and, of course, pointing out that he couldn't work with the other man howling. Typical Rodney. Radek hadn't been insulted by the man's callousness – he would have been more worried at obvious concern.

Resting hadn't really helped. In his rooms, the pain had worsened, like very bad stomach cramps. He still figured it was the food, but there was no other evidence besides his pain – nothing was coming out, nor did he feel that it wanted to. He had slept only a little during the night. Skipping dinner in the mess hall in favor of a power bar half nibbled, he'd also skipped breakfast when the sun finally rose.

In the morning when the pain hadn't subsided at all, Radek had finally called Dr. Beckett. He had listed his symptoms and expressed a concern that it might be food poisoning in spite of evidence against it. They had agreed that if it had been a contagion of some kind, the city would have picked
up on it. A wave of pain had hit while Radek was on the radio; Carson told the Czech to stay put, and had arrived a short time later with a gurney.

It was now midmorning, and Radek was at least getting some relief, although the churning, almost grinding sensation in his midsection wasn't dulled by the painkillers. Dr. Beckett had run several blood tests and taken every measurement he could for Radek. Beckett was clearly confused by the results, saying they didn't make sense. After the doctor left to double check things, Radek could hear him and Rodney arguing outside.

"Pregnancy test, are you mad? In case you hadn't noticed, Rodney, Dr. Zelenka's a man."

"No, Carson, between the five-o'clock shadow and the entire lack of perky breasts, I didn't notice that fact at all. Look, we found something that might make a pregnancy test worth considering. I'll bet you're not making heads or tails of the blood work. Too much estrogen, too much progesterone? Pregnancy test, full body scan, Carson, now."

Radek's worried mind began working quickly on what Rodney had said. They knew some of the devices they had handled had something to do with reproduction, but how would that account for his abdominal pains? And why did Rodney want pregnancy tests on him? Radek was, as Carson had pointed out, very male. He had to resist the urge to physically check that fact for the sake of reassurance.

"I suppose you heard that?" Carson pushed aside the curtain and Radek could see McKay briefly, trying to steal a glance into the enclosed area.

"Yes. Has he translated the notes yet? Perhaps if we knew what was there ..."

"Aye. He said you were fine until the end of the moving you did yesterday, so he started backwards. That little gizmo you two handled, looked like a melted naquadah generator? He thinks it's some kind of fertility machine. According to the translation, it's designed to help men conceive and carry a child. From what he's said, he got you pregnant yesterday."

However much Rodney might dislike the phrase, the proper medical term for Radek's reaction was fainting.

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Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Some Ancient medical equipment plays havoc with an Atlantis scientist. Begins and becomes AU sometime between Runner and Duet. McKay/Sheppard minor relationship. MPREG!

From the Sea by Iocane

"Radek? You with us, lad?" Carson's voice came from a distance and got closer as Radek awoke slowly.

"Apologies, doctor, but the news was ... I did not sleep the last night, and have not eaten, and the pain medication makes staying awake sometimes difficult." He felt a little like Rodney, trying to explain away what was probably a perfectly reasonable reaction to the news he'd been given combined with the lack of decent sleep or food.

"Nothin' to worry about, lad." Dr. Beckett pulled a chair closer, sitting beside the bed. Radek's heart pounded and he knew the monitor showed it, which only made him even more conscious of it. "I know better than to ask if Rodney was right about the machine. What do the tests say?"

"I'll cut to the chase, Radek. Yes, Rodney was right – the pregnancy blood work came back positive, and the scan revealed the presence of a uterus in your torso. It also explains the anomalies in the other tests. The pain you've been feeling was the growth of that uterus, which thankfully has fully matured, so the pain should be gone now."

Without realizing it, Radek's hand moved to his stomach when he heard, almost as if protecting something there. The gesture surprised him and he hoped the doctor hadn't noticed. "Could I see
these notes, please? I wish to know everything."

Beckett nodded and withdrew, returning a moment later with one of the infirmary laptops. "This is what Rodney gave me, I'll see if he's left anything off."

Radek tried to ignore the fact that he was shaking, still reeling from the news. Part of his mind shut the idea out entirely, and he was able to look through the notes from an impersonal standpoint, absorbing the details about the machine, its purpose and function.

The Ancients – at least the ones who'd made this machine – apparently placed a good deal of importance on family; children, parents, siblings, aunts and uncles. They didn't limit the definition to 'man/woman/progeny' believing that a child should have adults who loved them. They also felt strongly that if a couple wished for children, the best way to bond with that child was to allow one parent or the other to carry the child. Needless to say two out of the three combinations of men and women had no issues – a woman was designed to carry a child. It shouldn't have surprised anyone that the people capable of building the Stargates and Atlantis herself would also be capable of making it possible for a man to carry a child to term without a great degree of difficulty. Based on the notes, Radek surmised that Rodney's ATA gene had activated the machine. Without his knowing the machine had taken enough material to extract a strand of DNA, which was all that was needed. The impregnation of the second partner, in this case Radek, occurred when he or she also touched the device. They couldn't figure out how the change was taking place, but it was done now. The child would develop normally within Radek's body, the modified uterus drawing on his own energies the same way a woman's would. In this case, according to the notes, when the child was at full term, they would surgically remove child and uterus, leaving the man unchanged, as he was before the pregnancy. Thankfully, Radek didn't notice anything about the growth of breasts to facilitate feeding said child. He didn't even know if there would be any more machines like this, or if this had been the work of a small faction or individual; like the time-traveling puddle jumper.

So he was pregnant ... and with Rodney's child, no less. That thought made him shudder. The big question before him now was whether to keep the child at all. He wondered what Rodney would want.

When Radek had read through the notes several times, he quietly asked if Dr. Beckett could come in.

"May I be released, doctor?" He asked, closing the laptop. "I need to think about this, about everything, and I cannot do that here." Blue eyes shone behind spectacles and he was glad the doctor didn't argue with him.

"Aye, lad. You're in good health, considering, but I'd like you to stay away from the labs for now, alright? I'll have a word with Rodney so he won't make a fuss, he'll never admit it but I think he's worried about you. Come back in a few days for a checkup. And let me know how you want to proceed with this." Radek suspected Beckett was offering to remove the child without putting undue pressure on him to decide.

Radek was released from the infirmary and made his way slowly through the halls. He couldn't meet anyone's eyes, especially the marines, though he felt as though they were all staring at him, through him, like they knew his secret. He took the long way back to his rooms, circling around the laboratory so he wouldn't run into Rodney.

"Zelenka! Hold up!" Kavanagh's grating voice followed Radek through the halls and he stopped, knowing the man had no issues about personal space and would dog him back to his rooms until he got what he wanted. "What are you doing, giving Miko the protein analysis tests? That was
Radek listened impassively, one hand on his hip, one resting across his stomach, as if he were scratching lightly. Kavanagh was as usual being self-important, trying to make others change to suit his own opinion of himself. Finally Radek snapped. "I have put Miko on protein analysis and you on sampling run because Miko can cease to think of her own reputation for more than two minutes, and you going off world makes everyone around here happy and does wonders for morale. Good day."

The uncharacteristic bluntness of Radek's outburst startled Kavanagh long enough for the Czech to escape. He realized he didn't care that he'd just insulted a colleague, and knew full well a report would be written by the self-important little man berating Radek's unprofessional manner and demanding he be removed from the Atlantis project. Kavanagh wasn't stupid by any stretch, but the man was far, far more grating than even Rodney. Radek almost thanked Rodney aloud when he heard his boss on the radio, demanding Kavanagh's presence in the lab.

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In his room, Radek set his radio aside and lay on his bed. One arm tucked up under his head, the other laying over his stomach. He was pregnant. He had never wanted children, never really liked them. His marriage had fractured over that point, his wife wanting children, and Radek preferring not. They had split long before the divorce was finalized, only a month before his leaving Earth. He knew he could go back to Beckett, right now, and have the child and everything to do with it taken out of him.

Atlantis wasn't a place for children – there was too much to do, too many things that could go wrong. Too many uncertainties. Radek himself was too busy to lose the inevitable time to actually carry the child, the way his body would slow down his work. He couldn't afford the demands of caring for the baby afterwards. And he feared the military, if he was honest. Many of them, one-on-one, he didn't fear as such. There was a camaraderie here, after everything they'd been through. But when something this strange confronted them, Radek didn't believe that all the marines on the base would be understanding. The homophobia would certainly play a part – though Radek himself preferred women. The very notion of a man carrying a child, especially the child of another man; it smacked of the same apparent unnaturalness of two men as lovers. Or so Radek feared others would believe. It was often easier to accept something wildly different – like the Wraith – than something that could be just like you. Having a child would make Radek a liability in so many ways, even before the child was born. The clear and obvious decision was to abort. Today. Now.

He lifted a hand from his stomach and reached for his radio link, tugging it over his ear. He switched it on, listening to the quiet chatter on the various channels. It wasn't something he normally did, but he was finding it difficult to speak, to say Dr. Beckett's name, to ask if there was time in the infirmary. He wondered if, in asking, he would reveal too much to someone listening. Atlantis was not, as a rule, populated by idiots. In the end, he tugged the link off again and stood. He'd go down there now, and wait around until Beckett could see to him. Normally he wore the link unless he was sleeping. For now he kept it in his pocket, putting himself 'off duty' until he finished with Beckett.

Again, he walked slowly, feeling everyone in the city looking at him, as if he were a freak. He had never felt like this, and he wondered in passing if everyone who was 'different' felt this way. If so, he had even greater respect now for those who endured this all their lives.

"Dr. Zelenka?" Elizabeth's voice cut through Radek's thoughts as he walked. "Are you alright?" She
held her coffee in both hands, giving Radek a concerned look.

"I am fine, Dr. Weir." He tried to summon a smile for the woman who was slowly becoming a friend. Facing certain death a few times together did that to people. Under other circumstances he would call her Elizabeth, but it was a privilege he saved until she asked or unless they were all about to die. Again.

"Are you sure?" She asked, then switched to Czech as several marines approached, not wanting to embarrass the man. "[You look pale, and Rodney tells me you were having stomach pains yesterday?]"

Radek searched her face, her eyes – a diplomat's face, trained not to lie even if her words might. Had Rodney kept it at stomach pains, or did she know about what grew right now in Radek's body? What would she advise him to do? She was a woman, and his friend, almost. No, he mentally shook his head. He was getting rid of the child, not wanting to burden Atlantis any further than she already was. "[Thank you for your concern, Dr. Weir. Yes, I've had pains; I'm going to the infirmary now to talk to Dr. Beckett about them.]" The truth had never felt so much like a lie as it did right then.

"[Alright. Take care of yourself, I like to see my scientists in good shape.]

"If I'm up to it, I look forward to it."

He smiled back, briefly and was aware it didn't meet his eyes. He enjoyed the friendship the two had, even the ever so subtle flirtation that could never be anything more.

Parting ways with Elizabeth, Radek kept walking, making his way to the infirmary. When he arrived, he was surprised to see Rodney there, as if waiting for someone. The other man was typing frantically on his laptop. "Zelenka." Rodney looked up when the other man approached, standing as he closed the laptop with a snap.

"Dr. McKay." Radek felt wary right now around the other man – feeling a stab of guilt that some might consider he was taking a decision away from Rodney in aborting the child.

"I'd like to talk to you in private," Rodney asked. His voice was a little sharp, but with an undertone that Radek recognized as Rodney needing some kind of interpersonal contact that he wasn't good at asking for.

"Can it wait?" Radek's heart raced, suspecting Rodney wanted to talk him out of this. "I'm here to see Dr. Beckett."

"He's patching up Kavanagh; he'll be a few minutes. Please, Radek?" Rodney looked furtive, nervous, eyes a little scared maybe, but steady. Steadier than they would have been a year ago.

"Alright." The pair left the infirmary and found a small, unused room nearby, which Rodney closed as Zelenka settled on a small, uncomfortable chair, one arm curled around his stomach.

"What are you doing?" The question wasn't accusatory or demanding, just Rodney's characteristically confused bluntness. It was just Rodney doing his best to keep his own emotions in check. Radek was worried at the calm tone – Rodney was high strung, and for him to behave like this meant something was going on.

"I've decided to not burden the city or her people with such an inconvenience as a child would
cause." He found he couldn't meet Rodney's eyes, feeling them boring into his skull. His arm around his waist tightened as the other joined it.

"I see." Rodney sat across from him, looking up, as he often did when thinking. "Have you spoken to Carson about this decision?"

"I have not. It's where I was going when you brought me in here. I cannot see he would force this on me. It would slow me down in later months, and sooner perhaps, with sickness and other things." He remembered his sister's pregnancy only vaguely and distantly. "And the child itself would be demanding."

"You're probably the only person in this city I'll have to say this to but, Radek ... Sometimes you really do have to think of what *you* want. Atlantis is important, yes, but ... So are you. Of course if you ever repeat that I'll deny it. I know you never wanted kids, neither have I, but ... Hell, I'm reconsidering the whole idea, just knowing that ..." He left it unspoken that he was half of what Radek was getting rid of.

"What would you have me do, Rodney?" he asked, finally meeting the other man's searching blue eyes. "Carry the child; raise it here in the city? It will slow me down. Some will hate the child ... and me for having something so unnatural. I did not wish this. I do not think I want this. I never liked children, I did not want them. But as you say, the possibility forces one to reconsider. When I left my rooms, I wanted only to be rid of this, to no longer be a freak. But even then I wondered ... what would it be like? To have a child, to feel it move, to watch it grow. I do not demand you take any more part in this than you have." He left it there, leaving it up to Rodney whether he would be a part of the child's life or not, beyond being Radek's boss.

"I ... I don't know, I really don't. I won't make a good parent, but ... if you keep the baby, I'll be there. I ... We can't be ... I mean, nothing against you personally but you and I won't ... As a couple, because, ah ..."

"Don't worry, Rodney, you're safe from me. Men are attractive enough but I prefer women, and I would not have you betray your feelings for the sake of a child neither of us wished to conceive." He knew – rather, he had a very strong hypothesis regarding Rodney's feelings for a certain Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, and he tried to keep his words just vague enough that Rodney could feel secure that Radek didn't know who might be betrayed.

"So ... you've decided ...?"

For all his preference for women, Radek did find Rodney rather adorable those few times when he didn't quite know what to say. "I have decided for now ... not to decide. It is too big, and I should take more time to think. I thank you, at least, for asking me to truly think about things, and not merely act on the why-nots."

"I ... you're welcome. I, ah, I'll try not to, uhm, be too much of a pain about it, it's your decision, really, after all. So ... I'll just ... go."

Rodney departed quickly, leaving Radek alone with his thoughts.

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A few days after his talk with Rodney, Radek wandered the city at night, feeling her thrumming around him. His own gene therapy didn't take, so he wasn't as close to her mentally as Sheppard, or even Rodney. But he spent so much time with Atlantis and her workings, more even than Rodney, and he felt the city. Sometimes when he was working alone, he'd talk to her. Always in Czech, his words were a cross between those for a lover and those to a child - soothing, comforting, confiding.

Eventually, his wanderings took him to the jumper bay. He had always liked this place, regarding each jumper as a delightful and beautiful puzzle to be solved and refined and made into sheer perfection. Until now, they were the closest thing he had to children.

Coaxing one of them open, Radek settled himself on the bench in the back, lying down, one leg on the floor. He tucked one hand under his head, the other resting on his stomach. Sometimes he fell asleep here, but never for very long. The little jumpers were a comfort to him, and he needed that right now.

Radek had put the problem to the back of his mind for a few days, letting it simmer and stew without consciously thinking about it. It hadn't been easy but he'd dove into his work to force his mind on more practical issues.

Now, a week after the conception, he was letting himself really think about things. A child. A child growing within his own body, as he thought, not that of a woman. Again, his mind ran over the countless reasons he shouldn't have a child now. The resources it would demand; the changes to his life that would make his job harder; the drain the child would be on everyone, especially Radek.

Then he asked himself the real question, the one Rodney had made him consider. Did he want to continue what had already begun? Would he love, care for and cherish the life inside him? His hand rubbed slow, small circles on his stomach, as if soothing the life under his fingers.

"I thought I was the only one who came to the bay at this hour." John Sheppard's voice was slow and quiet, and Radek could understand why Rodney felt as he did about the Lt. Colonel.

"Colonel, I'm sorry." Radek sat up, feeling almost as if he'd violated something – John was the only person he knew who cared for the jumpers as much as he did.

"S'okay, Radek. Stay." John settled on the bench across from the man. "If you don't mind some company. It's nice to know I'm not the only one who ... feels them," he said. Radek could feel John studying him in the darkness, and he wondered if John knew anything about his condition. Radek had heard a few rumors about Rodney's infirmary visit demanding pregnancy tests, and he knew Rodney and John were close. Radek watched them enough to know that Rodney's feelings were not unrequited. Perhaps Rodney had said something to the colonel? "I come here sometimes at night to think ... Or when I need to stop thinking." That smile that Radek knew Rodney loved so much formed on Colonel Sheppard's face. "Want to take her for a little spin?" the colonel asked.

"I ... I do not wish to intrude but ... if you are willing ..." Radek nodded, liking the idea of taking a flight with the pilot, though he couldn't help but think Rodney might be jealous at the time spent with 'his' colonel. Normally, Radek's stomach churned at the idea of actually being *in* the jumper in flight, or any sort of flying craft, really. But if there was anyone in either galaxy that Radek would feel comfortable flying with, it was John Sheppard.

From the front seat, John informed the control room that they were taking the jumper on a quick planetary run to test a few modifications, winking at Zelenka as he spoke. They were cleared for launch, and without another word John guided the jumper into the air. They flew in companionable
silence for a while before Sheppard spoke. "Radek?"

"Yes, Colonel?" Radek had one hand splayed on the panel before him, not in nervousness, but a simple feeling of the jumper.

"If I'm out of line with what I say, I apologize. I've put a few things together the last ... week or so. Some things Rodney said ... a few files I'm not supposed to have read ... a rumor or three. From all that I've been hearing, I can come up with one of two conclusions. One ... Rodney got some girl on Atlantis pregnant." Radek saw a twitch in the Colonel's eye that could have been jealousy. "Or ... you and he touched some weird Ancient machine and now you're thinking about whether or not to have a kid because of it. Considering the way things go around here, I'm thinking option two is actually the more likely one."

Radek knew better than to be surprised. The colonel was a lot smarter than most people thought. "I should talk to Andersen about increasing computer security," he grumbled a little, neither confirming nor denying what had been guessed at. The rumors didn't surprise him, with the fuss Rodney had made about pregnancy tests in the infirmary. And he knew Rodney tended to babble, especially when the colonel stood there and let him, as he was inclined to do. Radek should have figured the somewhat maverick colonel would also be able to crack into a few computers.

"I just wanted to let you know that whichever you decide, I'll support you. I know Elizabeth will, too, but she has no idea what's going on with you right now, by the way." Radek nodded at that, a little more at ease. "No one does. Well, Carson I imagine does being the doctor and all, but the only people around here with enough information and brains to figure it out right now are you, me and Rodney."

Radek sat in silence for a long while after nodding that he understood what Sheppard was saying. "Thank you, Colonel. Your support is appreciated. Rodney has ... already tried to talk me into keeping the child, in spite of the many reasons why it's not a good idea."

John gave a soft chuckle at that. "Sounds like Rodney. If my information is correct, half of the starter material came from him. Between the two of you, the kid will be smart enough to build nuclear bombs in the second grade."

"I do not think she will wait that long," Radek said with a laugh, then he felt an odd chill. Not only was the child no longer 'it,' but a little girl. A gentle clutch in his abdomen cemented the decision for him, though he said nothing right now.

The two rode in silence for a while and the planet once again came into view as they headed back.

"Thank you again, Colonel. You have helped me a good deal with this, tonight. Now," Radek took a deep breath. "If I may return the favor ..." He paused, waiting for a response from the other man.

John said nothing, turning to get a better look at Radek, an eyebrow raised.

Radek chose his words carefully, knowing that what he was about to say could be rather dangerous. "If I am out of line, please tell me, but ... we both know Rodney will never make the first move. If you want him, you cannot wait for him to come to you."

John was silent for so long after this, Radek worried he'd overstepped his bounds, and sank back into his seat a little. "I am sorry, that was wrong of me to s-"
"No, it wasn't, Radek. I'm sorry; I didn't mean to run silent on you there. I just wondered if I was being that obvious." There was a note of genuine worry in the colonel's voice.

"Not really, no. It is Rodney who is obvious, to me. You, I had to look for, and I watched you for a long time. He cares for you more deeply than he will say, even I think to himself." Radek wasn't much for matchmaking, but when he had seen signs of Rodney's attraction to Sheppard, he had begun to keep an eye on Sheppard, wondering if the unspoken attraction might be returned.

"Rodney has good friends," Sheppard finally said with a smile.

"Better than he deserves."

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Rodney woke at the insistent chiming of his door, turning onto his back, covers tangled around his legs. He managed to kick them off and grabbed his robe, tugging it on around the shorts and t-shirt he'd worn to bed. "What is it?" he growled drowsily, letting the door open. His jaw slacked a little at the sight of John standing there. "Something, Colonel?" he asked, stepping aside automatically to let the other man in.

"Yeah, actually. I just had a nice little talk with a mutual friend, and I wanted to say something before I went to bed."

Rodney tried to hide the shivers at that slow fingers-down-his-spine drawl John employed. "Oh? And what was that? Couldn't it wait until mor-mph!" His mini-tirade was cut off by John's lips, and he realized the pilot's arms were around him. He had barely started returning the kiss when it ended.

"Dammit, Colonel!" Rodney grumbled, keeping his hands on John's biceps. "Why did you do this now? Three in the morning when I'm barely awake? We're continuing this discussion when I wake up," Rodney growled, gripping John's shirt in one hand as he stalked back to bed. He really was entirely too tired for this – he'd been covering for Radek and stretching himself even thinner than usual the last few days. As much as he wanted to indulge in the dream that was settling into his bed, Rodney needed sleep and his body wasn't allowing anything else.

John chuckled as they settled on the narrow bed; John spooned behind Rodney, who was asleep even before they finished settling.

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Chapter Summary

Some Ancient medical equipment plays havoc with an Atlantis scientist. Begins and becomes AU sometime between Runner and Duet. McKay/Sheppard minor relationship. MPREG!

Chapter 3/8 by Iocane

Radek noticed a difference in Rodney, though a subtle one the following day and couldn't help but smile to himself. There was no outward change in how Rodney and the colonel interacted, but Radek noticed the change in Rodney because he'd been looking for it. He hadn't yet told Rodney of his final decision – he had decided to 'sit on it' for a week or so, let himself get used to and truly consider the idea before taking it any further.

They were scheduled to go off world that day, Rodney, John, Teyla, even Beckett and several others. Radek spent the morning basking in the quietness of the lab without Rodney. If anyone noticed he drank tea this morning instead of coffee, no one said anything. He wasn't getting morning sickness yet, but the scent of coffee hanging thick in the air of the mess hall had sent his stomach churning. Miko, bless her, was always offering tea, even though she was frequently declined. When she had offered this morning, Radek had accepted – the fragrance from her mug had been quite pleasant – he still needed caffeine and it seemed to provide Miko with the energy to keep up with Rodney.

The highlight of his day so far had been to once again tell Kavanagh to stuff it when the man had blustered in, trying to prove that Zelenka had reached an incorrect conclusion on a recent set of tests.

"Dr. Zelenka, my office please." To his surprise Dr. Weir radioed him around lunch time.
"I need you to go off world," she explained. "There's been an encounter with the Wraith on the planet Sheppard's team went to this morning. Dr. McKay and Lt. Cadman were taken into a Wraith Dart, which our team was able to shoot down relatively undamaged. Colonel Sheppard has requested your assistance in trying to get our people out of the ship. Can you be ready in half an hour?"

Radek's heart pounded and his arm curled around his stomach a little. "Of course. I'll assemble some equipment and a team."

On the planet, Zelenka traded nods with John as they walked from the 'gate to the fallen dart, where Radek and his team went to work right away. He quickly figured out what had happened, his elation at working on a relatively undamaged Wraith ship was muted by the realization that there was a fifty-fifty chance he wouldn't be able to save Rodney.

Radek had a moment of considerable panic when the dart ship blew a circuit a few feet away from him. He felt Beckett's eyes on him, and tried to calm himself, a hand resting on his stomach, as if to calm the life there as well.

"First time off-world?" Sheppard drawled, eyes not missing the protective hand.

"Yes." Radek's heart was still racing, eyes darting around as if a Wraith were ready to pounce him, hand poised for a snack.

John managed to calm him down and Radek was able to get back to work. They materialized one of the bodies and, much to his relief, Rodney reappeared, looking blearily at them before collapsing.

Over the next few days, Radek spent most of his time working on the Wraith Dart. He was trying to fix things so Rodney and Cadman could be separated and the city could get them both back. Part of him wondered if Cadman would find out about what Rodney knew and what she would do or say about it, if the final separation was a success. His outburst at Rodney had been fueled a little by his own added consciousness and he suspected Rodney had guessed as much.

Rodney approached him afterwards, one evening when they were in the lab late together. "I understand I have something to thank you for," he said softly, a shy little smile developing. Radek figured it wasn't the separation of Rodney and Cadman that he was being thanked for.

"You made me think of something that needed thinking of. I only passed the favor on, so it would get back to you." Radek smiled, sipping his tea. "I take it things are well, then?"

"Very well, thank you. And I took pains to make sure Cadman couldn't find anything about you."

Radek nodded his thanks, and since Rodney looked like he was itching to ask, the Czech had a little mercy on the man who had so recently been through quite the experience. Radek placed a hand meaningfully on his belly, meeting Rodney's eyes. "You will be in charge of the baby shower," he said with his somewhat bossy tone that he would only use on Rodney when they were alone, or if McKay crossed the line.

Rodney looked confused for just a moment, then he had that half smile of dawning realization before he broke into a wide grin. "What made you decide?" He finally asked, restoring his features.

"The city herself, I believe. I also think I decided that first day, when I spoke to you, but was afraid to say. It is not an easy decision to have made. Your colonel helped. He's very smart. Smarter, I think, than even he knows."
"He isn't the only one," Rodney said with unusual insight that almost made Radek squirm.

Rodney finally headed off to bed, leaving Radek alone in the lab with his thoughts, rubbing his not-yet-bulging stomach gently.

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* Radek felt a little awkward as they assembled for the meeting. He was seated between Rodney and Carson. Teyla sat at Elizabeth's right hand side, and John was on Rodney's other side. Elizabeth and Teyla were the only ones of the group who didn't know what the exact subject of the meeting was. Teyla was included more as the representative of the Athosian people than as a member of John's team.

"Alright, gentlemen, you've got us all here, now what's this about?" Her words might have seemed brusque but her tone was easy, relaxed and Radek could only hope that, even if she didn't like what they told her, she would keep her calm.

"Carson?" Rodney offered.

"You actually know more about it than I do, Rodney." And he'd interrupt anything Carson said anyhow, so best to save himself the trouble. Radek had told the others when they'd discussed the meeting that he'd rather not be the one to begin, he was already ill-at-ease being the focal point of the meeting.

"In the Ancient medical lab we opened three weeks ago, there was a device that was activated by myself, then Dr. Zelenka helped move it. The machine in question is a portable in vitro lab. When I activated it, it began to do its job, which was to facilitate pregnancy between partners ... any two partners. When Dr. Zelenka helped me move it, it finished its job. In this case, the job involved the growth of a uterus and implantation within that uterus of a viable human embryo." By now they were all used to Rodney's rapid-fire speech and no one had problems following his quick words.

Weir looked between the men across from her, studying them, noticing Radek's hand resting on his middle. "So what you're saying is that Dr. Zelenka has an artificially implanted uterus – with child – thanks to an Ancient device?"

"That's essentially it, yes," Carson answered, cutting off whatever Rodney might have said.

"Dr. Zelenka, where do you stand on this right now?" She asked, meeting Radek's eye.

"No where, at the moment. I'm sitting in the conference room." He'd hoped a bit of levity would ease the tension he felt building, and it seemed to work for a moment. "I have decided for now to keep the child, barring complications."

"Why wasn't I informed of this sooner?" She wasn't accusing, but Radek suspected she felt that, as head of the expedition, something of this importance should have come to her before now.

Both Rodney and Dr. Beckett opened their mouths to explain but Radek spoke first. "I asked that it be kept a secret, Dr. Weir." He hadn't specifically asked, but he didn't want any of the others to be subjected to Weir's ire at keeping the secret on his behalf. "At first, it was my intention to dispose of
the child, for reasons I need not go into now. Had that been the case, Dr. Beckett, Dr. McKay and myself would have written a report of the incident to file with other documentation relating to the device." The paper was still being written by Beckett. "I had been hoping nothing would be said after that. However, since I'm keeping the child, I believe it would be wise to give everyone here fair warning, beginning with you, Dr. Weir." He knew she'd be getting a lot of the 'political' fallout from this both here and from Earth.

"When you put it that way, Dr. Zelenka, I can understand your silence up 'til now. I take it arrangements are being made to help accommodate the pregnancy?"

"Aye, with Rodney's help, we'll be changing Dr. Zelenka's schedule a little to make time for classes and the like. He'll be joining me on the mainland when I go, to talk to the women there about some basics. They'll be a lot more informative in practical matters than any articles could be, and he'll be getting plenty of those as well. Now that you're aware, we'd like to request larger quarters for him-"

"Though it's not a hurry." Radek already felt they were putting in too much effort on his behalf – this sort of diversion of resources was one of his fears to begin with. "It is only to allow for a nursery, a larger room can wait."

"Aye, but it's something I'd like us to think about now."

"Alright, I'm sure we can find somewhere with a nursery, or at least something we can pretend is a nursery. So you've decided to raise the child yourself, Dr. Zelenka?" Again, Weir's green eyes fell on Radek.

"Yes. I cannot say it will be easy, but, now that I have decided to keep the child, I do not want to give her up as soon as she is born." The child had been 'she' since that day with Sheppard in the jumper.

"If you change your mind, Doctor Zelenka," Teyla spoke for the first time, "there are families on the Mainland who would raise the child for you, though I can understand wanting to raise her yourself." She smiled at him and Radek relaxed visibly – the Athosian response was one of two he was worried about in a group sense. The Marines were, of course, the other.

"Thank you, Teyla." Weir smiled at the Athosian woman, then turned to the others. "Is there anything else?"

"Yeah." John folded his hands on the table, leaning forward. "There's some concern, not all unfounded unfortunately, that there might be an ... unofficial military response to the situation. I don't think any of the original expedition will have a problem, including the Marines. But we've got a lot of new crew now – a lot of new military who haven't been through what the rest of us have. They still think in Earth terms."

"You're worried about violence against Dr. Zelenka." Weir clearly wasn't surprised at the fear. "Sadly I can't say it's unfounded. I agree with you, John. I would trust anyone who came through that first year with us not to let Dr. Zelenka come to any harm. The newer ones, I don't know. Most of them are probably going to be fine with it, they've been accepted into the Stargate program, after all. But I do agree that this situation poses a certain risk."

"I was thinking of having Harriman assigned to keep an eye on Dr. Zelenka. She's been with us since day one, and she's grounded for a few months anyway." John had clearly been thinking things over. Harriman was semi-grounded. She was perfectly fine as long as she was inside the city but the
stress of going off-world had proven too much and she was currently working with Heightmeyer extensively.

"Dr. Zelenka?" Weir addressed him again.

"I do not like the idea of having a babysitter ... or bodyguard. Perhaps we wait, see what the reaction is?" Again he was trying to put the city as a whole before his own concerns. "I do not wish to insult anyone by assuming violence. I am not so far gone that I can't run away," he cracked a lopsided, quick smile at that, once again trying to ease the tension.

"Alright. No bodyguard – yet. Then our next step is to talk to our people about this." She addressed Carson, Rodney, John and Teyla in this. "Dr. Zelenka, I know technically it isn't anyone's business but yours, but this is a rather unique case. How much do you want to be public, and when?"

"It needs to be known I'm having a child. I suspect eventually it will come out that Rodney is the father so perhaps full disclosure from the start is best. As for when, honestly, the sooner the better I believe. I don't want to wait until the pregnancy is obvious." The Daedalus was due back in less than a week now. "Dr. Weir, what about Colonel Caldwell?"

"I'll speak to him as soon as he returns. I think it best that if we're going to let this cat out of the bag, we do it now. Knowing that man, he'd try to drown it otherwise."

In an odd way, Radek felt privileged to hear that – it was no secret Caldwell and Weir didn't get along, but strong gossip was one thing, to see her express the dislike in such a way directly showed a trust he hadn't quite expected.

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After the meeting, John went straight to Weir's office, which saved her the trouble of calling him.

John could tell by the look on her face she had something to ask as he closed the door and sat down. He waved a hand over her desk, causing the glass walls to fall opaque, giving them more privacy. "Two things. First, I knew about Radek beforehand because he told me ... sort of. I put a few things together and kind of tripped over a file on Rodney's laptop. I didn't want to hide it from you, but when Radek and I talked about it I didn't know which way he was going to go."

Weir listened, nodding. That'd been what she had planned to ask. It didn't surprised her that John preempted her. "I don't like that you felt you couldn't trust me with this." She held up a hand to stave off interruptions. "But considering the delicate nature of what was involved, I can understand why you didn't. And the second thing ..." She sat back, raising an eyebrow at the pilot.

"This is something that doesn't go in any official report, Elizabeth. This doesn't even go in your diary, your journal or anything besides your head." The intensity of John's insistence made her nod, though she was a little worried about what he was going to say. "You should know, as both a friend and our boss. Rodney and I are involved." In a way, this was making up for not telling her about Radek. At least John hoped it was. "We're telling you just in case you hear anything. We're being discreet, but no one's perfect. We wanted you to know, just in case."

Just in case one of them got hurt on a mission, or worse, didn't come back. She nodded, understanding everything he said and a lot of what he hadn't. "I appreciate it, John. Your secret is
safe with me. Thank you."

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The next few weeks were remarkably uneventful. Quietly, everyone told their immediate staff about Radek's situation. From there the information trickled down to everyone in the city and on the Mainland. Radek felt an upswing in the general unease around him but he tried to convince himself it was largely his own perception. To his surprise, Kavanagh hadn't made a fuss, though he heard the man trying to shout Rodney into giving him Radek's job once he was unable to keep at it. Miko had just smiled and made sure to keep him supplied with tea, since the baby apparently didn't like coffee at all. Rodney must have noticed Radek's reaction to the smell of coffee because only days after the announcement a sign had appeared in McKay's neat handwriting, 'No coffee in labs on pain of death – R' with 'pain of death' underlined three times.

He flew to the mainland once a week with Carson during his checkups. The women were wary at first at the idea of a man having a child, but they soon relaxed into the idea. He did live in the city of the Ancestors after all, and many miraculous thinks happened there, so why not this as well? They talked to him, giving practical advice and little hints and tips about how to cope with the various problems he'd potentially encounter.

The best help at the moment was a tea to help with the one symptom that was already manifesting itself – morning sickness. Miko's tea helped, the Athosian tea was even better and Miko didn't mind replacing the Darjeeling she usually gave him with the spicier Athosian brew.

The women gave him practical advice that, since it came from women who reminded Radek of his sister and mother and grandmothers, felt more real to him than articles read only on his laptop.

At Beckett's insistence, Radek was eating in the mess hall more often – or at least he was forbidden to eat in his room or the labs. He had seldom eaten in the labs but frequently did so in his room, and even more frequently skipped meals. He was somewhat surprised when Lt. Cadman sat with him about four days after the initial announcement. "Hiya!" She smiled, plunking her tray down across from him.

"Good afternoon, Lieutenant," he said politely with a bit of a smile. He was unused to any but the science team, or occasionally John's team joining him for a meal.

"I never did thank you for helping to get me out of Rodney's head," she said cheerfully.

"It was Rodney who did it, really."

"But you told him to shove it when he was getting things wrong. If you hadn't done that I might not be here today, so ... thanks."

"You're more than welcome." The two continued talking as they ate, and it occurred to Radek that Cadman and Rodney might be the two people in the city to have even the remotest idea what he was going through. The sudden and unnatural imposition of a second life entirely dependent upon his own well being.

It wasn't the only time Radek had a surprising guests. Several women, mainly from the science teams but more than one or two marines, stopped by to share a meal. Radek began to wonder if his
pregnancy had somehow granted him access to a secret society of women. It was an interesting notion. They seemed to relax with him, and he found he could relax with them. Like the Athosian women, they all had advice and stories to share, some from their own experiences, many from siblings or friends.

Radek knew, on the other hand, three people had put in requests for transfers back to Earth the same day his pregnancy was made public. Several more had come in between that day and when the Daedalus left a week later. Radek was surprised they only lost a handful of people over it. He was pleased that none of them had been original expedition members.

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It was a month after they told Elizabeth. Radek had loosened his belt by a notch but there were no other outward signs of his pregnancy except he drank Athosian tea now instead of coffee, which kept the nausea mostly at bay.

He and Willis, one of the new Daedalus scientists, had been repairing an air-cycling station in one of the newly opened sectors of the city when Radek heard several voices coming in their direction. His heart thudded in his chest but he kept walking, trying not to let his fear show, though he couldn't imagine why they would be there at this time of night. He thought he'd heard echoes of 'right down here' and 'freak' in the hollow corridors, but again he convinced himself it was just his imagination.

His worst fear was confirmed when he felt Willis reach over and pluck the radio off his ear. "Get him!" the other man howled once Radek was out of communication with anyone.

The marine footsteps increased and Radek tried to turn and run, tripping over Willis and grunting with the impact as he fell, losing his glasses. He managed to get himself up, but a blow to his head knocked him to his knees and he felt the pain stabbing into his body as the marines surrounded him and began their beating. Knowing he couldn't escape, Radek curled up, wrapping his arms around his midsection to protect the child there. Radek tried to scream as he felt hands and boots on him, trying to wrestle him out of his ball, kicking him when they couldn't. In the distance, he heard insults hurled at him and he found himself pleading in Czech, doing everything he could to protect the child he carried.

He heard more footsteps and a lot of shouting and curled up tighter, fearing reinforcements. He wished he hadn't been so foolish, so arrogant when he'd declined the bodyguard.

Even when no more blows came, he couldn't bring himself to relax, not yet. He wasn't being hit, but he could hear the clear and distinct sounds of a fight around him.

"Dr. Zelenka?" The voice was familiar, feminine. Radek couldn't place it yet, and curled up tighter, worried for the child. He knew they had kicked his midsection a few times, and in his sides where he couldn't protect himself. He also knew he'd been kicked in the head more than once. All over his body the pain was making itself known as his adrenaline-fueled fear began to wane.

"Lt. Cadman to the infirmary, we have a situation ..." She gave the location. "Dr. Zelenka's been attacked. We need a medical team and backup here, get me-" Cadman rattled off a short list of names and Zelenka dimly realized she was listing people she trusted for said backup. "Three marines down, they're being watched now but they need to be put in the brig." As she spoke, she kicked one of Zelenka's assailants who seemed to be waking up.
"Willis," Zelenka said quietly, his mind unwrapping, realizing he was at least a little bit safe. "They need to ... he was ..." Radek tried to sit up but the corridor spun, his stomach lurched and he lay back down, eyes closing.

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Chapter Summary

Some Ancient medical equipment plays havoc with an Atlantis scientist. Begins and becomes AU sometime between Runner and Duet. McKay/Sheppard minor relationship. MPREG!

Chapter 4/8 by Iocane

Radek's vision came slowly into focus as he opened his eyes. His vision never entirely sharpened and for a moment he panicked, then remembered what had happened. Willis taking his radio, the attack, losing his glasses. His hands flew to his abdomen and he moaned at the pain the motion caused.

There was a bit of a flurry around him and he saw several figures approach. As they got closer, Radek could identify Beckett, Rodney, Sheppard and Weir, with a nervous looking Cadman hanging back. Beckett was reaching towards his face and Radek recognized his glasses. He could see where the wire frames had been bent back into shape, and the lenses were new, still smelling of cleaning solution. "Thank you." The cold metal helped sharpen his focus a little, the fuzziness fading from both his vision and his thoughts.

"Before you panic, Radek, your baby's fine, they didn't do her any harm." By now they had all taken to referring to the child as she, though at this early stage they had no way of knowing for certain. "Can you tell us what happened, Radek?"

Radek's whole body relaxed, in spite of the pain he felt all over, face flooding with relief that the beating hadn't harmed his unborn child. "I was working on the air cycling station with Willis. It was taking longer than it should have, a lot of little malfunctions. By the time we left it was very late, maybe two am. On the way back, I heard some soldiers approaching, then Willis ... he ..." Zelenka reached up, feeling the absence of his headset. "He pulled my radio off before they got to me, so I
couldn't call for help. He said 'get him' and I tried to run and tripped over him. I do not know if it was deliberate or my own foolishness." As soon as Willis' name came up, John and Rodney shared a look and John stepped away. Radek could hear him talking quietly on his radio. He shifted his gaze to the apprehensive looking blonde, standing behind the others and off to the side. "How did you know?" he asked the lieutenant quietly.

"I overheard some guys talking. Rather, Cindy Cates heard them and gossiped to me. When I realized what they were planning, I remembered hearing you and Willis arguing about the air-cycling station and who was gonna get to do what about fixing it, and I just got a really bad feeling about things. So when you two were way later getting back than you really should have been, I decided to go looking, just in case. I took Heller and Jung with me, too."

"The three marines who attacked you are in the brig right now, they're going back to Earth for a court martial as soon as the Daedalus can get them there," John said, then his radio chirped. "They just got Willis in the brig, too. He must have run as soon as the marines got there, probably thought we wouldn't be able to prove anything. Scanners in that area of the city were down, and we can bet he had something to do with it."

Radek nodded, glad of the others – it was warming to know that even if a few marines didn't like what he was, those people he was considering more his friends every day were still there with him. Part of him, however, wished to simply be left alone, a little embarrassed that he had turned down the protection that would have kept him safe and overall less of a problem. "If it's alright, Colonel, I believe I'll accept that bodyguard now." He smiled a little.

"Already taken care of, Radek. There were over two dozen offers as soon as word of your attack started to go around. Lt. Cadman's in charge, she was going to be doing something like that anyway." John's drawl was oddly soothing to Radek and he nodded.

With a wave, Cadman fell back, leaving only the senior staff. John and Rodney departed a few moments later after assuring themselves that Radek was fine for now. Beckett ducked away to tend to the few other patients he had.

"Dr. Weir." Radek noticed she lingered and suspected it would have something to do with his attack.

"Dr. Zelenka." She nodded, pulling up a chair. "When you're ready, would you be willing to make an official statement? From what Cadman says, you were balled up pretty tight when they were at you so I understand if you can't name any names, but anything you can give us would be a great help. We already know who it was, but a statement from you will make the case that much stronger."

"Of course, Doctor. I am not one for vengeance on my own behalf; what's done is done. However, this is no longer only about me."

"I understand." Something told Radek perhaps she did. "When Beckett lets you up and about, we'll set up an appointment. The marines and Willis are going back on the Daedalus, your statement can be sent in a burst through the Stargate when you're ready, so there's no rush."

"Thank you, Doctor." Radek tried to smile, feeling his own fatigue catching up to him.

"Call me Elizabeth, please, Doctor."

"Radek, please, Elizabeth." It was nice to be able to use her first name without the threat of death hanging over their heads.
"Alright, Doctor Weir, time to let the patient sleep, I daresay he could use it."

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Radek's injuries weren't really that bad; several dozen cuts and bruises, three cracked ribs, a black eye and one broken finger which thankfully didn't affect him much as he could use either hand for anything he did. Everything else was just aches. Catching is mottled reflection in a mirror, he realized he looked far worse than he felt. Still, Beckett kept him for a few days in the infirmary before letting him go. He would have kept him longer but both Radek and Rodney were itching to get the Czech back to work. With Willis gone and Radek out of commission for several days, there was a large backlog of work. Radek had been surprised that Willis' actions had been fueled more by simple ambition than by prejudice.

It was a few weeks before Radek started to feel safe again. His belt came out another notch and he began to think of making arrangements to get some new clothing. He knew what he had with him wouldn't do when he was very visibly pregnant. His bodyguards were largely those marines he had already begun to think of as friends, so their presence was less of a distraction than he had thought it would be. They all knew how to stay out of his way, and a few even proved handy when he was working alone, able to play assistants. He was later surprised to learn that they were all volunteering the time in addition to their normal duties. Even Lorne took a spin but his regular duties kept him too busy to volunteer often.

Zelenka was engrossed in his report printout, eating with his free hand as he sat in the mess hall. It was about a quarter full right now, groups of two or three clustered around the scattered tables. The light overhead dimmed for a moment as someone sat across from him. Radek looked up for a moment, face neutrally cheerful – he was used to people joining him for meals now. However, the look on the marine's craggy face wasn't really a friendly one. Radek's eyes darted around and he noticed a few more faces turned in his direction, not all of them friendly. None of them, in fact. His eyes flickered over to his current bodyguard, Lt. Eisman, the young man looking nervously aware of the situation. Radek saw two men moving in close to him, looking more than a little menacing. "I don't think he'll be able to do much, Doctor," the man sneered, seeing Zelenka's eye movement. "Right now there's more of us than there are of you." His voice was quiet; low and dangerous. Radek shivered and tried not to show his fear. One hand splayed across his abdomen, he straightened a little, not wanting to let this man win by intimidation alone.

A few of the assembled soldiers stood, moving in to flank the man sitting across from the scientist. Radek didn't have to look up to know whose side they were on.

"I don't care about some fucking Ancient technology or anything to do with it. What you are, Doctor," again he spat the word like it tasted foul, "is a freak." He heard a muffled gasp and in the corner of his eye, he saw that Lt. Eisman was being wrestled to the ground apparently for trying to call for backup. "The people upstairs think we should let you be. But this isn't exactly don't ask don't fucking tell. It's pretty obvious to us that you're someone's bitch and brood mare."

Radek's heart was thudding in his chest and he wished he dared try to make a call, somehow. Blue eyes flew around the room, both hands holding his middle. It seemed all the marines here were in the 'against' column when it came to him.

At first, Radek thought the sharp 'bang' he'd heard was a gunshot, and he wondered vaguely for a
second why he didn't feel the blossom of pain. The men around the table eased back, and Radek's gaze shifted to his side.

Large hands, coated with the meal already, worked carelessly, conveying food to mouth from the tray he'd dropped beside Radek's. "Thought you could use some company," Ronon said in his calm, conversational voice. Brown eyes flickered up to the menacing forms, which suddenly weren't so threatening. Ronon was used to taking out teams of Wraith by himself, none of the marines wanted to take him on, even in a group of this size.

As soon as the men were gone, Radek felt the city lurch around him rather unnaturally, then blinked away to reveal a starless night sky.

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"I must stop waking up in the infirmary," Radek groaned quietly, lifting his head.

"Aye lad, that might be a good idea. How're you feeling, Radek?" Beckett asked, checking the man's vitals. "Can you tell me what happened?"

Radek tried to think back, and noticed the unmistakable form of Ronon standing between Radek's bed and the rest of the infirmary. "I was having lunch, reading over some reports. A marine approached me, his name I do not remember but I believe it began with a B. He said he didn't ... he said I was unnatural, a freak." To Radek's shame he felt his eyes itching, remembering the words of hate and venom.

He took a moment, trying to breathe steadily. "Do not blame Lt. Eisman. There were many marines, and when he tried to radio for help, they incapacitated him." Radek's hands were sliding further around his middle, which was bigger now and harder to protect than when they'd beat him in the corridor.

"He did manage to call, but by the time others got there, Ronon had already seen to the problem. He said you passed out right after, almost banged your head on the way down. You seem to be alright, but I'd like to keep you here for a while, overnight if you'll let me. I don't like the fainting and I want to be dead sure everything's fine."

Radek nodded, finding himself more tired than he would have expected. When Beckett left, Radek noticed the big Satedan was still there. "Excuse me, Ronon?" Brown eyes peered out from shaggy dreads as the man turned, approaching Radek's bedside. "Thank you for your help earlier. I apologize for my reaction after, or I would have thanked you then."

"Family's important," Ronon said as if that explained everything.

Radek studied the clear brown eyes, matted hair and determined features and nodded. "Thank you again." Ronon nodded once, then resumed his personally assigned guard duty.

Family. Radek realized he hadn't yet applied the word to himself and his unborn.

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After his near-attack, further measures were taken to insure Radek's safety. There was a collection of Marines who didn't like him, and Ronon had reported the names of each one in the mess hall that day. However, the Czech's general good nature – and ability to rein Rodney in, or at least to take the man's ire so no one else had to, had won him friends he'd never expected to find. Officially, his guard was doubled, and the names very carefully gone through. Unofficially, Zelenka found himself usually with an entourage of three or four marines anywhere he went. Unless he was off-world, Ronon seemed to take special interest in keeping an eye on the swelling doctor.

Since that close call, he never ate alone, often two or three people settling around him in the mess hall as they ate and talked, aside from his bodyguards, who often split themselves between joining him for a meal and more actively guarding him. He was surprised when Dr. Weir began to join them. At first it was her and some of the other command staff. Sometimes it was only her.

"[Have you thought of a name, yet?]" she asked, sipping her coffee – the smell wasn't so bothersome anymore. It was early morning, and the pair was mostly alone in the mess hall. Ronon was eating quietly in a far corner, near the door. He was the only person anyone in the city would trust to mind the doctor alone – everyone else had backup.

"[I don't even know yet if it's a boy or a girl. But ... yes. If it is a girl, Marina, and if it's a boy, the first name I do not know, but middle name Rodney, because he *is* a part of the child.]

"[As if he needs the boost to his ego.]
"I never figured you for a matchmaker, Rodney." John chuckled, looking up from his book to fix his lover with a curious gaze.

"Oh please! I'm not a matchmaker; I'm just talking about dinner, between friends."

"Mm-hmm. Then why isn't Beckett invited? I mean, if this were a real dinner party, wouldn't your best friend be on the guest list?"

"Carson's busy with Cadman." Rodney sulked a little, dropping himself on John's bed, pressing against his side. "Elizabeth and Radek are both single so it's a safe bet they're not doing anything that night."

"Which night?" John didn't put his book down; he loved teasing Rodney like this.

"Whichever night I give Radek off so he can have dinner with us."

"And Elizabeth."
good and if I tell you how it ends will you put the book down and kiss me?"

"No."

Rodney had been getting 'taking what he wanted' lessons from a certain Air Force Colonel, so John did eventually put the book down.

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"Radek?" Elizabeth looked up, a little surprised to see the Czech standing at her doorway, even more surprised to see his battered toolkit. She saw a pair of marines standing at the far end of the bridge to her office. Radek hadn't felt the need to bring them into Weir's small office for this.

"Elizabeth. "[If this is a bad time I can come back, but I believe I have found a way to give you more privacy in your office. John told me he can change the glass?]" He'd been mulling over the question for months and had only twenty minutes ago hit upon the solution and was eager to try it.

"[Yes, he made it opaque, I admit I don't like the whole place being glass but we can't figure out how to hang curtains in here.]"

Radek nodded and stepped into the office, the door closing behind him. "[And gene therapy didn't work for you, yes?]

"[Yes, I'm one of the fifty two percent, unfortunately. But you said you can make it so I can make the walls opaque? Even just a little?]

"[If my simulation is correct, I believe I may be able to. If it works on this, there are many other things I can do with it as well. May I?]" Elizabeth stood so he could get around her desk.

"[Should I leave?]" She knew some people didn't like to have someone over their shoulder.

"[I don't mind if you stay. It's your office after all.]" He flashed her a smile, and ducked under the desk. He reached up, laying his hand over a section and the walls frosted just a moment, then went clear again.

"[That was fast! Whatever you did worked for a second.]

"[Sorry? I hadn't done anything.]

"[You had your hand here, and the walls went frosted. Stand up and try it again.]

He did, eyes going wide behind his glasses as the glass walls turned smoky. Radek concentrated and when his hand moved away, they stayed like that. "[The therapy didn't take with me, and I hadn't even gotten the desk open ...]"

"[Maybe I wasn't trying hard enough before.]" Elizabeth stood beside him and tried to clear the walls, holding her hand over the same spot on the desk, even touching it in case that helped. The walls didn't change. She could see Radek's mind working, as was her own, and the two came to the conclusion at the same time. "[I'm no medical doctor, Radek, but I have a feeling your little Marina
"I can't say how long the effect will last once you've had the baby, Radek, but yes, it seems that even the unnatural imposition of the gene can create an offspring with the gene, naturally. Which is a little unusual because my research into the gene on Earth indicated it was in no way passed on genetically the same way we think of it. On the other hand, it may be a by-product of the machine used in the wee one's conception. When you're far enough along, Radek, I'd like to test the baby for the gene."

"Of course." Radek nodded, sitting on one of the infirmary beds with Elizabeth lingering nearby. After he'd successfully rigged her desk to allow her to control the walls, she'd asked if she could accompany him to tell Beckett about the apparent effects of gene therapy.

A few tests later and Beckett had confirmed it – Radek's blood was showing trace amounts of the gene. Less than the weakest therapeutic result, but still a marked presence – marked enough to enable him to use the city to a fuller extent than someone without the gene at all. Beckett warned him that since it seemed to be coming directly from the child, it was only temporary, and the effect was likely to fade after the child was born, an event now only six months away.

"[How does it feel now?]" Elizabeth asked as they sat at lunch. The mess hall was nearly empty – the real lunch rush was over and the dinner rush hadn't yet begun. A group of marines at the table by the door were Radek's current bodyguards.

"[It's like ... a concert, your favorite piece of music played live, so you can feel it in your very soul, and every note is exactly as it should be, the way you know it in your heart. I know it will fade, but for now, I will enjoy the music.]" He ducked his head shyly, realizing he'd gotten a bit flowery.

"[Radek you have the soul of a poet.]" Elizabeth smiled – not her diplomat smile, this one reached her eyes and Radek liked it more than he would admit right now.

"[Thank you. I can sometimes get carried away, especially when I don't have to wrap my mind around English.]" Radek realized he never had actually thanked her for their Czech conversations. 
"[Thank you for this. It's nice to speak the language of my home, when I'm so far from it.]
"[I'm glad to help, you're keeping me from losing at least one language out here, and the conversation is quite pleasant. Do you miss it, Earth?]"

"[Sometimes. Some days I do not know which is home, Earth, or here. I think when the time comes.]" His hand moved to rest on his stomach. 
"[Atlantis will be home, when I have more here than I had on Earth. Perhaps it already is. You? Do you miss Earth?]"

"[I did, for a long time. But there's nothing for me there now that isn't here.]" Elizabeth's face darkened for a moment, thinking of Simon, still berating herself for telling him not to wait, and being upset when he'd listened.

Radek found himself reaching across the table, covering Elizabeth's hand with his, seeing the flash of remembrance on her face. He'd heard rumors that her relationship had ended while they had all been on Earth, rumors confirmed by the ghost on her face now. He gave her fingers a gentle squeeze and let go, his resolve to keep things as just friends firmer than ever – she didn't need the complication of
a pregnant, lovesick physicist.

"[So tell me about America,]" he asked, breaking the heavy silence, wanting the easy conversation back.

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This story archived at http://www.wraithbait.com/viewstory.php?sid=8497
Chapter Summary

Some Ancient medical equipment plays havoc with an Atlantis scientist. Begins and becomes AU sometime between Runner and Duet. McKay/Sheppard minor relationship. MPREG!

Chapter 5/8 by Iocane

"Surprise!" Radek jumped a mile when he walked into the darkened room and was greeted by the shouts. He'd been called by Rodney to assist him in repairs he was making in this room.

"Don't worry, Radek, I'm still doing the baby shower, but this is the Radek shower." Rodney guided the other man to a new chair, taking his toolkit and setting it aside. "Since you can't go to the nearest mall and pick up what you'll need between now and when she gets here, and your clothes are getting a bit on the tight side, we decided to give you a hand." Rodney patted the man's shoulder, and waded back into the party, as usual barking orders, apparently quite happy to be in charge of so many people. Radek caught John watching Rodney, noting a fondness in the colonel's eye which made him smile.

Aside from the fact that Radek had a good many friends in the city, the party was largely an excuse to celebrate and everyone welcomed it. They had been planning it for a month or so, Radek learned later, to give people time to order anything they wanted from Earth. At the four month mark, Radek had begun to stress the seams of his clothing a little and had been wondering what to do when he got any bigger. He'd spoken to a few women on the mainland about altering some of his clothing. Their delays in alterations made sense now, if they were covering up for the party.

The room had two tables and a dozen or more chairs, one of which was dressed with a red bow. It was a gift from the science department, ergonomically designed to accommodate Radek's pregnancy as he progressed. One table was laden with a buffet of Earth and Athosian dishes. Radek was
embarrassed at the other, piled high with presents wrapped in everything from paper to cloth to no wrapping at all.

It was more than Radek had ever expected, even from his friends, and he wondered if it was the extra hormones in his blood that made him feel a little teary-eyed at all the hugs and well wishes. The party continued merrily until Rodney determined it was time to open the presents, beginning, of course, with his own.

It was a cloth wrapped box, containing some more of the Athosian tea he’d been drinking so much of. It was Elizabeth, standing beside Radek on 'wrapping paper duty' who noticed the blue cloth wrapping was a shirt. It was the same as the blue shirts all the science teams had, but a bit larger around the midsection. The box itself was hand carved wood, making up for the practicality of the gift. Rodney covered his own generosity by pointing out the tea kept Radek from getting sick – and thus interrupting his job, and the blue shirt so he wouldn't be getting any extra attention. The words seemed harsh but those who knew Rodney as Radek did only smiled, knowing what the man was truly saying.

The other presents were along similar lines. A lot of new clothing, some extra pillows, various pregnancy-comforts and Radek never did figure how Cadman had gotten his shoe size to order a pair of sneaker-like slip-on shoes that he could get on without bending. The most surprising was a stack of pregnancy and baby books from Caldwell along with a card signed by him and a dozen other Daedalus staff, including Hermiod.

Some of the gifts were Earth bought, and some he recognized as Athosian made. A few he couldn't place and concluded they were either traded from other worlds or hand made by the person giving the gift. The generosity warmed him immensely, and the horror of his attack so long ago and the close call more recently were both dimmed in his mind.

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Elizabeth pressed the chime on Radek's door, holding a package in one hand. The party had been two weeks ago, but her present for him had only just arrived on the Daedalus. She'd managed to get a last minute shirt from one of the Athosians, but she still wanted to give this to Radek personally. In a way it was better this way – the present was really more for Radek himself and less to do with his child. Seeing the other presents he'd been given, she was glad of the delay – half of it would have been out of place.

"Elizabeth." Radek couldn't hide his smile when he opened the door. He stepped aside, a hand resting on his five-month stomach under a light blue shirt.

"Thank you. [I meant this to arrive before the party but the post office didn't get it to Stargate Command in time so it had to come on a later Daedalus run.]

"[Thank you.]" He smiled, moving around the room and clearing a box of his no-longer-fit clothes off his desk chair. "[Sorry, I've been so busy I haven't had time to rearrange everything. I have more clothes now than I have room for.]

"[It's alright. I could talk to Rodney if you need time off ...]" She didn't seem to like the idea that Radek might be overworking himself, intentionally or not.
"[No! Thank you, but it's not that I'm overworking, not like that. Only that there really is so much to do. Rodney has put me in charge of getting the new staff acquainted with the place, as well as all his paperwork, and I spend more time now with the city than before."

He smiled and Elizabeth was reminded of the city's music he spoke of.

"[Alright then, as long as you're not overdoing it."

Elizabeth turned the neatly wrapped package over in her hands before handing it across to him.

Radek settled back on the bed, sitting up as much as his stomach would allow comfortably, the wedge-shaped pillow supporting his back had been a gift from Lorne. 

"[Thank you again."

He smiled and carefully unwrapped the package. The maternity part of the gift was on top. Several pairs of slacks she'd had custom made for his height and potential waistline, along with a matching belt. Beneath the slacks was the more personal set of gifts. He opened the cardboard box, revealing a dozen or so wrapped trinkets, which he recognized immediately as being from his own home country.

"[I spent a little time there in college,]"

she explained as Radek unwrapped all the little presents. 

"I've always tended to collect things when I spent any time in a country, little things like that. I never get a chance to really display them, but I always keep them. I thought you might want a little reminder of home. If nothing else, you can give them to Marina, a little something of where her father came from."

"I don't know what to say."

Radek spoke slowly, his voice just a little awed as he ran his fingers over the precious little bits of wood, clay and metal. About half of it was really just tourist trinkets, but it was still a reminder of home. He felt a sharp pang of homesickness, seeing the familiar imagery, and yet, he realized the nostalgia was for a time, more than a place. "[I cannot thank you enough, Elizabeth."

Blue eyes shone behind curved glass and Radek wondered how she'd known, or had the luck to guess that he had been wishing for something more of his native country, some way to pass his heritage on to his child.

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Radek leaned back in the jumper pilot seat, feeling the ship move around him in a way he couldn't describe – and didn't have to, to anyone who could fly them. The sensation was like nothing he'd ever felt, and he grinned from ear to ear. Flying the jumpers was a pure thrill that almost overcame his unease at riding them. He had quickly realized he was the type of driver who made the worst kind of passenger. Sheppard was the only pilot he didn't feel nervous with.

It was only his weekly trip to the mainland, but Carson was stuck in Atlantis with an emergency and John was riding shotgun, giving the other man pointers on the half-hour flight. "It's gonna be a sad day, Radek, when you can't do this anymore. You're a natural."

"Considering I am six months pregnant, natural is not a word I would apply to myself," Radek said with a little smile. The pregnancy was beginning to take its toll at last, and Radek was having to work harder to maintain his normal calm. The last few nights, the baby was moving a lot, keeping him awake, making him more irritable than usual. However, having John beside him rather than Carson was doing wonders for the Czech's nerves at the moment.

"So, Radek, since we have a second alone, there's something I've been wanting to say ..." John's voice had that slow thoughtfulness he'd had when he had informed Radek that he knew of the
pregnancy, so long ago now.

"Yes? I fear this now, as I have no advice to give in return – you already have Rodney."

"Yes, well that's actually some of what I wanted to talk about, in a very roundabout and actually totally unrelated way."

"Do not be confusing the pregnant man, Colonel."

"Are you and Elizabeth involved?"

"I do not wish to complicate Dr. Weir's life any more than it already is by her being in charge of Atlantis."

"Which I'm assuming is 'sneaky Czech scientist' for 'No.'"

"If you insist, Colonel," Radek replied with a serenity he didn't feel. Why had John chosen this line of questioning? Radek knew his feelings for Elizabeth had been growing the past few months. In light of his pregnancy and the problems it represented for him, he hadn't wanted to involve Elizabeth. Her life already had enough pitfalls without worrying about a pregnant boyfriend carrying another man's child. In his most private thoughts, he entertained the idea of approaching her when his daughter had grown a little and wouldn't be so dependent upon him.

"Sometimes, Radek, people want someone else to take care of, someone to take care of them. I'm not necessarily saying that you need taking care of and she doesn't, but you both kind of do in different ways. She's very alone, right now, and I think she could use some company. Something a little bit more than a friend for coffee in the morning. She wouldn't say anything, to anyone, but I don't think she'd say no if a certain someone offered to help her be not so lonely."

They had almost landed when Radek spoke at last. "I will think about it, Colonel. Thank you for the advice."

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Chapter Summary

Some Ancient medical equipment plays havoc with an Atlantis scientist. Begins and becomes AU sometime between Runner and Duet. McKay/Sheppard minor relationship. MPREG!

Chapter 6/8

"This is stupid, I am walking house, why am I going on a date now?" Radek demanded of John, who had stopped by to see how the Czech was doing, between his new quarters and his date tonight.

"Because you asked Elizabeth if she'd like to have dinner with you on the East Pier tonight and she said yes. I heard she even borrowed a dress for the occasion."

"Oh," Radek unleashed a string of Czech at that, and once again tugged the shirt free of his waistband, not liking the look of it tucked in. He didn't like the hanging out look, either. He'd switched between the two so often the shirt was now wrinkled. "No! I will cancel, this was a stupid idea."

"Oh, no you don't!" John snatched the man's radio out of reach. "You need this as much as Elizabeth does, Radek." John moved over to Radek's closet, now big enough for all his clothes. "This shirt, leave it tucked out..." He tossed the shirt to Radek, who continued to mutter in Czech as he pulled the garment on, the blue Athosian cloth bringing out his eyes to a startling blue.

"Speaking as someone with a thing for geeks, let me just say – wow." John's grin relaxed Radek as he turned, trying to see himself in the mirror from all angles. The slacks Elizabeth had given him, along with the shirt, his for once combed-and-staying-that-way-dammit hair and fresh shave did make for a decent looking fellow, he thought. Except for the watermelon hiding under his clothes.
Finally, he carefully gathered up the flowers he'd picked on the mainland earlier that day and checked his watch. He swore in Czech then ushered John out of his rooms. "I'm going to be late. Thank you Colonel, wish me luck."

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*I am very happy for you, Doctor Weir," Teyla stood beside the woman, helping lace up the Athosian dress she was wearing for the date. Elizabeth had approached her asking if the Athosian women had any dresses to spare, and she'd been happy when Weir had told her why.*

"Thank you, Teyla. I have to admit, I'm pretty happy for me, too. I have no idea where this is going, but, Radek is a good man, and I like him. Thank you very much for the loan of the dress. I didn't have time to order something from Earth, and I didn't have any 'date' clothes with me."

"Doctor Zelenka is a good man, and he is very fond of you, Doctor Weir, we can all see it. And you are just as fond of him." She finished lacing up the dress and stepped back to let Elizabeth see it.

It suited the woman, the green and brown tones of the dress enhancing her eyes and hair. It was just dark enough that she didn't look washed out, and not so dark as to make her fair skin seem stark white. The gold and reddish highlights and stitching only emphasized Elizabeth's complexion and hair, making her look and feel a little more exotic. Elizabeth rather liked the effect, and she hoped Radek would as well. Teyla gave her a friendly hug before leaving, not wanting her presence to make Radek nervous when he arrived to fetch his date. Elizabeth's throat was bare above dress' neckline. The necklace she'd worn every day since arriving had been a gift from Simon, and she was ready at last to put him behind her.

Dr. Weir had been quite surprised when the slightly nervous Czech had come to her quarters a week ago, asking quietly if she would like to join him for dinner on the East Pier. She'd accepted, hiding her surprise, but not her pleasure. Radek was one of the few people on Atlantis whom she felt she could trust not to use any sort of relationship as leverage. It was one of the reasons, she realized later, that she had allowed herself to start falling for the Czech.

The door chimed, startling Elizabeth out of her thoughts. She gave herself one final glance before letting the door open. The look on Radek's face said the dress had been the right choice and Elizabeth realized she hadn't felt this eager for a meal out since Simon. It surprised and pleased her that thinking of her ex-lover didn't pain her as it once had.

"Beautiful flowers, for a beautiful woman," he said, blue eyes twinkling as he handed her the flowers. "Tonight, we speak in English." He cherished their Czech conversations, but in an odd way, he liked the intimate nature of them. This date, for all they were trying to keep it quiet, was somewhat of a public affair. Elizabeth was 'governor of the colony' after all, and Radek was the only pregnant man in the city, so they would be noticed, and by now everyone knew about the date anyway, making it rather high-profile.

"Thank you so much, Radek." Elizabeth smiled as she put the flowers in a vase. Then she took his arm as they walked through the halls. At the pier, Radek led her to a table he'd had set apart from the others; it was already set with a cream colored tablecloth and a single white candle in a simple silver candleholder. He'd traded in a few favors and had arranged for wait service for them. He'd also arranged for a bottle of real Earth wine, traded for a day off for one of the scientists. It was a pink champagne and Radek had checked with Beckett and they agreed on two glasses for the evening,
since Radek was otherwise being good about what he ate and drank. This was a rather special occasion.

After holding Elizabeth's chair for her, Radek settled into his own, his maternity lab chair having been moved out here so he could be comfortable.

They talked quietly, revisiting a few old conversations, talking a little bit about Earth. Elizabeth coaxed him into talking about some modifications he was working on for the jumpers. Aside from the leader in her wanting to know everything that was going on in 'her' city, Elizabeth had long ago learned she liked when Radek 'talked shop.' He didn't condescend when she asked for clarification, and the way he talked about Atlantis, she could almost hear the music he'd compared the city to.

Their conversation was interrupted only by their meal, during which they still talked but at a slower pace, exchanging smiles and the occasional touch. After dinner itself, they sat at their table talking and sipping wine. Their hands met on the table, fingers playing very gently over each others, caressing, light touches.

"Would you like to go for a walk, Elizabeth?" Radek said finally, finishing his glass of wine. The alcohol was having its gentle effect. He'd been good and kept to two glasses, but he felt warm through and through. He suspected Elizabeth's warm smile, light touch and soft green eyes had something to do with it.

"I'd love to." She smiled and they stood, Radek again offering his arm. She had enjoyed the dinner immensely though she knew they were being closely, if affectionately, watched.

Radek's body was slowed by the pregnancy, making for a leisurely stroll. He stopped once, taking Elizabeth's hand and pressing her palm to his stomach, letting her feel the movement there. She gasped softly at the sensation, smiling into Radek's eyes, loving the intimacy of the moment. "What does it feel like?" She asked, keeping her hand on him, his own hand covering hers, long after the movement had subsided.

"Life. Magic, which I never believed in before I felt this. It is ... It woke me, the first time it happened. I admit, I called Dr. Beckett, worried something was going wrong. I knew the baby would move at some point, but I was not ready for it." He chuckled shyly, then laced his fingers with Elizabeth's as they continued walking.

"Oops." She chuckled, curling her fingers around Radek's, loving the feel of her hand in his.

"It was somewhat embarrassing, Dr. Beckett was very tired, but he had insisted I call him personally if anything happened. When he explained the movement was only the child, it was a relief to say the least. He said she was very healthy, and that Marina was lucky to have such a concerned father." He sounded a little doubtful but his smile was a winning one.

"Well, she *is* very lucky," Elizabeth said as they continued walking. "I know for a fact her father is a very kind and good man."

"You would say this about Rodney?" Radek's eyes danced as Elizabeth laughed. "Thank you. I can say Marina's father is very lucky tonight, spending time with a beautiful woman who makes him smile even when she is not there."

"You're getting poetic again, Radek."
"Perhaps Marina will be a poet, not a scientist. I hope only for her to be happy."

"If that's what you wish for her, Radek, that alone will make it easier for her to be so."

They had reached a gentle set of steps that looked out over the Lantean ocean and Elizabeth suggested they sit, realizing with an internal blush she had hopes of getting closer to Radek. Nothing indiscreet of course, but an arm around shoulders was far from indiscreet. She could also tell the walk was beginning to pain him and didn't want to embarrass him by bringing attention to it.

For Radek, the hardest part had been getting over his nerves. To stop thinking about why he shouldn't date Elizabeth and simply ask her out. Now that they were well into the date, Radek found it easy to behave as he had wanted to for so long. Once they were seated, his arm wrapped around her lightly, easing her closer as they gazed at the stars. He normally wasn't very demonstrative in public but for tonight he would gladly make the exception – first dates were special.

"It's almost familiar now, isn't it?" Elizabeth asked after several quiet moments, enjoying Radek's arm around her shoulders, leaning closer to him.

"Yes. My eye no longer looks for shapes it won't find." Radek once again took Elizabeth's hand, strong fingers pressing her palm against his stomach, letting her feel the intimate movement of life within him. In the early months, many had touched his stomach, for luck they said, but the novelty of it had worn off long ago. Aside from Carson, and Radek himself, Elizabeth was the only one to feel the life moving inside him.

"Why Marina?" Elizabeth finally asked, her hand drifting lightly over Radek's stomach of its own accord. He didn't seem to mind at all.

"Two reasons. My grandmother was Marina, and my sister named her daughter Chesna after our other grandmother. Also, Marina means 'from the sea' which I think is appropriate for Atlantis, city which vanished under the ocean, and rose up again when we arrived. It's a fated name, I think, and a good one. Middle name McKay for Rodney, since she's a girl. Rodney is not a good name for a girl, even a middle name." Zelenka was not going to deny – or now allow Rodney to deny – his inadvertent part in Marina's conception. Not that he'd been trying – Zelenka was surprised by how much Rodney seemed to be anticipating the birth of his daughter.

"Marina McKay Zelenka? That's lovely." Elizabeth shifted and leaned down a little, planting the lightest of kisses on Radek's round stomach. "Hello, little one."

Radek was so touched by the gesture that when Elizabeth lifted her head, he slid a light hand to the back of her neck and leaned forward to kiss her, lips touching now as fingers had on the table, lightly, slow, gentle caresses as much of air as substance.

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"I told you it was a good idea," Rodney sniffed, glancing over his laptop screen at Sheppard.

"You're right, Rodney. Dinner party to *not* fix up Radek and Elizabeth was a fantastic idea. Too bad they beat you to the punch." John didn't look up from his book, but Rodney could still see his smirk.
"Well they might not have if someone hadn't given Radek a little pep talk."

"I'm sure I have no idea what you're talking about, Rodney."

"Oh, don't play coy, Colonel, you don't have the eyes for it. You told Radek to go after her, when you took him over to the mainland that day."

"I was returning a favor. Though sometimes I ask myself if 'favor' is the right word. Curse might be a little more accurate."

"Oh, fuck off," Rodney waved a hand dismissively.

"Finish that report and we'll look into it."

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Radek sat slowly, lying back in the bed with a heavy sigh. He felt a pang of mingled guilt and love as he watched Elizabeth. She was bustling around his rooms, cheerfully setting up the nursery. A month ago, he would have been up helping her but when he tried right now, his back protested. At just over seven months pregnant, Radek began to understand why women frequently added a few months to their 'months along.' He felt more like he was twenty months pregnant.

Rodney had kept to his word, and thrown Radek a rather impressive baby shower. The first mid-way "Radek shower" had been a quiet, intimate affair compared to the baby shower. The North Pier was the only place big enough to accommodate everyone, including a good many people from the mainland. There had been a handful of Daedalus runs to prepare and make sure everything was there. Everyone had made sure that all the essentials were taken care of – diapers, formula, clothing. And that there were plenty of extras – three strollers, several high-chairs, toys of all sizes. By Radek's estimate, they could afford to lose contact with Earth for two years before Marina ran out of diapers, formula and toys to break.

Radek had admittedly spent most of the time trying not to weep too much at all the warmth he felt from everyone. It seemed everyone brought over a plate of food for him to nibble so Radek hadn't felt guilty at being waited on, since he hadn't moved once he settled into his chair. At the end of the party, Rodney had shooed him and Elizabeth off, assuring them that most of the presents would be packed away for when they were needed.

The rest were sent home with them and Radek watched Elizabeth with loving eyes as she set up the nursery. He occasionally made suggestions, but contented himself with watching, trusting her to make a good nursery for the child he hoped she would help to raise. "[Thank you for that. Join me?]" he asked, holding an arm out when she finished hanging a mobile over the hand-carved crib.

Radek sighed softly as Elizabeth settled beside him, her head on his shoulder, her hand resting on his stomach, rubbing in gentle, lazy circles. His back was beginning to relax a little and Elizabeth's nearness helped him further. "[I should not have waited so long to ask you to dinner.]" He gave her a gentle squeeze.

"[I'm glad you asked, even if it took a little while.]"

Marina shifted inside Radek and they both quieted for a moment, lost in the shared feeling of
movement and love.

"[I didn't want to give you anything more to worry about. At the same time, I could see you were lonely. It was Colonel Sheppard who advised me to act.]

"[I was lonely. My talks with you were the highlights of my day most of the time.]

"[And mine, even now.]" Radek covered Elizabeth's hand with his, liking the feel of her warm, slender fingers under his own and against his stomach. "[I love being able to just hold you, now. To touch you if I like. I don't have to look away if I think I'm going to give myself away by staring too long.]

"[And I get to be twice as glad when Rodney's off planet, and I get to hear you talk shop instead of him. I like us together, whatever we're doing.]" She smiled and sat up, kissing him softly.

"[Speaking of, I hate to mention it but I have some reports to review for tomorrow.]

"[I was going to mention the same thing, I have some, too. I'll get them.]" They had taken to bringing work 'home' when they could, usually to Radek's new quarters, which were the larger of the two and closest to a transport.

They were settled again twenty minutes later, Radek's laptop propped on a bedside stand designed and built by a pair of engineers for him. Elizabeth sat at his desk, the two sharing smiles any time they looked up and met each other's eyes.

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This story archived at http://www.wraithbait.com/viewstory.php?sid=8497
Chapter Summary

Some Ancient medical equipment plays havoc with an Atlantis scientist. Begins and becomes AU sometime between Runner and Duet. McKay/Sheppard minor relationship. MPREG!

"Radek, you don't have to do this," Elizabeth sighed, hands on her hips as she watched the Czech moving around his lab. He was moving as quickly as he could, which at eight months pregnant, wasn't very quick at all.

"Yes. I do. Rodney is not here, won't be back for two days. Miko is sick, Kelso is sick, everyone sick, but me!" A nasty bug had gotten through both Beckett's screening and the Atlantis lockdown protocols, probably because it wasn't at all deadly, just an unpleasant bug to have. The closest equivalent was adult chicken pox, with the added bonus of extreme nausea. Half the city was down with it, and half of those who weren't were already off world and couldn't be recalled in time. How Radek had managed to escape the infection, he didn't know, but he was very glad of it. If ever the Wraith wanted to attack, this would have been a very good time.

"So this can wait, Radek, please!" Elizabeth was pleading with him both as a lover and as a boss. Radek was hampered enough by the child now to be a liability off world.

"No, Elizabeth, it cannot," he snapped, then closed his eyes, forcing himself to relax. Elizabeth could see his stomach jump, and couldn't help the thought that Marina was telling her bearer off for being stubborn – Rodney's half was showing through. One of Radek's hands was working at his back, the pain there never quite going away these last few weeks.

Radek opened his eyes, looking much calmer and walking to Elizabeth, taking her hands. "It is
simple mission. The storms on this planet make it difficult to visit. If someone does not go now to check the power source they found, we may not be able to for months, or years. No one else can do this." he moved his hands to her face and leaned in to kiss her gently. "I will be careful, I promise." He kissed her again, quickly, keenly aware they were in the very public lab, though it was empty save for them. As soon as the others heard Elizabeth was coming to talk to Radek about the mission, they had cleared out, not wanting to get in the way of anything.

Elizabeth curled her hands around Radek's, holding them tightly. This was Dr. Zelenka – the man who had planned the cold and ruthless obliteration of Atlantis and her database. The man who had once told Elizabeth without fear or sentiment that in a war there were casualties. He was right and she hated it. They had found signs of a very, very powerful energy source, the kind that could only come from a ZPM or something just as good. As leader of the expedition, she was torn about sending Radek. He was unfortunately correct, he was the only qualified, even remotely capable person who could do this right now, and they did have a severe time limit. Ten hours was the outside estimate before the planet's atmosphere rendered the jumpers useless. It would take that long to get Rodney back if they recalled him this minute. On the other hand, Radek's pregnancy and difficulty moving made him a liability in case anything did go wrong.

As his lover, Elizabeth had the easier decision – she didn't want him going, period. But she knew he was right. Another ZPM meant real time contact with Earth, better defenses for the city, and too many other things to pass up the chance.

Seeing Elizabeth's silent resignation, Radek took her hands in his and lay them on his stomach, letting her feel Marina. "[I'll be back for our breakfast, Elizabeth,]" he said softly. "[I love you.]

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"Unscheduled off world activation! Lt. Cadman's ICD. She says they have a medical emergency; they need a full team in the bay. Dr. Zelenka's been severely injured."

Being held captive by Kolya. Having a dozen Wraith ships bearing down on Atlantis. The idea that she might never see Earth again after she stepped through the circle of blue and white and into another galaxy. None of these had scared Elizabeth as much as those words did. She found herself running up the stairs to the jumper bay, struggling against a pair of marines who were keeping her away from Radek and out of the doctors' way.

"Clear!" The electronic thump of the paddles echoed even in the small space. "Clear!" Beckett said again when no pulse came. A monitor beeped. "We have a pulse." They concentrated then on getting Radek onto a gurney and wheeling him up to the infirmary.

Elizabeth followed quickly, knowing the marines were behind her and she forced herself to stop at the infirmary door, watching them transfer Radek's still unmoving body onto one of the beds and begin to hook him up to a dozen machines.

"Elizabeth?" Beckett stood beside the woman, taking her elbow gently.

"What happened?" Elizabeth couldn't tear her eyes from Radek's body, laid out on the white sheet, his stomach terrifyingly still.

"As far as we can tell, there was an explosion. Whatever the power source was, they didn't get to it
in time, the place was booby-trapped. Radek disarmed several of them, but he couldn't get out of the way in time when a secondary trap blew nearby. He banged his head right good and he's got a few burns – they're being treated now. The head is the worst of it, and I'll be honest, it's worrying."

"Marina?" Elizabeth heard herself ask, her voice hollow.

"The lass is fine where she is. Radek's body is alive and well but for the burns, but he's not waking up any time soon."

Elizabeth felt her knees go out from under her and Carson caught her, setting her in a nearby chair. "I shouldn't have let him go. Not even a ZPM is worth this," she whispered, letting her mask of leadership slip, revealing to Carson the pain of a woman in fear of losing her lover.

"You did right, Elizabeth. He was dead set on going, and it was a huge chance, if it was a ZPM." He brushed her hair back from her face, doing his best to comfort his friend. "There was no way we could have known this would happen. You can't blame yourself, Elizabeth."

"Watch me," she challenged. She did blame herself, and would continue doing so until Radek awoke, probably longer.

"When John gets back, I'll have him knock some sense into ye, lass. Or better – Ronon."

Elizabeth said nothing, only standing and taking a few steps closer to Radek. They soon finished bandaging his burns and she was allowed by his side. Sitting, she took his hand in two of hers, leaning down to brush a kiss against his forehead. "[I'm here, love,]" she murmured, eyes fixed on his still face. She saw his glasses on the far table, one lens cracked, the other missing entirely. One hand drifted to his stomach and she felt the familiar movement. "Hello there, little one." She caressed the bulging bit of skin, as if trying to soothe Marina as much as herself and Radek.

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"She hasn't moved since she sat down, Colonel. She blames herself for what happened. She's not eaten since yesterday and I'm a little worried. Elizabeth didn't want him to go on this mission, not as far along as he is. On that level I agreed with her, but there was a very good chance there was a ZPM on that planet, and only a very narrow window of time to investigate. Radek was set on going; they had it out in the lab I hear."

John listened to Beckett's rundown of what had happened, watching Rodney out of the corner of his eye. The scientist was quietly approaching Elizabeth, and he could see her look up when Rodney touched her shoulder.

Rodney said nothing, only laying one hand on Elizabeth's shoulder. Part of Rodney wanted to rail against her, or against Radek for letting this happen, but he knew he would have done exactly what Radek had and probably wound up just as damaged because of it. Elizabeth reached up and took his hand, both of them watching Radek, sharing an odd companionship.

Rodney might not be acting the proud father, but it was known to his friends he was looking forward to the birth. And for all his berating of the Czech, he liked and respected the only other man he would trust the caretaking of Atlantis to. Something about the prospect of an actual child had tempered McKay in ways no one could put a finger on. He yelled as often as usual, but it was a
different tone. Maybe they were all just getting more used to it, but everything felt different now. Marina changed everyone around her, it seemed.

When Rodney and John separately and together failed to get Elizabeth to leave to eat, they settled on bringing her some food, though she wouldn't leave Radek's bedside just yet.

Another day passed, and there was still no change in Radek's condition. His heart beat steadily, his lungs drew in air and his brain showed activity, but he simply wouldn't wake up. Beckett said this was expected, he might be out for a while. They already had him on IV fluids so he would be nourished.

On the forth day, they talked Elizabeth into leaving long enough for a shower, real food in the mess hall and a nap. They got the first two, but she would only sleep once she was back in the chair at Radek's bedside.

A week after the accident, Elizabeth began to get a hold of herself a little better. She spent only what time she had to in her office, usually at night when it was quiet in the city. The rest of the time she spent working at Radek's bedside. Rodney frequently joined her, sitting on Radek’s other side.

Eventually she began sleeping in her own bed again. She kept up a vigil over his unmoving body. The part of her that had to make the hard decisions was resigning herself to the fact that Radek may never wake up. Her emotional energy shifted to Marina, who Carson assured her was still developing inside Radek's body. Sometimes she'd lay her head on Radek's stomach and she could almost hear the tiny heartbeat, her eyes following the line on the monitor showing the tiny, steady beat that was not his own coming from inside Radek's body.

At night, before bed, she'd read to him, or speak to him in English and in Czech. On the table at his bedside she arranged a few of the little knick knack's she'd given him. Sometimes, she would lay her head gently on his stomach, feeling the baby move, humming softly to her, as she had done with a very awake Radek on the morning of his accident.

Everyone walked carefully around her, except Ronon, who had by default become the one sent in to get her if she spent too much time with Radek and needed to eat or sleep.

After two weeks, with no change, Carson took Rodney and John into his office and locked the door.

"I'd like Elizabeth to be here but I dinnae think she needs to hear this, not yet. There's no simple way to put this, but Marina's killing Radek. The pregnancy is taking whatever resources his body has to keep the child healthy, at the expense of Radek's own recovery. He should have woken up a week and a half ago. Now, the child's old enough, I can do a caesarian and hysterectomy and she's more than capable of surviving, at the expense of Radek. But with Radek in the state he's in, that feels an awful lot like butchery, and it's a call I'd rather not make on my own. You two are his closest friends, apart from Elizabeth. I'll be consulting her as well, but I'd like you pair there, already knowing what I'll have to say. I won't do this unless we all agree. I've spoken to the other doctors, and this is the only thing we can think of to change his condition. Otherwise, he'll go on like this. We can take Marina now, and hope he wakes up. Or we wait another two weeks when he hits the nine month mark. I'll *have* to take her then. There's a slim chance he'll wake between now and then but I'd rather not take that chance. His body needs time to heal. Marina can survive outside of him at this point, eight and a half months is plenty of development."

The two men across from Carson were thoughtful, mulling over what he'd said. It wasn't a question of what, really, but when. Whether Radek awoke or not, Marina would have to be delivered via
surgery anyway. If they took her out now, there was a better chance he'd awake sooner.

"We'll talk to Elizabeth," Rodney said, surprising both other men, who nodded.

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It was late, and the gate room was pretty much empty but for the few unlucky techs who drew the night shift on this rotation, monitoring gate and city activity and overall city operations just in case. They pretended not to notice the walls of Elizabeth's office going from frosted to clear and back at random.

John took point, tapping the currently clear door. Through the glass he could see Elizabeth's pale skin and tear-reddened eyes. He entered first, with Rodney and Carson behind. Carson and Rodney sat, with John standing behind them like a dark sentry. Elizabeth moved her hand over the desk, fingers brushing the modification Radek had made and the walls shifted to a frosted white.

"We need to talk to you about Radek, Elizabeth," Carson began. He explained what he'd already outlined to John and Rodney. "The real question is do we take Marina now, or two weeks from now. My recommendation is now, but I won't do it without the consent of both you and Rodney. I know there's nothing official with you and Radek, but I know how close you are to him."

Elizabeth nodded, and the three men across from her recognized she was thinking, and hard. John had last seen this particular look when his team was visiting Hoff.

If they took Marina now, it felt almost like admitting Radek wouldn't awake in time to 'be there' for the birth, that he wouldn't awake at all. However, if they let her grow to term, another two weeks, it made it seem like Radek was an incubator, nothing more. "Carson ... you're certain there's no other way to wake him?"

"Aye. If it weren't for the bairn, there's a few things I'd try, but hearty as she is, a baby is a very delicate thing, and I don't know as much about the connection between her and Radek as I'd like, not by a long shot. I'm worried if I do something to revive him, it'll harm the little one, and-

"Radek would rather she be safe than him," Elizabeth said softly, sighing and sitting back. "Do it. Whenever you're ready, Carson." She was silent for another moment, then shifted her gaze to Rodney, asking his permission. "I'd like to be there, to hold her, if that's alright."

Rodney nodded quickly. "I was hoping you would be. As far as I'm concerned, you're as much a parent to her by now." He gave her a small smile.

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After her birth, Rodney held Marina for all of three minutes before gladly passing her over to Elizabeth. Not that he wanted nothing to do with her, but for all his finesse at working with Ancient and Earth machinery and delicate circuitry, he was terrified of dropping, breaking, or otherwise harming his daughter.

Elizabeth cradled the child to her, cooing softly. Rodney hovered and she didn't mind at all, glad of
the attention being paid to his child.

"She's got Rodney's nose," John commented, glancing over Rodney's shoulder. The three were alone in the makeshift nursery in the infirmary, and Elizabeth noticed John's hand resting lightly on Rodney's hip as he leaned.

"As long as she has my brains," Rodney replied but there was a softness in his voice and his gaze that had only been heard in relation to Marina.

"The only thing for sure is that she'll be loved," Elizabeth smiled. "Not many children are born with four devoted parents."

John beamed at that, it was the first time he'd been included in Marina's parentage. He knew Rodney planned to mostly stay out of her actual rearing, content to play the doting uncle. John was happy with second doting uncle, but he realized at Elizabeth's words that he really was technically a stepfather. "May I?" John asked both and Elizabeth handed her over with a smile.

Demonstrating far more comfort than his lover, John held Marina carefully tucked into one arm, his other caressing her cheek. For all his nervousness, John knew Rodney had been practicing for helping with Marina and both men were past masters at the arts of feeding, burping, changing, and washing babies.

Elizabeth decided to give the pair a moment with Marina alone and slipped out, also wanting to check on Radek.

"Love you," John murmured, leaning in towards Rodney for a gentle kiss.

"Love you too. Jesus ... I'm a dad," Rodney looked like he still didn't quite believe it.

"And you thought you'd have to forgo reproducing," John chuckled, remembering hearing about that long ago conversation.

"Unless you've got some equipment that's gone unnoticed, she's it," Rodney gestured a Marina, then drew a callused finger down her impossibly soft cheek.

"You love her, though." It wasn't a question and Rodney nodded, looking a little besotted as Marina yawned.

"I'm going to be the best uncle any kid ever had," Rodney said with a stubborn tilt of his chin. A chin shared by his daughter.

"You're also her dad, Rodney. You can't ignore that."

"I don't plan to. I'll be her dad, but so will Radek, and I know Elizabeth's looking forward to playing mom. It'll be less confusing if there's just the two parents and a pair of devoted uncles."

"So no father by proxy through you, hmm?" John chuckled, nuzzling Rodney. A moment later, John made it clear he was handing Marina off and Rodney sat, cradling her in his arms. John made up for it by settling behind Rodney on the low, wide couch and drawing his lover against his chest, arms wrapping around Rodney, paralleling Rodney's arms and holding Marina as well.

"Keras' kids aren't enough?" Rodney shook his head. Over the last year or so John had spent a lot of
time on that world, fulfilling an unspoken promise to Keras to make life after twenty four something to look forward to. As a result he'd become quite familiar with the Elder's three children.

"Nah. I've always wanted kids, you know that."

Rodney nodded, still feeling incredibly warmed at the idea that John had basically given up any chance he had of having children of his own in favor of having Rodney. Marina was as close as he'd come now. He glanced back at the colonel and sighed. "I'm not letting you anywhere near that thing, Colonel." John had already teasingly asked about using the fertility machine again.

"I didn't say anything." John was all innocence and wide eyes.

Rodney just humphed, and noticed Marina was asleep. John stood and carefully deposited her in the tiny crib, calling the nurse in to watch her as they joined Elizabeth at Radek's bedside.

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Chapter Summary

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Traps. They'd found out about the first one by accident. A marine tripped one, and had managed to dodge the electrical bolt in time. Radek dimly remembered figuring them out. He reverse engineered the detonated one, and used that as a model for diffusing the others. It was slow work, and he suspected when they began that they wouldn't get to the source in time. But it was a necessary risk. A ZPM was worth it. They had one, but the attack had depleted it considerably. The traps only strengthened Radek's resolve to get to the center of the complex where the energy readings came from. Why trap the place unless there was something of value, and since the traps were intact, the place hadn't been gutted by anyone else yet.

He could feel Marina squirming inside him, as if she didn't want to be on this planet any more than he did. The second trap done. The third, the fourth, the fifth, all taken with no problems. They took time but once he solved the first one they weren't really that difficult, just complex and tricky. They had two hours left before they needed to be on the jumper back home, and by Radek's calculations, there were three more traps, and that left them about ten minutes to look at the energy source. Ten minutes was enough time to see if it was a ZPM.

Was it that she kicked just then? Was Radek's concern for the child moving in his belly making him lose concentration? Did a passing thought of Elizabeth ruin his focus? Was it the rain that was pouring down intermittently and chilling his fingers? Was it fate punishing him for persisting in something unnatural? Radek didn't know just what it was that went wrong. He was moving a tiny
sliver of metal just so to make the contact just there, and disable the trap. The primary trap was
disabled, and that tripped the secondary one. The ten seconds between realization and explosion
were just enough time for Radek to alert the rest, and Cadman to reach to grab him, trying to pull his
slow moving body away from the detonation.

He was floating. It felt like it had a week ago, when he'd taken Elizabeth up in a jumper. He could feel Marina, that bundle of life that was so precious to him now.

He was cold, trapped, voiceless, helpless.

Pain filled his body.

A shock, blue light-fire running through his veins, like what had killed him. He could hear sounds around him, made some of them out to be voices. He could still feel Marina, quiet, soft, soothing to Radek's aching soul. She seemed to glow. At least it felt to him like she did. A soft green glow, like Elizabeth's eyes in the dark.

He found himself wishing Marina would have Elizabeth's eyes. But she would have blue eyes, he and Rodney both did. He felt Elizabeth close by, but he couldn't reach her. He couldn't talk, couldn't touch, almost couldn't feel at all. Marina knew she was there too, and the not-quite-child was happy. Marina was safe, and happy, and warm, and that was enough for Radek. He let himself sleep, content that Marina was alright.

Radek slept, and slept, waking only to assure himself that Marina was still safe and happy and warm, then he drifted again, secure in that knowledge. Around him, he could hear the shadows of voices, but the words didn't penetrate, only the whispers of sounds, and it wasn't enough to rouse him, not with Marina safe.

He didn't know how long he slept, on and off, but eventually he woke and Marina wasn't there. That presence where she'd been was gone, leaving him hollow and empty and cold.

"No!!" Radek's eyes flew open and he thrashed, arms reaching for his now empty stomach, sobbing at the thought that his child was gone.

"Dr. Beckett, he's awake!" There was a small stampede to Zelenka's bed as they worked to calm him, not wanting to sedate him after he'd finally woken up.

"Radek, Radek, calm down, lad, it's alright, you're alright."

"No!" He shook his head, panicked, his two week old beard and normally flyaway hair making him look wild. "Marina!" he cried, then unleashed a stream of anguished Czech.

"She's right here, Radek." Beckett tried to soothe him. "Marina's right here." Blue eyes shifted from wild with grief to disbelieving, then they moved, looking over Beckett's shoulder.

Elizabeth approached, holding an impossibly tiny baby in her arms, Rodney just behind her. "Here's your daddy, little one," she cooed and the others moved out of her way. Her eyes glowed with love for Marina and Radek as she handed the tiny bundle into his trembling arms.

"[I thought I'd lost you, my little love,]" he murmured, remembering that cold emptiness that had awakened him. "[When?]" he asked Elizabeth, shifting Marina to one arm, wrapping the other around her tightly, not caring the audience they had right now. He smiled when Elizabeth leaned
closer. His arms were weak from disuse and he knew he couldn't hold his daughter for long but he could hold her for a few moments now.

"[Marina was born two days ago. Your accident was over two weeks ago, love. Dr. Beckett worried that carrying Marina was keeping your body from properly healing. We agreed to operate; she was old enough to survive.] Oh god, Radek I'm so glad you're back!" Elizabeth slipped back into her own language for the last, her emotion overcoming her for a moment, holding him tight.

"Let's give them some family time, come on, everybody out. Even you, you don't scare me, laddie," Carson shooed Ronon out as well, who was looking very protective of the three of them.

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"[It was good that Dr. Beckett took her. As long as I could feel she was safe, I ... slept, it's not the right word, but with Marina safe, I could stay where I was. When I could no longer feel her, I woke.]" Radek explained. Marina was tucked into one arm, his other hand holding the bottle of formula. He was getting good at the practicality of this, sitting up in his bed. His midsection still ached, and the burns were bothersome but otherwise he was very much alive and well and quite happy about it.

"[I was so afraid I'd lost you. I ... when you didn't wake up, I began to tell myself you never would, so I could keep doing my job. But I didn't give up, not really, I just ... I couldn't let go of everyone else, and-]" She was stopped by the gentle brush of lips against hers and she sighed quietly, returning the light kiss for a long, lingering moment.

"[I'm back, and you are still here, and Marina is here and well, and I still love you, and you love me. I only wish I had listened to you. I lost two weeks of time with you, and we don't have a ZPM.]"

The regret that tinged his eyes poked at Elizabeth's heart. "[You had no choice but to go, love. I didn't want you to go, but you needed to. Because you're my Radek, and you're Atlantis' Dr. Zelenka, and both men will do what's needed. I was angry at you at first, but I got over it because I knew you were right. And you're back now. I might not let you go off world ever again, though.]" She smiled and they gazed at each other until Marina began to fuss. Radek watched with loving eyes as Elizabeth scooped the newborn up, draping her against her shoulder, gently patting her back. Elizabeth was as tender with the child as Radek was, and already getting used to being co-parent, loving the job as much as she loved Radek.

"[She's getting quieter.]" Radek said later, after Elizabeth had put Marina into the tiny handmade cradle near his bed, then lay beside him.

Something in his voice told Elizabeth he didn't mean the baby. "[Atlantis?]" She rested her head against his shoulder when he took her into his arms. It had taken her only a short time to get used to being able to get her arm fully around Radek's middle, now that Marina wasn't filling it.

Radek nodded, his fingers drifting idly through her hair. "[She'll never fall silent, she never really was, but it's getting harder to feel her.]" He'd known he would eventually lose touch with the city, but he'd held out a very tiny hope of keeping some vestige of it, something more than memory.

Elizabeth said nothing; there was nothing to say. She had envied Radek that contact, brief as it had been, but she ached for him now that he was losing it. Her only response was to move a little closer,
as if offering her own presence in replacement of the city he was slowly losing. Radek accepted, tightening his arm, savoring her embrace.

"[I wish Marina had your eyes,]" Radek said much later.

Elizabeth held that thought for a long time, a warmth spreading in her.

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You've found the place to walk the path you've chosen  
You'll never miss the world you've left behind  
When life gives life, it's happiness unbroken  
– Air Supply, "Eyes of a Child"

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