By Your Pupils You'll Be Taught

by amaradangeli

Summary

He thought she probably had better things to do than brown-nose somebody her brain made her far superior to.

Notes

This story was betaed by AutoCrit (which means me and a computer, so you know, it is what it is). But I think it worked out okay.

She brought him a cup of coffee as he sat vigil by Kawalsky's bed. Unsure of what to think of her, he wondered if she was some kind of brown-noser... he thought she probably had better things to do than brown-nose somebody her brain made her far superior to. The coffee was just coffee. As it had been a bad damn day - he took it.

The whole thing could not have been a picnic for her — being knocked out in the elevator by a
"How're you holding up?"

"Me? I'm fine, sir."

"Headache?"

She hemmed like she didn't want to say but she opted for, "A little."

He looked at her. What about her didn't want to admit to something as benign as a headache? What would cause her to feel like she needed to hold pain close to her chest?

Under his scrutiny she tightened like a bow string, pulled herself up to her full height, and pushed her shoulders back until she stood at attention right there next to a hospital bed, with a cup of coffee in her hand. He could tell the entire affectation subconscious, a thing she did without thought, without bother.

She embodied such subordinate officer perfections. What would it be like to get her out on the town, with a few beers in her, dressed in civvies... Would she still be the perfect subordinate or did Captain Samantha Carter have it in her to get a little wild? She was, after all, the kind of woman who went through the stargate, who challenged her brand-new CO to arm wrestle. She could be made of moxie under her staid, uptight exterior.

"You gonna sit?"

She looked a little surprised by the sort-of invitation, but she pulled a chair over from the other side of the room until it sat a slightly-more-than-respectable distance from his own and sat.

He checked a smile. She would be interesting, he could feel it. He wondered what made her tick, how she ended up this by-the-book pro, where this program — where he — might lead her. She seemed so multi-faceted. Dimensional women, full of contradictions were always a draw for him. He disliked what you see is what you get. He liked a little more mystery in his life.

"How's he doing?"

"Sleeping, mostly. Can't say I blame him."

"Isn't he sedated, sir?" She smiled only slightly, but it came through in her tone.

Instead of answering her he said, "You should be getting some rest, too."

"I'm fine," she said immediately in a tone that suggested it untenable for him to think otherwise.

Considering how things were in the military, he figured he understood. He was looking forward to showing her his differences. That yes, he was a commander - and a damn good one - but he was different than the guys she reported to a half a dozen times over in her short but already illustrious military career. Jack knew he tended to care too much about the people under his command. It wouldn't change with this new assignment.

It started long before the loss of his son. Jack always cared too much - it was a trait he'd been able to hide from his superior officers for the better part of his career. The loss of Charlie made all the things inside him both more acute and duller. Like wrapping them in cotton, for protection.

Like his relationship with Skaara. The alien boy did not remind Jack of Charlie. He gave Jack the
impression, despite the bravado of youth, he needed to be protected. That brought out in Jack the guy who did that very thing.

Daniel brought it out in him too.

He could feel it happening with Sam.

Jack felt like everybody's father, big-brother... he glanced at her from the corner of his eye. He didn't want to be either of those things to her though he still wanted to shield and shelter her. He realized the pull of attraction deep inside of himself. He wasn't supposed to be attracted to her, he shouldn't be. But hormones were beyond control and she practically defined attractive.

Still, despite having been a man for more than forty years, he didn't make a woman uncomfortable on purpose, ever, and only a couple of times by mistake at least two decades before. He had to reign in the things his body told him he wanted. He had more than a passing acquaintance with appropriate. And he knew the regulations. The attraction to her wouldn't be a problem. He would make sure she never realized.

He knew himself better than to believe the feelings would pass as he got to know her more.

True she might turn out to be a person he didn't care for. But he didn't think the outcome probable. And being a man generally more turned on by what happened between a woman's ears than by the real estate between her chin and knees, well, he thought she was going to up the stakes more as time went on.

He took a sip of the coffee she brought him. Black, his preference, unsweetened, not. Was she the kind of woman who picked up on those minute details over time or if her brain was so in charge, if she found herself so far above regular daily occurrences, that such a thing would be lost on her.

He didn't care either way. She was interesting no matter which way things played out. Interesting for different reasons depending, sure, but interesting nonetheless.

"What are we going to do?"

"About what?"

She picked at the lip of her Styrofoam cup. "About the fact that apparently, we can be infected by these things easily, without our own knowledge, and without being detected for some amount of time."

"Now we know what to look for." It didn't sound like a terribly reassuring answer.

"Okay, so we know what to look for. But what about the... host?"

He shrugged one shoulder. "Maybe they can get the thing out of him."

"And if they can't?"

"I'd rather not think about him being a Goa'uld."

"Mmm." She nodded. She took a sip of her coffee. "It's not the unknown of other planets that frightens me. That part is exciting. I'm excited we're doing something even astronauts don't do."

The way she said astronauts told him what her dreams had been. Pre-stargate.

"But this," she jerked her chin towards Kawalsky, "terrifies me."
He thought she had guts to admit her fear to her brand-new CO. He decided she deserved his honesty. "Me too."

Her gaze landed on him heavily, like she didn't expect candor from him - perhaps because colonels were more often sharp than candid, but more likely because men had likely disappointed her. "So, what are we going to do?"

"I don't know." It hurt to say, as an answer man. And for her, the buck should all but stop with him.

She pursed her lips and nodded, took a sip of coffee and then relaxed back against the chair. "You think he's going to be okay?"

"Charlie's a tough guy."

"Yeah, but—"

"We have to believe he'll be okay."

"For Daniel's sake?"

Jack nodded. "Yep. His too." He wondered if his acceptance of responsibility showed on his face. Out of his depth with these aliens, he didn't understand near enough about the enemy and yet his job meant ordering people to actions that might end their lives. Or worse.

The job he understood. This wasn't his first command. But somehow, the devil he knew was less intimidating than the gods he didn't. The weapons might be the same, but the fight on other planets outstripped the fight on Earth. The stakes were undeniably higher. The risks more pointed. And a damn sight slimier.

She needed reassurance, but Jack wasn't the guy to give reassurance to her, not in a long speech, rarely with words. She'd come to understand that. In the meantime, he would find something to say to tell her she had company in her fears, but his job was capped off by making sure things turned out okay — and he'd do that despite his crisis of confidence.

"We're going to have to believe we're bullet proof."

"Isn't that kind of dangerous, sir?"

"Maybe," he said with a shrug. "But we're not going to be able to go out there and do what needs doing if we're afraid of everything we encounter."

"A little fear is healthy," she countered.

"A little," he conceded.

She accepted that, and it made him glad. He wasn't sure what else to say on the subject and those few words were as close to a pep talk as he was currently — ever — capable of.

"You should get some rest."

"I'm not allowed to sleep. Concussion."

"Ah. Right."

"So, maybe I'll sit here with you guys for a while?"
He liked that she wanted to. He liked that he didn't intimidate her away. He was glad their first exchange in the briefing room - so long ago now - didn't chase her away from him. Because yes, he objected to scientists, but he didn't object to her. Not after the hours they spent out there together.

She was young and green, but she was also good. And what she lacked in experience she more than made up for in brain power. He had in her more asset than liability.

He took another pull of the bitter coffee. "Sure, Captain."

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!