Beneath the Rule of Men
by sixbeforelunch

Summary

Why Daniel Jackson makes the worst hostage ever.

Notes

So I wrote this back in 2009, the wonderful randomfreshink beta read it, and then I totally dropped the ball on the final updates until I rediscovered it on my hard drive the other day. So, four years later, here is it.

"Five krintas of gold," Landry said.

Teris sat forward in his chair. "Five? I asked only two."

Landry smiled. "You misunderstand. I'm not offering you five krintas of gold, I'm naming my price."

Teris leapt to his feet, the heavy wooden throne rocked, but didn't fall."Your price!"

"You have Doctor Jackson. If you want us to take him off your hands, you pay us five krintas of gold. Otherwise, he stays with you."

"Five krintas," the other man, Mitchell, said. "It's a good price. You should take the deal."

Teris took his battle ax off of the wall and swung it at Landry's neck. The holographic projection of the foreign general shuddered and righted itself. He spat. "You dare to make a geck of me? My price is now twenty krintas of gold, or I send you his head and nothing more. You have until tomorrow."
Landry looked at someone, someone Teris couldn't see, and nodded. "Fine. Keep him. But five krintas to take him back is a bargain. Next time we call, the price will be ten."

The projection winked out and the stargate closed. Teris paced in a circle. His face was hot with rage and he swung the ax, close enough to the guards to make them flinch. He snarled. These outworlders dared to mock him?

He threw his ax to the ground and stalked out of the throne room.

Who was this Daniel Jackson that they thought they could play such games? Did they really value his life so little? Yaik had assured him that Daniel Jackson was of great value to the Tau'ri. That they would pay dearly to get him back. If Yaik had lied, had traded this Daniel Jackson in exchange for his own skin, knowing he was worthless, then Yaik would die, wishing he had accepted the hangman's noose and been done with it.

Teris stalked across the courtyard, slaves and military men alike cowering in his wake. He shook his head, too angry even to get enjoyment from the pathetic display of servility.

He burst into the jail, wooden door crashing against the wall. Daniel Jackson sat in his cell, on the wooden plank of a bench. He looked up in surprise when Teris walked in.

Udan, the moron child, stood at attention as Teris stalked past. Teris ignored him.

"You. Daniel Jackson. What is it you do for the Tau'ri?"

Daniel Jackson's eyebrows rose and fell. "Well, this and that, really. What's the job description of a member of SG1?" He paused for a beat, not long enough to allow for an actual reply, but long enough to suggest the idea of one. "It's the last digit of pi." He smiled, rather awkwardly, Teris thought. "It's a joke. There is no last digit of pi. There is no official job description..." Shrugging, he trailed off.

Teris stalked past the cell, pacing. "Yaik claimed you were valuable. You are a great warrior? You fight with skill and cunning?"

"I fight with...some skill."

"You have bested men with only your bare hands?"

"A few. Mostly...no. Not so much. Teal'c is really better at the whole besting men thing. And Cameron too. And Sam. And Vala. I never really got he hang of hand-to-hand. Jack tried. He did try. But then Cassie flipped me on the mat that time and he mostly gave up."

Teris snorted. "This Cassie, he is not a warrior of skill?"

"Cassie is--was, at the time, a teenage girl."

"A girl! You were bested by a girl!"

"Well, to be fair, Janet had her taking self-defense classes when she was ten and--well, yes. Yes, I suppose I was."

Teris started pacing again. Had Yaik lied to save his skin? Was this Daniel Jackson worth nothing? Perhaps. But Yaik had bet his life on this man and Yaik was a coward. There must be something...

"You are a great swordsman? A master forger of weapons?"
"Forger, no. And I've never been one for swords. I do okay with a P90."

"This is a powerful weapon?"

"Oh yes."

"And you are an expert in its use?"

"Technically, based on my last marksmanship ratings, no. Almost, but not quite expert."

Teris ran his fingers through his hair. "Are you a healer? A sorcerer? You have powers?"

"Not...at the moment."

Teris slammed his fists into the bars of the cell. "What is it you do for your people?"

"I, uh, I talk a lot?"

Teris slammed his hands into the wall. "Your people demanded five krintas of gold to take you back. I thought they were simply trying to play me for a fool, but perhaps you really are worth less than nothing."

Daniel Jackson's eyebrows rose and fell again, but he stayed silent.

Teris pulled his knife from his belt. "In which case, I should kill you now and be done with it."

"Father!"

Teris spun, and snarled, "You dare address me as a father, whore-child!"

"No, sire, I forgot my place. But, sire, he may not be worth anything to the Tau'ri, but there are others who may be willing to pay for him. He is still Tau'ri. There are Goa'uld, perhaps, who would pay handsomely. Or the Lucian Alliance?"

Udan flinched as Teris raised his hand. Teris snorted. He did not even have to strike the whore-child to cause him to cower.

"I had thought of that," Teris said, slowly. "I do not need you to suggest such things to me."

"Of course not, sire, I was only--"

"I will send someone to make inquiry, to see if there are others who would be interested in him." He turned to Daniel Jackson, still seated."You had best hope there is someone else who wants you or I will feed you to my dogs."

Teris stalked back across the royal courtyard, to the banquet hall. A large meal, the company of a few women, and then he would feel fit to deal with Daniel Jackson.

Later, sated in every way, he began to think more clearly. He shouldn't have listened to Udan. Better to kill the man now, to have his fun and be done with it. More inquiries would only waste time, and Yaik had lied. Daniel Jackson was worth nothing to anyone. He talked. Worthless.

Teris raised himself up from the table. Yes. Yes, he would contact the Tau'ri again and demand a hundred krintas of gold. Then he would cut Daniel Jackson into little pieces and send them through the gate, one by one. Perhaps he was worthless to them, but at least they would have to clean up the mess.
He chuckled to himself as he entered the throne room.

"Contact the Tau'ri! I want to speak to Landry again."

He stopped and frowned. The throne room was empty, the guards not at their posts. He looked around in rage. They would die. They would all die, slowly, horribly.

"Father."

Teris spun and saw the whore-child, Udan, standing in front of him. He clenched his fists, ready to attack the bastard son, but he did not land even one blow. Fast, faster than Teris had ever seen him move, Udan struck. It was so quick, so sudden, that it took Teris a moment to register the attack, to feel the blade of the knife deep in his stomach, the pain spreading like fire through his belly.

He fell to his knees, to the ground, managed to turn himself over so that he could see his attacker, and there he lay, propped up by the stairs leading to the throne.

"Whore-child."

"No!" Udan shouted. "You do not call me that ever again! My mother was not a whore, she was your wife!"

Teris spat blood. "She spread her legs for every guard in the palace."

"No, you spread the legs of every handmaiden in your service! She took only one man into her bed. She gave you nothing but fidelity and service, and you repaid her with insults and blows and a parade of other women!" Udan shook his head, lowered his voice. "And you dare to judge her for taking comfort in the arms of Rashim?"

Udan knelt next to him and pulled the knife from his stomach. Teris groaned as the pain washed over him. Udan looked at the blade. "I should begin by cutting off pieces of you and making you watch as I feed them to the dogs. Isn't that what you did to Rashim while my mother screamed and begged for you to stop?"

"Udan."

Teris turned his head and saw him, Daniel Jackson, standing in the doorway. "You. You did this. How?" How? Was the man a in truth sorcerer? He had head tales of those who could weave spells with words, but he had never before put stock in them.

"Udan, do what you have to do, but don't do more than that. The last thing your people need is more of the same."

Udan closed his eyes and nodded, rising slowly to his feet. "Yes. Yes, you are right." He sighed and set the knife down on the throne, so close, but Teris couldn't find the strength to lift himself up and take it.

The stargate burst into life then, and the image of Landry and Mitchell appeared.

"Teris we've--" Landry stopped. How an image, a chimera, could see what was happening, Teris didn't know, but this Landry was clearly seeing everything. These Tau'ri, he had been warned away from them. Perhaps he should have listened.

"Bad time?" Landry asked.
"Eh, not great," Daniel Jackson said.

"You really should have taken our first offer," Mitchell said. "Five krintas of gold to take him off your hands. A bargain, really."

"Yeah, about that--" Daniel Jackson said.

Mitchell put his hands up in surrender. "Vala's idea. She swore we had to make Teris mad. Apparently, she's had dealings with him and you're better off if he's pissed."

"This Vala is correct. My father's more sadistic tendencies come out when he's in a good mood. He was utterly gleeful the day he killed my mother. And he would not have sent you back alive even if your people had paid the ransom."

Mitchell pointed at Udan. "See?" But Daniel Jackson just narrowed his eyes and hummed thoughtfully.

"We'll be through to pick you up in a few," Mitchell said.

"No. The, uh, transition to the reign of Udan should take place with as little outside interference as possible." He shared a look with Udan, who nodded. "I'll be home soon."

Landry appeared to consider. "Fine. But *Odyssey* isn't far out from you and I'm not going to call them back until you're standing in front of me."

"I appreciate that, sir," Daniel Jackson said.

The stargate snapped closed, leaving the room lit only by the candles on the walls.

Udan sighed again, a sound that became a low moan. Weak-willed child. Tragic that the great Teris had been felled by one so pathetic. But perhaps not so much pathetic after all. Udan hefted the battle ax from it's place on the wall.

"Udan," Daniel Jackson said. "He could still face justice. You could start your reign by upholding law."

Udan shook his head and Teris managed a laugh. As if he could be saved from the wound, brought back when his blood was spilling over the stairs and his very breath seemed to be fleeing from him. "No, Daniel. This--this is mercy. If I brought him before the people, they would demand that he be tied to the oxen and torn asunder. And no matter how much I wish it otherwise, he is still my father."

"How?" Teris asked, forcing the words past the pain and weakness. "What power did he give you?"

"Power?" Udan rose stood over Teris, looking down at him. "He gave me no power. He only asked me my name. I told him I was called Udan, and he asked me what it meant. I told him that once my name had been Gasha, 'leader'. But that was before you murdered my mother and stripped me of my rights as first born, demoting me to a guard in the place of the man you claimed was my father. Do you remember the day you changed my name, father? I do. I remember it almost as well as the day you gave Rin to that decrepit old man in exchange for a sick ox even though you knew how much I loved her. Or was it because of how much I loved her?"

"You could be Gasha again. I could make it happen." Teris closed his eyes. He hurt. He felt weak.

"No. I am Udan now. I am the rejected one. What has been done can't be undone." Udan hefted the ax, shifting his weight.
"Udan, is this mercy or vengence?" Daniel Jackson said. "A good king obeys the laws, but he also shapes the laws. Your father denied you your rights as the first born. You suffered more than anyone by his hand. Lead by example, don't be led by the will of the crowd."

Udan sighed. "I am sorry, Daniel. You are a wise man, but you do not know our ways. I will try to honor the things that you have told me, but this is how this must take place."

Daniel Jackson crossed his arms over his chest, flinching in anticipation, but refusing to look away.

"You see, father. Daniel gave me no powers, built me no weapons, bested no warriors. We simply talked."

The blade fell.

end

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