The Aschen Confederation

by AKarswyll

Summary

The year is 2010 and Earth has joined the Aschen Confederation. But not all realities chose to change their past. Some realities chose to change their future. Sam & Jack Multimedia Awards 2014 & 2015 nominee.

Notes

Title: The Aschen Confederation
Author: A. Karswyll
Summary: The year is 2010 and Earth has joined the Aschen Confederation. But not all realities chose to change their past. Some realities chose to change their future.
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Author's Note: If looking for other good ‘2010’ inspired fanfiction, the Standers trilogy by Offworlder (Standing, Still Standing, and Stepping Up) on Jackfic and Schism by A.j. on FanFictionNet or the SJD Archive are highly recommended.
Characters: Master Bra’tac, Marcus Brauchli, AF Maj Dr Samantha Carter PhD ret., Charlie/Pales, Alex Colson, NID Agt. Mark Devlin, NID Agt. Devon, Dominic, Amb.
Credits: Thank you to fems once again for a fantastic beta job and for pushing me to the end. Also thank you for the assistance with Janet’s medical theories and jargon, for Kinsey’s speech, and ensuring the rest of the gang got their thoughts aired. Another very big thank you for sharing the fact that you accidentally turned on Adobe Acrobat Professional’s Read Out Loud function and informed me about it so I knew that Acrobat could do it, as it has become invaluable for checking grammar for this and other stories. Invaluable and highly amusing at times listening to the mechanical masculine voice say things like “O’Neill’s” and “goa’uld’s” as “o-single-quote-neill-single-quote-s” and “goa-single-quote-uld-single-quote-s.”

Dedicated in thanks to Venom69, whose Change A Thing really got me thinking about what could have been.


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Feedback: I love hearing your thoughts, questions, and criticisms.

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Chapter 1

Fraiser Residence, Washington, DC
July 30, 2010

Pouring a dark stream of coffee into a waiting mug, Janet Fraiser picked up the newsheet e-reader with its seventeen-inch screen to read the morning's copy of The Washington Post newspaper. Immediately her brown eyes were drawn to the first page headline of the electronic newspaper: Aschen Anti-Ageing Vaccine Distributed Worldwide.

Janet sighed as she read the name of Earth's allied saviour. As always, thoughts of them brought mixed feelings forward: relief that the threat of the Goa'uld were eradicated; uselessness as Aschen advanced medicine made her profession redundant; and most personally, grief at the loss of a good friend who had disappeared months after Earth joined the Aschen Confederation.

Lost in memories and thought, Janet did not hear her adult daughter and son-in-law sombrely enter the kitchen.

"Mom." Cassandra Klerk formerly Fraiser spoke quietly, her muscularly slender, black haired, and brown eyed husband Dominic Klerk hovering behind.

The heartbreak in the young woman's voice caught Janet's attention immediately. She set the newsheet e-reader down beside the coffee mug and turned her full attention to her daughter. "Cassie? Sweetheart, what is it?"

"I'm—I'm not—" Cassie's voice broke, unable to say the news.

"Oh honey," Janet said sorrowfully as she rose from her seat at the kitchen table. Crossing the distance between them, she enveloped her daughter into her arms. "It will be okay, it'll be okay." She murmured soothingly, exchanging a compassionate look with Dominic as she rubbed soothing circles upon Cassie's back.

"I thought for sure this time…" Cassie sobbed brokenly into her mother's shoulder.

"They said it isn't either one of us." Dominic quietly informed his mother-in-law, answering the unvoiced question she had on her face. "We just have to keep trying."

"They're sure the naquadah isn't doing anything?" Janet asked softly, having hypothesised that as a host could only carry a foetus to term if the symbiote was dormant then the presence of free-ranged naquadah in her daughter's blood would prevent conception unless preventative methods were taken to suppress the metal.

Cassie wordlessly shook her head.

"I thought we could get a second option," Dominic said softly as he came more into the kitchen, a large hand reaching out to stroke his wife's back.

"From who?" Janet enquired. "The Aschen are hundreds of years more advanced in medicine than we are and none of our former allies have much to do with us anymore." It was not just allies that did not have much to do with them, but formerly friendly planets that polity refused relations with Earth and by extension the planetary confederation it was now a part of.
"I was thinking about you Janet."

"Me?" Janet was surprised. "It's the Aschen that have given us the anti-ageing vaccine and the anti-cancer vaccine... and they have medical machines that can reverse tissue damage and mend broken bones... I mean, what can I do? It all makes the medicine I practiced seem like it belongs in the Dark Ages!"

"But you were Cassie's doctor long before we knew the Aschen," Dominic reminded her gently.

Janet nodded slowly. Releasing Cassie from her arms, the young woman gathered herself while furiously wiping at the tears that were still leaking from her blue eyes.

"When would you like to do it?" Janet asked her daughter quietly.

"After the Alliance Anniversary," Cassie said softly as she stepped back more and intertwined her fingers with her husband's, visibly drawing support from him. "I... I need a few days before I can go through this again."

... 

Three days later in the crowd present in the J. R. Reed Space Terminal that now housed the stargate in the capitol Janet watched as the current president, who had just been elected to his second term in office, Robert Kinsey give his speech via teleconference for the Alliance's tenth anniversary ceremony.

"My fellow Americans," President Kinsey spoke from the massive screen hanging behind the stargate. "Ten years ago a team code-named SG-1, then working in secret, came upon an alien race: the Aschen. With that introduction, I was able to forge the greatest alliance this country—indeed, this world—has ever known on this day."

Janet politely joined the clapping crowd as she observed the SG-1 members standing to her right exchange looks.

It angered her slightly that Kinsey would not even take the time to be physically present at the ceremony honouring an alliance he had been instrumental in forming. However, the anger was tempered by thankfulness that he was not present, considering the history between him and those being awarded medals today. It was a blessing to be spared the antagonism of his presence.

"I read from Colonel Jack O'Neill's mission report of that first contact. 'These folks sound too good to be true. Willing to share their science and technology. Friendly, smarter than we are. One thing’s for sure: the Goa'uld are coming... The Aschen could save our asses.' Well, guess what, Jack? They did." Kinsey gave a sly and patronizing smile on screen.

Especially the antagonism and friction that burned hot between Kinsey and O'Neill that came through quite clearly with that quip directed to the absent former team leader.

"Jack O'Neill could not be here today, but those candid words hurriedly scratched down in a mission report ten years ago were prescient. Membership in the Aschen Confederation guarantees the security, the health, and the future of every human being on God's Earth."

As Kinsey concluded his speech, Janet watched the awardees mount the steps leading to the stargate and bow their heads forward to receive the anniversary medals that recognised their team's contribution to the alliance and the key role they had played in the Stargate program before it had become public.

The remaining SG-1 team members turned around and faced the crowd to stand proudly at
attention. As they did so, the soldiers in uniform lining the steps raised their arms to fire the salute. Janet grew misty eyed as she looked at the ceremonial robed individuals standing before the stargate. So incongruous exposed in the glass-domed structure that now housed the alien device.

Ten years since the Alliance and the end of the Goa'uld threat to the world. Ten years since Colonel O'Neill had spoken out against the Aschen and when receiving no support for his loudly voiced suspicions, had walked from their lives. But it was not the fact that the colonel did not stand as an awardee that had her eyes misting.

It was the fact that only two stood and were honoured on this day.

Ten years had passed since the disappearance of Samantha Carter. A disappearance that had rocked the world and led to a massive planetary search and then an intergalactic one. Every search had been futile and in the end as the years passed, Samantha Carter's disappearance had become an unsolved mystery.
Chapter 2

On board the O'Neill, Earth Orbit
August 1, 2010

Reading the data on the screens before him Jack O'Neill worked in companionable silence with Thor and the asgärd crew on board the cloaked flagship of the O'Neill-class warships as it orbited Earth.

One of the computer feeds was picking up different channels being broadcast from the planet below. While the signals were cluttered with a profusion of radio and television shows, most of those picked up transmissions focused on the day's tenth anniversary of the signing of the Aschen-Earth Alliance.

Most of that news was just background noise for Jack who felt no admiration for the Aschen and even less for the current presidential administration. But he was not on board in relation to the Aschen for the moment but assisting the Asgärd in policy—policy!

With the defeat of the System Lords, the political stability of the Milky Way Galaxy had been unbalanced with less-advanced planets and cultures bearing the brunt of piracy by pirates using more advanced technology. While the twenty-six planets of the former Asgärd-Goa'uld Protected Planets Treaty had quickly been guarded by the Asgärd after the conquest of the replicators, those protected planets did have treaties and alliances with other unprotected planets and wished for their guardians to extend the shield of protection.

The Asgärd, now that their resources were not tied up fighting an aggressive mechanical enemy, were not averse to assisting but felt protected planets should be as autonomous as possible. This was where Jack came in. He had years of experience exploring other planets and knew how they had been affected by contact. Coming from a primitive planet himself he also knew how they had been affected by sudden alien technological advancements. His perspective was invaluable for creating relevant policies and explaining those policies in words other humans and their governments would understand.

It had most certainly not been something Jack had expected to find himself doing upon his retirement from the military ten years ago.

A discreet chiming noise sounded from the watch around Jack's wrist, reminding him that it was noon and time to take a break from sitting at the computer for the past five hours. Flexing his wrists upon standing to relax them after the session of continuous typing, Jack made his way from the room to the mess—a room that for the Asgärd was now defunct but not for their guests.

Sitting on a table for him was a casserole dish with its meal of ham and scalloped potatoes freshly cooked and beamed aboard from his family's kitchen on Earth. As he seated himself, Jack heard the familiar stride of Thor enter the room and approach the table.

Jack looked up and greeted the Supreme Commander of the Asgärd Fleet as the alien took a seat across from him.

Thor returned the greeting pleasantly and waved at Jack to eat. "I just wish to inquire how your wife and children are doing as it has been some Earth months since I have seen them."
"Well, the wife's being a wife," Jack joked wryly, "and the boys are being boys. You should come for a visit. I know she'd like to talk with you and the boys love it when you do that, you know, spider thing." Jack held his hand palm up and wiggled his fingers alluding to what he was talking about.

Thor inclined his head in understanding. "I believe I shall O'Neill. Your sons remind me of Magni and Modi when they were young."

Thinking of the antics of Thor's two sons when he had been on Othala had one of Jack's eyebrows rising to his hairline. "When they were young? What about now?"

Thor permitted an expression of Asgard amusement to cross his features. "Now O'Neill, their actions are like yours."

Jack looked mildly affronted at the accusation of childish behaviour but did nothing to refute it. "Okay, I'll let them know you plan on a visit."

"Thank you O'Neill," Thor said graciously. "How are your plans proceeding?"

Jack nodded as he finished his meal. "Yeah, things on Chebel are falling into place nicely."

"That is pleasing to hear. And the other federated planets?"

"We're working on the last eleven of the thirty-three. Only have one of the allied planets though. Still have to work on the other eight."

"The Council will be surprised to learn that you now have one of the allies. There was expectation that recruitment to your cause would be difficult."

"Freedom is a very powerful lure," was the answer Jack gave.

Thor inclined his head, knowing fully the power of what Jack said and the great lengths people would go to achieve freedom. "I only hope O'Neill that you do not lose your home on Earth through this."

Jack shrugged as he rose to his feet. "It will hurt, but better things than people. Besides, there are many worlds that would offer us sanctuary."

Thor knew that was true and if O'Neill succeeded and his own world still turned from him, those worlds that he freed would only be too happy to offer him and his family a home. Even the worlds of the Asgard in the Ida Galaxy would offer him sanctuary. Othala in particular would be very happy to have the O'Neill family return after their seven-year absence.

Cassie sat in the visitor chair in front of her mother's desk six days after the Alliance's tenth anniversary. Her foot tapped an impatient rhythm on the floor as she waited for her mother to return with a verdict.

Janet bustled into the room, slim computer tablet in hand. "Hey. Sorry to keep you waiting sweetheart, but I was just double checking the results…"

"And I'm fine. Right?" Cassie said with a sour twist to her mouth, more than familiar with her Aschen doctor Emmil's verdict each time she went to him concerning her attempt to get pregnant.

"Cassie, I don't know how Emmil could have missed it, and frankly, I just don't think it's possible
he could have," Janet informed her daughter as she took a seat across from her.

"What?

"You can't have children," Janet stated as gently as possible.

"They said everything was normal," Cassie protested.

"In every other way, it is," Janet agreed.

"Then this is a mistake," stated Cassie insistently.

"Here, let me show you the scan," her mother slid the tablet across the table to her, "your schooling in pharmaceuticals should let you interpret the data yourself. See? There's no room for interpretation. Clearly your ovaries are damaged."

"Why?" Cassie asked, despair settling onto her features as she traced a line on the tablet's screen.

"I don't know. I don't know what may have caused it or when it may have happened, but obviously it was some time…"

"No. I want to know why Emmil looked me in the eye and told me that I was okay. Why did he lie to me?" Cassie gritted out, her earlier despair being consumed by a growing anger.

"I don't know sweetheart. But I'm willing to help you find out."

Cassie raised her eyes to her mother's and knew that she would do exactly what she had vowed.
Chapter 3

Internet Café, Washington, DC
August 6, 2010

Seated at a computer station in an internet café, Janet watched with some amazement as her daughter displayed definitely illegal computing skills as Cassie skilfully accessed the Aschen network core that now underlay all computer-networking systems. As she understood, only Aschen personal were able to access the Aschen core and yet Cassie had just breezed right in.

"The medical sub-core has its own code you're not going to be able to access," Janet cautioned.

Cassie snorted and typed in more lines of code. "Mom, the Aschen students suck at keeping their codes secret—I'm in, I'm in. Now what? It's calling for search parameters."

Janet could only suggest that she try medical records.

"I don't think I'm going to find anything specific to me in there," Cassie stated dryly, the search box cursor still flashing.

"So maybe this has happened to some other people." Janet reasoned. "Do a general search. Human reproductive statistics."

Taking the suggestion Cassie entered the search parameters and waited for the computer to compile its results. Minutes later she exclaimed, "That's it."

Janet looked at the Aschen text displayed on screen and inquired, "You can read this?"

Cassie shrugged, "It's sort of a requirement nowadays for the really advanced stuff at university." As she read the data more thoroughly a frown began to crease her brow. "Oh, that can't be right. If I'm reading this properly, the worldwide birth rate has dropped ninety-one percent in the last two years."

"What?" Janet barely managed to keep herself from shouting the word.

"That's what it says right here," Cassie tapped the computer screen.

"Yeah, but we would know," Janet insisted.

"Oh God." Frantically Cassie hit keys on the keyboard, exiting from the Aschen core network and logging off their internet session.

"Cassie, what's wrong?"

"Not here Mom," Cassie answered rising from her seat. Making her way to the counter she paid for their time, making sure to use cash. As the two women departed the café Cassie linked her arm through her mother's as they began walking down the sidewalk.

"What happened? Did you get caught?"

Cassie shook her head. "No. I learned that it's happened everywhere the anti-ageing vaccine has gone."
"But that means…" Janet began her voice horrified.

"They're doing it systematically," Cassie grimly concluded.

... 

After contacting Daniel and Teal'c, who was still present at Daniel's request on Earth and in the city, the four met at an outside bistro. Cassie and her mom informed the two men about what they had discovered and the four held a grim conversation regarding the planetary infertility, media blackout, and realization about just how dependent Earth was upon the Aschen. Not only the dependency, but how isolated they were from all their former contacts and allies.

None of them knew where the survivors of the Tok'ra were. Earth also did not have the support of the Jaffa for with the end of the war with the Goa'uld in 2003, the Jaffa were a dying people from the loss of their symbiote source.

They did not even control the stargate anymore.

"Now I wish we could take it all back," Daniel said bitterly as he looked at the drink in his hands. "How could we have been so blind? I pride myself on my culture observation skills and yet I was so blind!"

"We cannot retract our choice. The past cannot be changed. Only the future," Teal'c stated.

"But with the Aschen controlling everything," Janet began as she randomly flipped through newspaper articles on her newssheet e-reader, "and our military and every other on Earth a fraction of what they use to be because of the end of the Goa'uld War…"

Cassie's thoughts turned to how the US had begun downsizing its military forces—with other nations following suit—after the war's end in 2003, starting with the discharge of those that were a part of StarGate Command. Shortly after the closing of SGC, her mom had started a civilian doctoral practice in the Springs but had moved to Washington when she had enrolled in medical school at Georgetown University. Daniel had become a professor at the University of Chicago and Teal'c had returned to the Jaffa full time.

"Do they?" Cassie pulled her mother's newssheet e-reader towards her, a curious note in her voice as an article caught her attention. "Do they really control everything?"

"Well yes, the media, transportation which includes the stargate, medicine, agriculture," Daniel began listing the areas where Ashen knowledge or technology had been implemented.

Cassie electronically highlighted a letter to the editor regarding the Throwbacks on her mother's e-reader. She tapped a nail against the term with a raised eyebrow as she showed the screen to the other three at the table. "They may control the technology and think they control the populace, but this proves otherwise."

She watched as Daniel's eyebrows rose upwards as well as he read the highlighted term.

"I am familiar with the social phenomena termed by sociologist to be Traditionalists, although they had acquired the degrading tag of Throwbacks in the media, for those that did not accept the Aschen and eschewed their medicine and technology. I confess I've only given them a cursory examination during their development—figuring they were no more serious than a resistance to a transformed Earth history and change in culture—but if it is more than just a delusional cult…" Daniel leaned forward and took the e-reader from her and gave it a thorough read through
"Remember, it's only the people that have taken the anti-ageing vaccine that are sterile," Cassie reminded them.

"And you believe these people would be fertile?" Teal'c inquired.

Cassie nodded. It was only nine percent of Earth's population but even that meant the planet's still viable breeding populace was double the current total population of the United States.

Moreover, that percentage was more than enough to continue propagation of Earth's people.

"I'll do some research into these Traditionalists," Daniel announced as he tagged and sent the highlighted letter to his email. "Once we know more about them, maybe we'll be able to think up something."

"Perhaps we should also speak with O'Neill." Teal'c finally voiced what had been lurking in the back of all their minds.

Cassie had thought about Jack upon learning about the Aschen’s deception, and her mom had said she had similar thoughts while they had waited for the two men. For Jack alone had cautioned and then futilely fought against the alliance. She remembered—even thought she'd been a typical sixteen-year-old more focused on her budding relationship with Dominic—the fighting and the vicious words that had been said the closer the treaty date had come until finally, on the date the alliance was signed, Jack just moved to Minnesota.

But what she and her mom had discovered meant that it had not been Jack that had turned his back, but that they had turned their back on him when he was trying to get them to see more than the Aschen showed them. Cassie saw on their faces that it was a bitter pill for them to swallow: that they had ignored his warnings and alienated him in their desperation to end the war with the Goa'uld.

"Yeah," Cassie said softly. "We can try and find him."

"Then I shall inquire at his cabin," Teal'c informed them as he alone knew of the location of Jack's retreat in Silver Creek, Minnesota.

Cassie wondered as she looked at her mom, Daniel, and Teal'c that even if they did manage to find Jack: would they even get help from him. For really what could they do against the government and the Aschen? What options were there so they could save Earth?

Well, all they could do was ask.
Janet passed out cups of coffee to Daniel and Cassie and ensured the fruit bowl was close to Teal'c, who was scheduled to return to Chulak on the coming weekend, as they sat around her kitchen table. A table that was crowded with newspaper and magazine printouts and papers and what looked like part of a thesis.

"So what I've discovered is that 'Traditionalists' is a broad term used to describe those that eschew the Aschen. In general the people that it labels are the more conservative religious organizations—Hutterites, Mennonite, Amish, among others—xenophobic cults, and people who for personal reason chose not to be vaccinated," Daniel reported.

"They always make it seem like a single organized group in the news," Cassie commented as she sat on the couch with a dozing Boomer at her feet.

"It isn't. It's more political factions of our society."

"That is unfortunate," Teal'c remarked.

Janet nodded her agreement. If it had been a cohesive organization then maybe they could have spoken to a member. But that did not mean they could not be mobilized… if they could talk to the right people and did not get killed because of what they knew.

"So, did you get a hold of Uncle Jack?" Cassie asked the Jaffa.

"I did not," Teal'c informed them regretfully.

"Did you at least leave him a message?" Daniel inquired as he thought Jack would at least be willing to talk with Teal'c.

"I did not," Teal'c said again. "There was no method of leaving a message as there was no one in residence."

"He wasn't at the cabin?" Cassie exclaimed in astonishment.

Janet knew her face reflected her daughter's surprise. She clearly remembered Jack stating at his retirement, which had occurred a few months after Disclosure that he had sold his Colorado Springs home and was moving permanently to Minnesota.

"So, where is he?" Janet furrowed her brow perplexedly.

"I know not," Teal'c answered gravely.

"Oh God, you don't think they did something do you?" Cassie looked horrified.

Janet admitted to herself that the thought sacred her too, she just hoped because of the publicity that had surrounded SGC personnel—did even now, but had been particularly intense then…

"No, I don't think so. If they'd felt it necessary, they would have done it in the beginning. Years
later, after he's been fully…” Daniel hesitated as he seemed to search for a word. "Discredited? No, that's not quite right either—dismissed maybe? Well, anyway, with them in control of the media and stargate, they'd have no worries about him trying to do anything I think."

Janet just hoped Daniel was right.

"Well, if he isn't at the cabin, I guess we'll have to look for him.” Daniel declared.

"How?” Janet asked.

"Newspapers, gossip magazines, and chat-threads,” Cassie offered. "He used to lead SG-1. O'Neill sightings are more infamous than Elvis."

"That's a good idea Cassie,” Janet acknowledged. "Do you remember reading about any sightings recently?"

Cassie shook her head. "No, I stopped keeping track after he left us. But, if we do a search of those things though, I'm pretty sure we’ll be able to find a sighting and search to see if Uncle Jack really was the one spotted in the area and if he's living there.”

"Okay,” Daniel nodded in her daughter's direction. "So you and Janet will search for news of sightings and I'll dig deeper into the Traditionalists. Teal'c, could you please try and see if there is anyone off-world, or anything, that might be able to help us when you leave this weekend?"

"I shall inquire DanielJackson,” Teal'c nodded regally.

"Good,” Daniel said with satisfaction and turned the conversation to telling them more about what he had researched on the Traditionalists and Aschen.

... In a fully fortified and shielded bunker three stories underground and meters from his home, Jack finished relating the most recent information to the Jaffa on the other end of the communication stone.

"Production of the drug has resumed?” Jack inquired.

The portly head bearing the black tattoo of Apophis nodded. "It was discovered that one of the ingredient crops had been contaminated by fertilizer used on a neighbouring crop."

"So not sabotage?”

Maz'rai shook his head. "The farmer who supplied the crop owned both fields and was very upset to learn that the defect in that drug batch resulted from airborne contamination. I believe his upset as his wife is Jaffa and one of his two children received some of the contaminated drug."

"The child is recovering?” Jack expressed his concern.

"All those that fell ill are recovering well,” Maz'rai reported.

"Good,” Jack gave a nod and Maz'rai continued speaking.

"Information about the airborne contamination has been distributed to the other farmers. The scientists have begun conducting tests upon ingredients to discover what other methods could possibly contaminate supplies."

Jack nodded again. Pleased that when the Jaffa on the drug had begun falling ill it had quickly
Jack nodded again. Pleased that when the Jaffa on the drug had begun falling ill it had quickly been recognized as being isolated to those that were taking the new batch and the source of the problem quickly identified. Quicker than anyone would have found the same on Earth he was sure, but then again when one's own life and people depended on a drug to keep living he supposed Earth's response would have been pretty quick too.

"Is there anything else to report on that front?" Jack asked.

"There is not O'Neill."

"Alright, so only thirty percent of your Jaffa are on the drug and most of the Jaffa that do have symbiotes, those symbiotes should begin maturing within the next year or so."

"Indeed. It would be most wise if we moved soon so that we did not have to continue concealing the existence of the drug."

"I know Maz'rai, but until we get at least one more allied planet on board I won't take the risk."

Maz'rai's face briefly showed his disappointment before looking resigned.

Jack could guess what the look had been about. He was not just balancing the needs of the Jaffa but all the worlds and people of those worlds against each other. Sometimes the needs of the many did outweigh the needs of the few even when those few were all Maz'rai, and many other Jaffa, were only really concerned about.

"But, if you feel the need to distribute more of the drug, keep it to the more isolated Jaffa planets. Ones that they don't have addresses to. I'll transmit the authorization to you and Hak'tyl and leave distribution up to your discretion." Suiting actions to words, Jack proceeded to enter and transmit the authorization codes through the stone. While all the manufacturing and rendering technology was Goa'uld, it had all been code locked so that the machines only produced a certain amount of the drugs, which helped regulate the tight control over distribution. It was the best Jack could offer and the only thing he would allow his Jaffa supporters to do for now.

"Thank you O'Neill," Maz'rai memorized the codes he received that would authorize him to increase the drugs production. "We shall speak again within a fortnight?"

"Yes," Jack agreed already looking away from the stone, as Maz'rai ended the transmission on his end, to the wall calendar on his left.

Scheduled check-ins were marked down, carefully coded by symbols or a word that would only make sense to a few in the know to identify the individual calling. His teleconference call with Maz'rai was the only one of the day—other reports had simply been messages transmitted via the subspace network and already dealt with—so Jack rose from his seat and made his way from the bunker into the evening air.
Chapter 5

Jackson's Penthouse, Chicago, IL
August 18, 2010

Back home in Chicago a few days later, Daniel web-conferenced with Janet, Cassie, and Dominic in Washington as they shared what they had discovered. Daniel had already spoken about, and sent them more Traditionalist and Aschen information compiled as a research project so that any electronic eavesdroppers would not be suspicious.

"Actually, the search into Uncle Jack sightings was pretty interesting," Cassie remarked on screen.

"How so?" Daniel asked.

"Well, there were of course a whole bunch of sightings and a lot of articles about Uncle Jack in the first few months following Disclosure, but I'm really not sure about the sightings." On screen Cassie exchanged looks with her husband. "About them being genuine I mean, the ones around the Springs after Disclosure and few reports in Northern Minnesota after his retirement I'm not really doubting, but Uncle Jack seems to have been sighted in more places than Elvis."

"So you got nothing?" Daniel asked with tired disappointment.

"Most of the reported sightings are bogus I'm sure, but I did find something that means that while I might not have found where he is living exactly, I may have found how to contact him." Cassie tapped on her keyboard and drew up a website to show Daniel via their desktop application-sharing program.

"The New York Ceramics Fair?" Daniel read the name of the site aloud.

"Yep, take a look at the first lecturer and list of exhibitioners."

Daniel clicked on the link for the lecture series and felt his eyes widen behind his glasses at the first lecturer listed.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 20th
12 Noon "The Constellation Collection":
Alien Ceramics by J. O'Neill

Surprised beyond belief by what Cassie was indicating—that J. O'Neill was Jack O'Neill—Daniel then navigated to the exhibitors list and found Jack's name listed simply as J. O'Neill, MT.

"Montana?" Daniel queried as he read the state abbreviation. "He's in Montana?"

"So it seems," Cassie replied. "The website his name links to is for the 'O'Neill Originals Gallery' and the civic address listed is Turner, Montana. The About page of the gallery's website confirms that Uncle Jack is the artist, but you should check out the Gallery page."

Daniel did as directed, selecting Jack's name on the exhibitor list. The link took him to a classy website that proclaimed in cursive script O'Neill Originals Gallery along the top as a slide show featuring some select ceramics played on screen. Visiting the Gallery page Daniel found the ceramics divided into different collections. Recognizing the Constellation Collection as being the feature of Jack's lecture, he selected the link.
Daniel nearly swallowed his tongue in shock as he looked at the items on the page. Not only were all the ceramics for sale over $435.00 a piece, but what the collection was, was the biggest shock. Faithfully recreated in shape and colour were various ceramics that the team had encountered off-world. The artful photographs portrayed the ceramic items from different angles and the last shot was always of the stargate address on the bottom of the item. The website explained the address was the planetary origins of the design and provided a link to the official declassified mission report available at government's online Stargate Program Archive that hosted all the program's documents.

Barely able to comprehend what his eyes were seeing Daniel proceeded to view all the images in the gallery. While a majority of the items were what people traditionally thought of for pottery—plates, bowls, pitchers, tea pots, cups, and other dishes—there was a Whimsy Collection that was primarily of very whimsical figurines portraying unique off-world creatures.

Heck, there was even a ridiculously cute and cartoonish goa'uld sculpture looking cross-eyed and sticking out its tongue.

"My God," Daniel was half-dazed.

On screen, Cassie grinned. "You look just like I did—and Mom—when saw the site and learned what Uncle Jack has been up to since Earth joined the Aschen Confederation. So, we know where he's mostly likely living now." Cassie remarked. "So, who's going to be the one to visit him?"

The question helped restore some clarity to Daniel's mind and he looked at the three in Washington through the screen. "I think it would be best if Janet and I went. I know you probably want to see him again Cassie, but this first visit isn't a social one so, it would be best if it was just Janet and I."

Reluctantly Cassie agreed that just the two of them would go. After that, Janet and Daniel did some discussing regarding travel plans before the two groups ended the teleconference.

In his Chicago penthouse, Daniel turned his attention back to the website still open on his browser, some of his earlier amazement returning as he looked through the gallery again. Then he opened a new browser window and did a search to see what else he could find out about the history of Jack's ceramic profession.

... 

Jack took advantage of the few quiet moments before having to wake his sons and snuggled more with his wife. This weekend his family had a full day ahead of them with chores that had to be done. It was harvest time for everyone in Montana and while they did not farm, they had a huge garden that they were still bringing in and the dogs, chickens, and goats that had to be tended daily.

Feeling and hearing the breathing of his wife change as she woke up he murmured quietly into her ear, "Good morning."

"Good morning," was her sleepy reply.

One of Jack's hands slid down to rub circles on her stomach as he rubbed his morning stubble against her head. "Not feeling sick this morning?"

She hummed pleasantly at the rubbing and enjoyed it for a bit before responding. "No, I really just think my stomach didn't like the shrimp platter we ordered at the restaurant last night."
Jack was pleased to hear that. Being sick was not one of the things his wife handled well. "Feel up for breakfast?"

"Oh yes," she said enthusiastically, the sleepy tone of her voice changing to wakefulness. Her tone definitely saying she was more than interested in food.

Jack chuckled as he unwrapped himself from around her back and departed the bed. "So do we want the usual weekend bacon and eggs or something extravagant like waffles?"

"Waffles," she declared decisively as she rolled from the bed herself and headed for the bathroom, her long braided hair swaying with movement, "with blueberries."

Still chuckling Jack got dressed and made his way from the master bedroom down the hall, forgoing his morning shave for the time being until they had eaten. He knocked on the doors of his sons' rooms and told them that it was time to get up and that mom wanted waffles for breakfast.

The word 'waffles' got their attention, as he knew it would, and soon there were sounds of movement in the boys' bedrooms as they stumbled out of bed and began getting ready for the day. Proceeding down the hall and staircase Jack made his way into the kitchen where he began getting the waffle iron ready and mixing the ingredients for breakfast.
Chapter 6

Main Street, Turner, Blaine County, MT
August 20, 2010

Parking the car outside the building with its old style frontier false front, Daniel checked the address against the Google map printout even though he recognized the façade of the building from the gallery's website. A sign with cursive script proudly proclaimed the building as O'Neill Originals Gallery & Studio with some ceramics artistically displayed in the large front window.

Daniel and Janet climbed from their rented vehicle and approached the gallery door. That morning they had taken a transport from Chicago and Washington respectively to Great Falls International Transport Terminal. After renting a car at the terminal, they had driven the three and half hours to the small farm town.

Allowing Janet to precede him into the gallery, Daniel found the interior well lit and rather modern in appearance with lightly creamed coloured pedestals and shelves artfully displaying various ceramics with no overcrowding of items.

A young looking woman whose nametag read Sally Kasdan smiled at them invitingly upon their entrance as she moved towards them from behind the counter. "Welcome to O'Neill Originals. Is there anything I can help you with today or have you just come to browse?"

"A little bit of both," Daniel admitted as Janet moved towards one of the artistically shaped shelves on the walls displaying figurines.

"Well, enjoy looking and feel free to ask me anything when you are ready," Sally said graciously before she moved back towards the counter area.

Hearing Janet chuckle as she examined one of the small sculptures, he moved up behind her and looked at the figurine as well.

A curiously cute dog-bird-like animal was holding a book in his mouth and looking sorrowfully up at an observer. The book had Daniel's Field Journal in small script on the cover. Seeing the creature and after a minute remembering the incident, a snort of laughter was invoked from him as well. "I can't believe Jack made that."

"When was that?" Janet inquired.

"It was with the Taychelas of P6X-456: the creature was what they used to herd their sheep-like animals. That particular one, not only did it take a particular liking for Jack, was one of the more persistent ones in stealing my journals—behind my back or right out of my hands—and then teasing me mercilessly when I tried to get them back." Daniel explained as he remembered also that whenever Jack had asked any of the animals to 'drop' a book they had done so instantly. He, however, had always been led on a merry chase throughout the ruins the team had been there investigating while the laughing natives watched.

"Ah yes, Sam did told me about that," Janet smiled at the memory, "though she laughed more than she told the story!"

Looking at the other figurines, Daniel chuckled or smiled fondly as various memories that were
invoked by seeing the creatures. Sharing the particularly amusing stories with Janet as they browsed.

After looking at the statuettes they moved onto examining the some of the more classic ceramics, as in dishes, and Daniel mentioned the planetary origins if he recognized it or the Earth cultural influence. In his research before coming here, he had learned that Jack—as J. O'Neill—was quite renowned for reproducing and restoring ceramics for archaeological and acquired collections. He himself in some of his lectures had unknowingly used, or referred to, some of Jack's reproductions as he had not associated the artist—because of how the name had been written—with his old friend.

When their browsing of the gallery collection done, Daniel had to pull Janet away from examining again a statuette that she swore was of Boomer, the dog Jack had given Cassie upon her adoption, to approach the exhibitioner Sally.

"Hello," Sally smiled charmingly. "See in anything in particular you liked?"

Janet nodded as her eyes strayed back to the dog figurine but Daniel smoothly got down to business.

"I noticed that door to the studio has a closed sign on it. Are tours usually given where O'Neill works?"

"The studio is one of Mr O'Neill's secondary studios and is primarily used for the pottery classes he instructs. No tours are given."

"He teaches?" Daniel asked, surprised yet wondering why he was surprised. Teaching was not very different from leading in a sense.

"Yes, most of Mr O'Neill's classes are for the school's art program but he does offer adult classes and other private instruction on occasions."

"When will those be offered?"

"It varies but I don't believe that there are any adult classes scheduled at this time."

"And the private ones?" Daniel asked.

"Those are by invitation by Mr O'Neill only," Sally explained even as she studied them. "I'm sorry if this is rude, but you are Dr Jackson and Dr Fraiser are you not?"

Daniel nodded, well accustomed to being recognized because of the media coverage during Disclosure and his continual presence being the forefront of alien archaeology. He saw that Janet was a little more surprised, as medical CMO even if it was of SGC; her face was not very well known.

"I'm surprised you know me," Janet admitted as she gave a self-conscious smile.

Sally just smiled brighter. "Well, anyone seeing Mr O'Neill's figure of you wouldn't have any doubt. I have also attended many of the instructional classes he offers and am quite familiar with certain stories that Mr O'Neill relates while teaching."

"He has a statue of me?" Janet was incredulous.

"Yes, if it helps to picture it, think of the doctor in Robert Munsch's Show and Tell if you're familiar with it," Sally said helpfully.
Janet's incredulousness turned into a laugh of understanding as she said wryly, "Let me guess, I'm that enormous 'Ah, JUST RIGHT' needle?"

Looking faintly embarrassed to confirm it, Sally nodded.

Daniel however was clueless. When he gave Janet a quizzical look, she squeezed his arm.

"I'll give you the book to read later—I think I still have Cassie's copy from when she was younger but basically the story is the adventure of a boy that brought his baby sister to show and tell at school and how his sister had cried so loudly and how they had tried to calm her, eventually calling in the doctor that pulled out bigger and bigger needles to use." Janet explained and then turned back to the exhibitioner. "I'd like to see the statue if possible?"

Sally visibly hesitated and then offered: "I could give you the directions to Mr O'Neill's farmhouse if you would like? I understand that's where that particular sculpture is kept when he doesn't bring it in for certain classes."

"Would you?" Janet said with real enthusiasm. "We'd really appreciate that."

Sally nodded and picking up a pen set it to paper and began drafting a rough map, making sure to include approximate distances along the roads. "Are you driving a hover or an electric?"

"Hover," Daniel said wondering why she had asked.

"Okay," Sally marked a thick line on the road about two kilometres from where she had marked Jack's farmhouse. "You'll have to walk from here as most of the O'Neill property is in a dead zone."

"A dead zone?" Janet asked curiously before Daniel could.

"Yeah, areas where Aschen technology doesn't work," the woman explained as she detached the map from the notepad.

Daniel and Janet exchanged startled and curious looks.

"Aschen tech doesn't work in certain areas?" Daniel questioned.

"Yeah, there are actually quite a few places throughout the area that Aschen stuff doesn't work. It's why people around here use electric," Sally explained as she handed the map over.

Accepting the map and expressing their thanks, the two made their way out of the gallery. Each thinking and wondering in particular about the nature of these reported dead zones. They had never heard of them before and if one of the zones was on Jack's property… coincidence or deliberate?
Chapter 7

Road to the O'Neill Farmhouse, Blaine County, MT
August 20, 2010

Daniel and Janet were watching the odometer in the car when at about the same distance that Sally had indicated on the map, the engine light for the hover car fluctuated wildly and the car shuddered to a dead stop.

"Well," Janet remarked with her hands braced on the dashboard, "she wasn't kidding about Aschen tech not working."

Daniel agreed as they climbed from the car, which was sitting on the gravel road. Pushing and prodding they managed to get the car back enough that the engine engaged again and now knowing where the dead zone started; Daniel parked the car on the side of the road out of the way of other traffic.

Locking the vehicle down, the two started the two-kilometre trek to their destination. Nearing the end of their walk both were more than ready to admit that they were badly out of shape. Daniel in particular who, as a member of SG-1, used to cover a lot more distance at a much faster pace and loaded with equipment. The road led them to a traditional looking farmyard with mowed lawn and sheltering trees encircling the area, with a farmhouse sporting a wraparound veranda and other buildings but no obvious farm machinery in view.

Approaching the farmhouse, they mounted the steps to the front porch and knocked on the door. After a moment with no response, they knocked again. When yet again there was no response the two exchanged looks.

"I guess he's not home," Janet said as they turned away from the door. She was not looking forward to the two-kilometre hike back in her heels.

Just as Daniel reached the bottom of the steps, a feminine voice called out.

"I'm out back! Come around!"

Looking at each other again, Daniel climbed back onto the porch and the two followed the wraparound veranda to the back of the house. Rounding the back of the house the two came to a dead stop at the sight of the woman sitting behind a table shelling peas. Older looking and carrying a bit more weight than they had last seen her, neither had expected to see the woman again.

The blonde woman sported an equally arrested expression as she recognized the visitors before it smoothed away and she returned to shucking peas from their pods. Recovering far quicker than Daniel and Janet who continued to stare in shock.

"My God," Janet whispered.

"Sam," Daniel's voice echoed the amazed tone of Janet's.


"You… you're..." Daniel stammered.
"You… you're…" Daniel stammered. "I'm what Daniel?" Sam arched a blonde eyebrow and discarded a pea shell. "You're here," Daniel finally said. Not fully able to articulate the situation considering that most of the world, themselves included, thought that Sam was one of thousands of missing persons around the world.

"Yes Daniel, I'm here," Sam's expression turning to annoyance and exasperation. "And so are you. So, what are you here for?"

"I don't understand," Janet took a step forward. "Sam, you—the world thinks you're missing!"

"No they don't."

"Yes, they do." Daniel insisted.

"No. They don't." Sam repeated. "If you don't believe me, just ask the current presidential administration. Or the IRS. They've known very well that I've lived here for the past couple of years."

"Then, then why didn't they tell us?" Janet asked faintly.

Sam lifted a shoulder in a shrug. "Ask them, not me."

An uncomfortable silence fell between the three. Daniel and Janet continuing to look at Sam incredulously as she continued calmly shelling peas into the big bowl on the table before her, discarding the pods into a five-gallon bucket beside her. Golden wedding band catching the afternoon sunlight as her fingers moved.

The tense silence was finally broken when the sound of barking dogs and a masculine voice came into their hearing range. Two mismatched dogs frisked about a man with an unshaven chin and worn, dirt marked clothes carrying two five-gallon pails were approaching the back of the house.

Daniel's posture stiffed even more at the measured cold look this older looking Jack gave the two visitors to the farm as he mounted the back steps and set the pails—loaded with more peas—next to Sam.

"Daniel. Janet." Jack stated frostily as he took up a defensive stance behind the table next to Sam. "What brings you to Montana?"

Daniel gave a merciless chuckle and knowing Jack, cut to the chase. "Funny you should ask that Jack. It turns out we made a mistake. A big one."

Jack snorted derisively. "Which one? We made a few."

"Our alliance with the Aschen," Janet stated softly meeting Sam's gaze steadily when the blonde-haired woman looked up from her work.

"Oh, that. Not working out, is it? Gosh, I wish I'd seen that coming. Oh, wait… I did see that coming," Jack sneered.

"It isn't what you thought," Daniel suppressed his frustration when Jack huffed a breath and made a point of rolling his brown eyes. "In the past two years, without our even knowing it, the Aschen have managed to sterilize over ninety percent of the world's population. The other ten percent are probably just a matter of time. We don't know how they've done it; or even how they've even managed to keep it a secret this long…"
Jack and Sam looked at each other, their faces blank. Then they looked back at Daniel and Janet.  

"Don't you understand?" Janet cried when they offered no response to his news. "Ninety percent of the world has been sterilized!"

Exchanging glances again, Jack said scornfully. "So what'd you want us to do about it?"

"Honestly Jack, we came to ask you. We didn't know that Sam was here." Daniel admitted.

"So," Jack repeated, "what'd you want me to do about it."

"Help us." Janet pleaded softly.

Jack sighed and scrubbed a hand though his hair and then scratched his nails through his stubble. "Why? I warned everybody, I threw up the red flag and everybody—including you two—shut me down."

"We're asking you to put that behind us," Daniel reasoned.

"Why should I? So you're not happy with the way things turned out… I'm sorry to hear that. Personally, I like things the way they are. No more saving the world, living a nice life here," Jack waved a hand to encompass Sam and the farm.

"Jack. We're talking about the future of the human race!" Daniel exclaimed in exasperation.

"So was I," retorted Jack as he started to turn his back towards them.

"Sam," Janet implored of her old friend. "Please, Cassie can't have any children because of the Aschen. And with the rest of the world…" Janet trailed off as she continued to look at the studiously blank look on Sam's face. "My God," she whispered in sudden revelation. "You know."

Daniel looked startled by the whispered accusation, but as he looked at Sam and Jack he knew what Janet had just stated was true. The two O'Neills did know. Nothing they had come all this way to tell was a surprise.
"You know," Daniel echoed Janet's accusation even as his anger grew. "You know and you've said—done—nothing?"

Jack arched a silvered eyebrow and looked at the archaeologist pointedly.

"How?" Janet asked her eyes still on Sam. "How—when did you know?"

Sam paused in shelling peas and leveled a look at them. "Tell me Janet, how can a race that is capable of staving off aging, curing cancer, and possesses machines that can reverse tissue damage and mend broken bones not be able to cure the infertility on the Confederation's federated planets?" Sam asked pointedly before brutally driving home what she had to say next. "And it is only on the federated planets where the populations are dying, and beginning to die on allied planets. The Aschen homeworld has absolutely no problems with infertility. How can that be if all Confederation worlds have access to the same level of technology and knowledge?"

It was obvious that the O'Neills were far more knowledgeable about the Aschen's sterilization. They had not even thought about the situation on other planets, being focused on what had been done to Earth.

"I can understand that you're angry at us—the world," Janet finally said. "But still Sam, we're talking about the entire world. Doesn't the fact that the world—you—can't have children mean you can put that anger aside and help?"

The two O'Neills exchanged looks again, Jack rolling his eyes again in exasperation, as Sam looked clearly amused.

"Jack, help me up will you?" Sam pushed the bowl of shelled peas to the centre of the table. Obligingly Jack held out his forearm to let her brace her weight even as his other hand went to her back. With her husband's help, Sam stood upright and stepped away from her chair. Clearly revealing what the table had kept from Janet and Daniel's sight.

A stomach swollen in the last term of pregnancy.

Daniel's jaw dropped as Janet's eyes grew impossibly round.

"You're pregnant!" Janet exclaimed, feeling redundant about saying the obvious even as she said.

Sam continued looking amused at their stupefied expressions as her hands smoothed over her stomach. When it became obvious that it was going to take more time for Daniel and Janet to recover from this revelation, Sam turned to her husband.

"Jack? I think it is past time for lunch. Do you think you could call the boys in?"

Jack gave a brief nod, stepped away from his wife, and descended the staircase. The dogs surrounded him again, as he made his way back in the direction he had come from earlier.

Rounding the table Sam strode leisurely with the distinctive gait of a pregnant woman to the back
door leading into the house. Opening the door, she looked over her shoulder at Daniel and Janet and invited them in. "It shouldn't take Jack long to round up them up. Why don't you guys join us for lunch and you two can meet the boys."

Still dazed by the revelation of Sam's pregnancy both Janet and Daniel wondered who the 'boys' were as they followed Sam into the cool interior of the farmhouse. They found out six minutes later when two boys about age eight and six with sun bleached brown hair and blue and brown eyes respectively burst into the kitchen followed by Jack.

Not even the presence of two strangers gave them pause as they scrambled into their chairs around the kitchen table and eagerly looked at their mother as she set plates of chicken salad sandwiches on the table.

"You washed your hands?" Sam inquired.

"Yep," the oldest boy chirped as both boys held out their hands. The hands of the youngest were still practically dripping water.

"Daddy used the hose," the six-year-old exclaimed clearly thrilled at the experience as they both reached for sandwiches.

Sam cast a look at Jack who just gave his wife a charming smile even as he began filling glasses with lemonade from the pitcher Sam had taken from the refrigerator.

"Before you two start eating, why don't you introduce yourself to our guests," Sam suggested to her two sons in a voice that all children recognised was actually an order.

Blue and brown eyes turned to look at the two visitors sitting in their parents' customary chairs at opposite ends of the kitchen table.

"Hello," the older blue-eyed boy greeted. "I'm Josh."

The younger boy with brown eyes gave them a grin that revealed his missing front tooth. "Hi! I'm Matt and I'm six!"

Janet and Daniel greeted the two boys and gave their own names, but evidently, as the O'Neill sons turned their attentions immediately back to the sandwiches, they were far less interesting than food.

Jack set the glasses of lemonade on the table and Josh and Matt making a point of finishing their mouthfuls before thanking their father. Clearly displaying their best table manners—even if they first washed that mouthful down with lemonade.

Murmuring their own thanks as they each accepted a piece of sandwich, Janet and Daniel hungrily tucked into the lunch meal themselves. They had worked up quite an appetite because of their unexpected walk. The two boys finished their lunch long before the adults and waited with barely concealed impatience for their visitors to finished eating themselves.

Once Daniel had finished eating what he'd put on his plate the two boys began peppering him with questions. Mostly about where he and Janet had come from and why they had come to their farm.

Neither of their parents made any move to interrupt, content to let their sons pose the questions and listen to the answers. Tag teaming, the boys were superb, as only children could be, at interrogating.
Listening Jack and Sam learned that it had been Cassie that had located Jack through his ceramics website—and as yes, they were 'the' Daniel and Dr Fraiser of their parents' stories—and had transported to Montana to visit the gallery in town and from Sally had found out where they lived. Daniel was the one that mentioned that they had had to walk part way to the farm, which had invoked laughter from the two boys who had chastised them about not knowing about dead zones and not owning an electric car.

Hearing that—which explained for Sam why she had not heard a car drive into the yard—Jack nodded that yes, he would drive them the two kilometres back to their car when either their unexpected guest decided to leave or they decided it was time for them to leave.

The questions about why they had visited led to them learning that Daniel and Janet had wanted to ask Jack for help, had had the boys innocently asking why they could not ask their mommy or daddy to help? That invoked chuckles from their parents at the flustered look on their guests' faces.

They would let the boys ask some more questions and then end their fun.
Chapter 9

O'Neill Farmhouse, Blaine County, MT
August 20, 2010

That evening after Josh and Matt had been sent to bed, tired out from the day in the sun and working the garden, Jack and Sam took a breather for themselves. They curled up together on the couch—Jack's hands rubbing circles on her pregnant belly—and discussed their unexpected visitors who were spending the night at the bed and breakfast in Turner.

To have Daniel and Janet turn up on their farm after roughly ten years of estrangement was quite unexpected. As equally unexpected had been the reason for their visit, to ask Jack for help with their discovery that the Aschen were sterilizing the population of Earth via the ant-aging vaccine.

"Really, what do they expect me to do?" Jack mustered curiously his chin resting on Sam's head.

"Well, you always led us to victory as a team," Sam reasoned.

"Not always. And it was your brains leading," Jack countered as his hands began to following the movement of the baby, "especially for situations like this."

"There never was a situation like this before," Sam retorted. Jack could not refute that even though his comment had been more about the scientific or technological solutions she had devised, both as second of SG-1 and for the Asgärd when they had been living on Othala.

"Speaking of this situation, how are the plans progressing?" Sam inquired. Her pregnancy had removed her from physical participation but that did not mean her brain was not still a vital contributor.

Jack reported that the situation was stable and that more evidence had been added to the Veritas file. The documentation in that file was more than enough to crucify the Aschen by all the allied and federated planets of the Confederation, but that crucifixion was not enough for them. Considering how the Aschen would handle revolts as demonstrated by what had happened on Volia and the fact that Earth no longer had its own significant military forces to come to its defence.

"Well, taking into account that the last of the ground zones were placed last week and Janet and Daniel came to tell us, maybe we should bring them in?" Sam inquired. "It seems as Earth could be the next allied planet taken."

"Possible," Jack admitted as his attention focused on the small foot that was suddenly thrust against a hand.

Craning her head around Sam looked up into Jack's face. "Come on, admit it. After five years, you're more than ready to put it in motion. Plus, just think of what Kinsey's reaction would be to the distribution of the Veritas file."

Jack smirked at the idea, basking for just a moment in what his mind picture before his thoughts, as always, turned to considering the reactions of the rest of the world. And in the end, it was really the people that mattered, not showing Kinsey up for the power hungry idiot he was.
"We'll see." Jack finally said. "About bringing them in, but in the meantime when they return for a visit tomorrow afternoon, we can see how much they know and how many are a part of their group. Plus, what ideas they'd come up with to stand against them. If they'd come with any ideas at all."

"Alright," Sam agreed. "Do you want to do it soon?"

"It can wait." Jack said before moving onto another topic. "Oh, remember that Thor plans on visiting this weekend."

"Yes I remember, and this time Jack, make sure Thor takes all of his toys with him?"

"Come on Sam, you know the boys love them," Jack cajoled.

"I know, but every time I see one of those spider ones scurrying through the hall I get the heebie-jeebies—considering what your reaction to them use to be, I'm surprised that you're so accepting of them."

"It's Thor," Jack said emphatically as if that was reason enough.

Sam merely gave an accepting sigh and settled back into cuddling with her husband and gradually the movements of their child settled. She did not really see the difference between Thor and what the toys used to be, but if her husband did, she would leave it be.

Daniel and Janet, feeling apprehensive considering their lukewarm response from the O'Neill adults yesterday, knocked on the door of the farmhouse. Unlike last time, the door was promptly opened and the smiling face of Matt greeted them.

"Hi! You're back!" the six-year-old welcomed enthusiastically. "Come on in, we're in the kitchen. Mom just took the bread from the oven."

Remembering years earlier Sam's claim that she could not cook, Daniel inquired with some interest, "Your mom cooks?"

"Nah," Matt shook his head as the two removed their shoes and placed them on the mat by the door. "Dad's the one that cooks. Mom's the one that bakes."

Both visitors found that distinction interesting as they moved through the farmhouse to the kitchen. Even before they reached the room, they heard another voice that indicated they were not the only visitors to the O'Neill's this day.

Entering the kitchen behind Matt, they found Sam was indeed removing loaves of bread from the oven, while Jack and Josh chatted enthusiastically with a largely muscular man with a bushy mane of brown hair. Matt scrambled into the chair beside the stranger once his guide duties were done.

"Daniel, Janet, this is Thor," Jack made the introductions casually as the two took seats at the table.

The two murmured polite greetings and the man returned the sentiments.

Daniel, searching for a conversation topic with this stranger, gestured to the prominently displayed Nordic amulet proudly worn around the man's neck. "I see you wear a mjolnir—Thor's hammer—are you interested in the Old Norse because of your name?"
Thor's brown eyes twinkled as his hand reached out to pound on Jack's back as the man suddenly suffered from a coughing fit.

"It could be interpreted that way," the man rumbled in a deep baritone.

Not understanding the mood that Daniel's question had invoked in the room, Daniel and Janet exchanged looks. Gradually Jack's coughing seemed to subside. Really only stopped, besides fits, when Sam shoved a loaf of warm bread at her husband and ordered him to start slicing.

"Well," Thor began as he pushed his chair away from the table and stood, "seeing as you have other visitors I shall return at another date to continue our conversation."

"Aww," the protest rose from the boys as they abandoned their bread and jam.

"Do you have to go?" Josh asked.

"Couldn't you stay a little longer?" Matt begged.

"Sorry children," Thor smiled affectionately at them. "But before I go," he made a fist with both his large hands and held them towards the boys, "I have items to bestow upon you."

The boys literally bounced in their seats at the announcement. Obviously, to Daniel and Janet, this man was a regular visitor and his gifts were regular occurrences.

"Can you deduce what they are?" Thor inquired.

The boys scrunched up their noses as they thought.

"Um… a butterfly!" Matt guessed. "One of those big blue Amazon ones!"

"A frog," Josh stated with conviction.

"Ah," Thor's brown eyes twinkled as he uncurled his fists, "you are both correct."

In the hand held out to Josh was a green tree frog with bright orange and white accents perched in Thor's palm. In the hand for Matt a butterfly slowly unfurled large blue wings as if it had just emerged from a cocoon.

"Wicked," Josh breathed.

Matt practically vibrated with excitement as he looked at his present.

"Are you prepared?" Thor inquired.

Two heads nodded vigorously, sending their hair flying in all directions.

"Now you must retrieve them!" Thor exclaimed as the frog and butterfly exploded into action. Two leaps and the frog had cleared the kitchen and headed into the hall while the butterfly had already cleared the doorway into the dining room.

Shrieking gleefully the two boys scrambled off their chairs and chased after their new presents.
Chapter 10

O'Neill Farmhouse, Blaine County, MT
August 21, 2010

Thor looked entirely too satisfied as the boys disappeared from the kitchen. Jack gave an apologetic look to his wife, considering that the night before she had asked that no more toys be given. Sam huffed an exasperated but accepting sigh that slowly turned into a fond smile.

Toys were toys and boys were boys as the saying went.

At least this time it had not been spiders. In fact, it looked like those toys were of neutronium nanos considering their far more natural shape than the kiron spiders had.

"Well, I shall be on my way then," Thor turned his attention back to his hosts. "It was informative to talk with you as always Samantha. I look forward to your visit and what ideas you will have for us."

"So do I Thor," Sam returned.

"Have a good afternoon O'Neill," Thor stated before addressing the other two guests. "Daniel Jackson, it was good to see you again and Dr Fraiser it was a pleasure to meet you in person."

Giving a smile at their puzzled expressions Thor departed.

Mystified by the man and the gifts that he had just given—Daniel swore that the man's hands had been empty when he had made those fists and held them out—Daniel turned a questioning look on the O'Neills.

"Jack, who was that?"

"Thor," Jack said again.

"What's his last name? When'd we—or I—meet him?" Daniel asked still not understanding.

Jack looked very amused as he answered. "He doesn't have one. And you met him years ago."

"When? Where?" Daniel asked. "I don't remember him from anywhere!"

Sam took pity on the confused archaeologist as she cast her husband a chastising look, knowing that he was having too much fun with teasing Daniel again.

"Daniel," Sam began gently, "that was Supreme Commander Thor. And eleven years ago you met him on board Bilskinir."

Janet was shocked as her mouth opened and closed with no words emerging. A glance at Daniel showed his eyes bulging comically behind his glasses at the news.

Taking some sympathy with their stunned expression Sam withdrew two beers from the fridge and after popping of the caps, set the bottles in front of Janet and Daniel. The two almost mechanically reached for the offered alcohol and each took a hearty swallow.
That human looking man had been Supreme Commander Thor of the Asgärd Fleet?

"Th-that man is human!" Daniel finally managed to stutter a response.

"Technically," Jack raised a finger into the air, "that was a human form replicator."

"A what!" Daniel's voice broke on the last word and he basically squeaked it.

"A human form replicator," Sam repeated. "An evolution in replicators that came from their assimilation of a human shaped AI unit found on a planet in the Nilor sector."

"I thought the Asgärd were fighting against the replicators," Janet said faintly. "When—how'd they become replicators?"

"They're not. Replicators." Jack stated.

Confusion was added to the expressions of Janet and Daniel.

"But," Janet protested, "you just said that the Thor we just saw is a human form replicator!"

"What Jack means is that the Asgärd are not replicators," Sam explained. "They just now inhabit forms made of kiron-based technology—most, like Thor have taken humanoid forms while others have constructed forms that are of interest to them."

"Like those toys he just gave your sons," Daniel realized. "Those were made of replicator blocks."

"Yes," Sam agreed.

"But Janet's right, the Asgärd were fighting the replicators. When'd they start using them instead?"

Jack lifted his shoulders in a shrug as he gave an enigmatic smile. "Well, you know the saying: can't beat 'em, join 'em."

Daniel gave Jack an exasperated look at the quip.

Sam tidied the plates that had been sitting in front of her sons' chairs and took a seat in the chair Josh had been in beside her husband. "About four months after the Alliance was signed by Earth we ended up living on Othala."

"Othala? As in the Asgärd homeworld in the Ida Galaxy?" Daniel questioned incredulously.

"Yes," Sam responded patiently to his interruption. "While living on Othala we got involved in their fight against the replicators. While not precisely at an impasse, the war between them wasn't progressing with any real advances on either side until an android was discovered in the Nilor sector. The Asgärd had taken it to study but the ship was compromised and lost to the replicators and the replicators started advancing and creating human form replicators.

"During a battle there was an incident that ended up with Thor's consciousness in one of the battleships. That led Jack to asking the Asgärd that if their minds could inhabit machines and operate them, why couldn't they just upload themselves into a human form replicator—as they control the block forms."

"Why would you suggest something like that?" Daniel asked curiously.

"The Asgärd as a culture continues to exist through cloning which was originally devised as a method of life extension," Sam searched for the words to explain. "Each time they clone a clone
from a clone, the Asgärd genome disintegrated a little more."

Janet nodded. "Yes, I'm familiar with a theory regarding why cells aged, in that telomeres, which are at the end of chromosomes, shorten with every division and eventually become too short for mitosis to occur."

"Yes, that theory," Sam agreed and carried on with her lecture. "The cloning allows the perpetuation of their culture but there is no true reproduction or population growth. In fact, until eight years ago, there were no new citizens born to the Asgärd."

"So, why'd they decide to try Jack's idea?" Daniel questioned.

"If they could end the war with the replicators they would be able to devote their full attention to their genetic problem. The Council felt a volunteer was an acceptable risk and even made a duplicate of the volunteer's mind in case the uploading didn't succeed."

"Who volunteered?" Janet inquired.

"Skuld," Sam replied.

"A valkrja?" Daniel asked correctly saying valkyrie in Old Norse.

Jack and Sam just exchanged looks as Jack shrugged. They had lived among the Asgärd for a time but that did not mean they were any more familiar with Norse mythology.

"Skuld was successful in taking control of the human form replicator chosen and with the uploading of four more Asgärd minds into the remaining four, the Asgärd had in essence conquered the replicators. With the war over they returned their attention to their genetic research, even though a majority of their population at the moment inhabits replicator forms, as their main goal is to become Asgärd again not just in culture, but in physiology."
Chapter 11

O'Neill Farmhouse, Blaine County, MT
August 21, 2010

It had taken some time for Daniel and Janet to digest, and for the O'Neills to tell, the story about how the Asgärd had essentially assimilated the replicators. The boys during the discussion had occasionally reappeared in the kitchen for another slice of bread and jam before disappearing into another area of the house to play with their, by now caught, replicator toys.

Daniel shook his head in baffled amazement. The Asgärd, more specifically their presence, had just seemed to disappear shortly after Earth had formed the Alliance with Aschen—and not merely from Earth, but from the entire galaxy. To learn that Jack and Sam hadn't just been living with them in their galaxy, but helped them win the war with the replicators was almost overwhelming in some ways.

"That's just…" Daniel shook his head again. Almost unable to come up with the words and finally settled for, "Almost unreal."

"We did a lot of unreal things as SG-1," Sam mustered as she thought back to their time as a team.

"Anyway," Jack said as he clearly began to switch topics, "you want to tell me a bit more about why you came out here to ask for my help? You have any plans in mind?"

Daniel and Janet exchanged looks. While Jack's voice was not very inviting at least he seemed more open to discussion then he had yesterday.

"Honestly," Janet began, "we don't know. We just know that we need to fix this mistake."

"Surely you had some idea?" Jack probed.

Janet shook her head.

"Not really," Daniel answered. "All our former allies, the Tok'ra, the Jaffa… relations deteriorated shortly after the Aschen and Earth devised and released the symbiote tonic."

"Yeah, and you didn't expect that?" Jack's voice was sharp with sarcasm.

Daniel looked away from Jack's accusing eyes as he was a little ashamed to confess, "No, everyone—we—we were just so focused on removing the Goa'uld that we got tunnel vision and ignored the others that would be impacted by releasing the tonic. We forgot that even though we called it a tonic, it was really a poison. A poison that didn't discriminate between the goa'uld that stole hosts, the symbiotes keeping the Jaffa alive, or those that blended."

Thousands upon thousands had died when they'd begun dispensing canisters of the tonic on goa'uld inhabited worlds. In retrospect, it had been like Rwanda on Earth, with that the people of Earth not taking note of the deaths or the governments writing them off as collateral damage in the drive to eradicate the Goa'uld. Even to this day, many people of Earth—the Confederation—were unaware of just how many Jaffa and Tok'ra had died at the same time as the Goa'uld.

"Did… did Jacob survive?" Daniel finally got up the courage to ask. All official contact with the Tok'ra had ceased with the first gassing and news had come sporadically afterwards. They knew...
there had been Tok'ra survivors, they did not know who they had been or how many.

Sam looked away at the question, but not before Daniel saw old grief in her eyes as Jack reached out to clasp one of her hands reassuringly. "No. He'd been undercover on Nekhen."

Daniel murmured his sympathies as Janet drew her breath in sharply. Nekhen the throneworld of Heru'ur, whom had been deemed the largest threat next to Apophis from Tok'ra intelligence, had been the test target of an earlier and particular virile strain of the symbiote tonic. No one depended on or host to a symbiote had survived that test.

"So, you have spoken with the Tok'ra survivors?" Daniel inquired.

"Yes," Jack said flatly, his voice inviting no further questions as he gave a reassuring squeeze of his wife's hand before he laced their fingers together. Looking at their guests questioningly again, Jack got the topic back on track. "So, back to this thing about asking me for help to fix this mistake you've made."

Both visitors accepted the change of topic as neither of them wanted to bring up more painful memories for Sam.

"Yes," Daniel agreed softly. "it is our mistake. A mistake that I wish we could take back. Change it. So that it never happened."

"Well it did happen, and you have no time travel machine. So, how do you think you're going to fix it?" Jack challenged.

Curiously Daniel's eyes lit up at Jack's challenging words and he turned beseechingly to Sam. "Maybe we can. Take it back."

"What are you talking about Daniel?" Janet asked.

"A number of years ago an accident sent us back to 1969. We could do what Hammond did to help us and send ourselves a message!" Daniel exclaimed with enthusiasm but when he looked at Sam and Jack, both O'Neill's looked very unimpressed.

"That's very… selfish," Sam said quietly. "Wanting to erase an action so that you don't have to pay the cost of the consequence."

"But we're talking about the entire human race!" Daniel cried.

"No, we're talking about a fraction of it on one planet of thousands," Sam countered with a sharp undertone in her voice.

"So, you two didn't really have any ideas about how I was supposed to help?" Jack intervening before an argument could brew between his wife and Daniel.

Daniel and Janet exchanged helpless looks. No, when discussing things with Teal'c, Cassie, and Dominic they hadn't really come up with anything besides knowing they wanted to 'fix' their choice and searching into just how encompassing were the changes that the Alliance had brought to Earth.

Their only real goal had been finding Jack and asking him for help. Hoping, wishing maybe, that the retired colonel would know what to do.

"No," Janet said regretfully, "Cassie was the one who suggested, and managed to find you after Teal'c tried to contact you at your cabin. Most of our thoughts have been about finding you, not
on what help we were going to ask for."

"So, Cassie—as you've already mentioned—knows about the sterilization, but Teal'c does to? I didn't think the Chulakian president visited Earth much these days." Jack remarked casually fishing for information.

The Jaffa, splintered already because of their service to various warring goa'uld, had remained fractured after the defeat of the System Lords. Each planet with substantial living Jaffa populations had developed into independent governments united more by heritage and traditions than anything else. Much like the city states of the ancient Greeks had been.

Teal'c had succeeded Bra'tac, when the elder Jaffa master had stepped down for health reasons, as first vice-president and then elected president of Apophis' old throneworld. As the president of Chulak and a Jaffa, it meant that Teal'c was far more involved with his people than the planet and people he had chosen to fight alongside ten years ago.

Daniel adjusted the frames of his glasses. "He was here for the anniversary ceremony and I convinced him to stay for a few more days afterwards. Then we found out about the sterilization and when he departed he'd said he'd look for support off-world."

Sam gave Jack a speaking glance. Her husband remained looking at their two visitors but did give her fingers laced with his a subtle squeeze. He had heard and it would be something for them to discuss in private later.
Days after the unexpected visit from Daniel and Janet, Sam and Jack were in the bunker's debriefing room in front of an Asgård communication stone engaged in an intergalactic teleconference with the leaders of the Jaffa supporters.

Jack had just finished informing the eight leaders that they had been contacted by Dr Jackson and Dr Fraiser with news that they, and Teal'c knew, about the Aschen sterilization. He concluded the debriefing by inquiring if they had heard anything about Teal'c making inquiries.

Only Ishta indicated she had, but Hak'tyl with its primary female population had different relations with other Jaffa planets and had come to act in some ways as a Jaffa Switzerland by serving as neutral ground for all Jaffa planetary governments. Not quite the outcome the Hak'tyls had expected upon revealing their existence after Moloc's death in a gassing but an advantageous development for everyone.

"So, the question becomes, do we bring Teal'c in?" Jack asked.

Discussion arose between the Jaffa leaders to which Jack merely listened to. They knew the minds and thoughts of their kind far better than he, and if any of them had the slightest doubt then—no matter his personal history with Teal'c—the Chulak president would not be brought into the fold.

In the end the consensus was that while the Jaffa of Chulak—as most places—would not be very eager to help the humans of Earth as most felt the humans of Earth were to blame for the Aschen's actions. However, with the situation being 'an enemy of my enemy is my friend' they would give aid in the fight against the Aschen. Even more so when they learned that it was O'Neill—O'Neill who first fought the false gods and had warned his own people but been dismissed—that led the resistance.

"Okay than, you are in agreement? Teal'c is to be approached?"

Eight holographic heads nodded.

"What of Dr Jackson?" Maz'rai inquired.

"What about him?" Jack asked.

"Shall he be approached as well? Now that he knows and considering his past history of... intolerance of social inequalities," Ishta said delicately having had political dealings with the man in the early months of Hak'tyls revealing themselves.

Jack grunted at the question. It was something he was still pondering himself. He did not want his personal feelings to cloud his opinion but considering the danger that Daniel could be in, or create, if he went off on one of his crusades... It might be safest for the resistance if they brought him in.

"I'm still considering," Jack said shortly.

"Might I suggest he be brought in," Ah'zar formerly of Ba'al's Jaffa stated, "for placating Earth after the Veritas file is distributed—perhaps even aid in its distribution and assessing possible
negative outfall on your planet—if nothing else."

The other Jaffa nodded and even Jack and Sam could see the wisdom of what Ah'zar said. Professor Dr Daniel Jackson of the Oriental Institute after all was a huge public figure and had been a major player in not only negotiating Earth's alliance with the Aschen but many, many other off-world treaties.

"All right then, it's agreed that President Teal'c of Chulak will be approached?" Jack said formally.

"It is agreed," eight Jaffa leaders responded in unison.

"It is also agreed that consideration will be given that Dr Daniel Jackson of Earth will be approached?"

"It is agreed," the aliens repeated the formal phrase.

"Let it be noted for the record," Sam intoned, her hands rubbing circles on her stomach. The recording of the discussion and motion would be released, heavily encrypted of course, to other alien supporters and it would be the supporters that were human that would accept whether or not Daniel would be approached.

"I'll let you decide amongst yourself who approaches Teal'c," Jack announced which led to a brief discussion amongst the Jaffa. In the end they elected Maz'rai, as a former Apophis Jaffa, to approach the Chulak president.

Exchanging some last bit of information the teleconference wrapped up and the communication stone turned off. Sam would encrypt and transmit the recording via their subspace network to the other supporters and support groups later.

"So, one more free planet," Sam remarked softly. "And maybe, maybe we could consider Earth an allied planet?"

Jack looked at the Plexiglas galactic map that marked all known planets and territories. In Confederation territory twenty-three planets were marked with green stickers, six others with yellow, and the sixteen remaining in red. Outside Confederation territory the situation was remarkably improved with a substantial number of free planets supporting the resistance. After looking at the map for a long time he looked back at Sam who was waiting patiently for his response.

"We'll mark Chulak as green. And if the others vote to approach Daniel, Earth as yellow."

"And then?"

"And then we'll quarantine."

"Even if Earth is only yellow?"

"Yes. This has gone on long enough. Chulak has enough armaments and once Maz'rai notifies us that Teal'c's on board, we'll have the tech crews start installing the Scotties on Teal'c ships."

Sam looked slightly amused as she always did by Jack's nickname for the Asgärd transportation devices that were a pivotal point in the quarantine strategy. And her husband claimed he did not watch science fiction.

"Has Stjarna enough ground and satellite zones ready for deployment on Chulak?"
Sam shook her head. "Not a full complement of ground zones, but there are enough satellites and setting up the zones around the stargate should secure the planet enough."

"I thought Stjarna had enough ground zones?" Jack looked faintly puzzled.

"For one planet yes, but if Earth becomes a yellow I think it would be prudent to set up a few zones around the Reed Terminal and get a few deployed in the 'ship yards."

Jack's expression turned appreciative. "Good thinking. One step ahead of me as always."

"Thanks and I wouldn't say that I'm always one step ahead," Sam gave a small grin as she stood and rubbed at her stomach, relieved that the baby who had been engaged in gymnastics during the teleconference had finally decided to settle down.

"For the technical stuff you are," Jack countered as he stood and closed the distance between them and laid his hands on her stomach. "The baby acting up?"

"No," Sam said fondly as she closed her hands on top of her husbands, "he's finally settled down."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Jack scolded lightly. "You didn't have to remain sitting for all of that."

Sam shook her head. "It was no big deal. It was just mostly summersaults."

"Ah," was all Jack could say to that. "Well, the boys are probably getting impatient if the movie is done. We should head back into the house."

Sam nodded her agreement and soon they emerged from the bunker into the root cellar above. After securing the door that looked just like another wall panel, only touch and DNA sensitive with a combination lock as well, they passed by the bins for produce and freezers for meat and emerged from the cellar into the evening Montana air.

Lacing their fingers together the two made their way across the farmyard into their house and the sons waiting for them.
Chapter 13

Chulak, Apep System
Parmoute, Peret

The four sentries on duty at Chulak's *chappa'ai* relaxed a smidge when they recognized the grandfatherly face and Apophis mark on the forehead of the Jaffa that had just stepped onto the planet.

"*Chel hol*, Mer Maz'rai," a Chulakian Jaffa respectfully greeted the visiting Jaffa by his title.

Maz'rai inclined his head in acknowledgment of the greeting. "Is Mer Teal'c here?"

"He is Sir," the Jaffa responded as he indicated the groomed path from the *chappa'ai* to the former Goa'uld palace and administrative centre that had become the Chulak Jaffa's capital city.

Maz'rai inclined his head again, shifted the weight of his satchel, and proceeded to walk to the Jaffa populated city. Upon reaching his destination he made further inquiries of Teal'c's location and was directed to the training grounds on the outskirts of the palace complex.

"Ah, Maz'rai," Bra'tac greeted the leader of the Jaffa on Apepi from his position seated on a stool on the edge of the training grounds. His seat provided him a full view of the area and training students.

"Master Bra'tac," Maz'rai returned respectfully, truly pleased to see the man's health so improved from his last visit to Chulak. "It is a pleasure to see you about."

Bra'tac's smile indicated that he was pleased to be out of his sickbed—brought on by old age and a maturing symbiote—as well. "You have come to speak with Teal'c I presume?"

"That is correct," Maz'rai replied as he looked at those on the grounds, his eyes finding Teal'c where he was instructing a pair of young Jaffa men with *bashaak*. When Maz'rai looked back at Bra'tac the old master waved him onto the training ground. Inclining his head respectfully once more to Bra'tac, Maz'rai crossed the grounds and approached Teal'c.

"*Chel hol*, Mer Teal'c," Maz'rai greeted formally, his use of Teal'c's title indicating that his visit was not strictly personal and he wished to speak with Teal'c about matters of the state.

Teal'c paused in his instructions and turned to the older white haired Jaffa. "*Chel hol*, Mer Maz'rai," Teal'c returned as he turned the *bashaak* he was holding over to the closest young warrior. "You have matters you wish to discuss?"

"I do, but may I speak them in confidence?" Maz'rai inquired as he gestured towards the wooded area to the north of them.

"You may," Teal'c responded and the two Jaffa presidents began to walk in companionable silence. Teal'c made no effort to start or begin a conversation as he knew Maz'rai would speak when he was prepared to.

Sometime later, after they had penetrated deep into the wooded area and come across a forest glen that Teal'c was familiar with having retreated to the place on occasion to meditate on troubling matters and thoughts.
Maz'rai indicated the grass and seated himself with Teal'c following suit. For a moment the two Jaffa regarded each other somberly and then Maz'rai removed his satchel and set it to the side.

"Word has come to me," Maz'rai began, "that you are inquiring about support for Earth."

Teal'c nodded his head.

"Support not only from Jaffa, but from others, such as strong human populated planets." Maz'rai elaborated. "What is your sudden interest, even with your long history and allegiance to the Tau'ri, in finding support for Earth?"

Teal'c responded calmly, "I have learned some distressing information regarding the planet."

"You mean, regarding Earth's alliance with the Aschen Confederation," Maz'rai corrected.

Teal'c warily studied the face of the older Jaffa but could make no guesses at his motives.

"You are not the only one to have concerns about the Confederation," Maz'rai stated blandly.

"Do you count yourself amongst these others?" Teal'c inquired.

"I do," Maz'rai responded as he reached into his satchel and withdrew a Goa'uld tablet and page turner and offered them to Teal'c. "But more importantly, your inquiries on Hak'tyl have brought you to the attention of these others. I will leave this with you to read and meditate upon."

Teal'c accepted the tablet curiously and watched as Maz'rai rose, leaving his satchel where he had placed it, and retreated to leave Teal'c to read and contemplate what he was about to read in silence.

Several hours later Maz'rai returned to the forest glen to find Teal'c mediating. Reaching underneath his Jaffa robes Maz'rai pulled out the naquadah amulet that he was required to wear in the presence of other Jaffa to mask that he no longer carried a prim'ta. Standing on the edge of the glen for a moment he swung the amulet like a pendulum and then as it swung towards Teal'c once again released the amulet.

Teal'c snapped out of kelno’reem as his hand snagged the tossed amulet from the air. He looked with puzzlement at the ankh amulet in his hand feeling the buzz of the naquadah but then suddenly he looked up at Maz'rai in sheer bafflement. He was no longer feeling a symbiote from Maz'rai.

Holding Teal'c's eyes Maz'rai loosened his robes and lifted up the edge of his tunic to reveal the knitted together flesh of his prim'ta pouch.

Teal'c's hand fisted on the ankh amulet as he stared in disbelief. Not understanding how Maz'rai could live without a symbiote. "How?"

"While the Veritas files tells of the actions of the Aschen, the resistance has taken into consideration all peoples—especially those that were affected by the release of the Aschen's poison," Maz'rai responded as he dropped his tunic, rearranged his robes, and approached Teal'c.

Sitting himself in the spot he had vacated hours earlier, Maz'rai reached into his satchel and pulled out a vial of indigo liquid. "With the assistance of the Tok'ra and Asgård, a synthetic drug has been devised that replaces our need for a symbiote. Apepi and other Jaffa worlds of the resistance
are already on the drug."

Maz'rai held the vial out to Teal'c. "For you as I know your prim'\text{\textquoteleft}ta grows in age."

The tremble in Teal'c hand was masked only when he fisted his fingers around the offered vial. His eyes locked with Maz'rai as the other man remained holding onto the offered drug.

"For now, it is only for you. But if you join the resistance, it is for your people." Maz'rai said quietly as he released his hold on the vial.

Teal'c looked at the vial in his hand and then back to Maz'rai. "Who commands you?"

A corner of Maz'rai's mouth lifted in a half smile, "The man who commanded you."

Teal'c's hands tightened around the vial and ankh amulet he still held. "Then I renew my pledge to him once more."

The half smile on Maz'rai's face turned to an expression of pleasure as he reached into his satchel once again and this time withdrew an Asgärd tablet. "Why don't you renew that vow yourself?"

Teal'c looked disbelieving for a moment at Maz'rai before he exchanged the ankh amulet for the Asgärd computer. Maz'rai hung the amulet around his neck once again as Teal'c powered up the device and waited.

For a few moments the screen was blank and then Jack O'Neill's face filled the screen.
Chapter 14

Chulak, Apep System
Parmoute, Peret

In the seclusion of Bra'tac's private quarters over their evening meal Teal'c concluded relaying all that Maz'rai had told him and his conversation held via an Asgärld tablet with O'Neill regarding the resistance against the Aschen that the Tau'ri led.

Bra'tac was silent for a long time after Teal'c had finished speaking. His fingers rolling the drug vial back and forth across the table they sat at. Watching as the indigo coloured drug within shifted with the vial's rolling movement and refracted the candlelight that illuminated the room. His mind engrossed in his memories and decision making.

They had put their trust in the Tau'ri before, allied with them, and look where it had led them to.

Yes, the Goa'uld had been defeated but at a price that cost the Jaffa their lives.

No, was costing them their lives as the offspring produced from the few—and now terribly prized—Queens seized in raids and still living did not match the Jaffa population growth now that they were free of the false gods.

Thievery of prim'tas was becoming the only course of survival for many Jaffa. And if they lost what few Queens remained then they as a people would have a decade or less to continue existing. Not unlike the situation that the Tau'ri were in with their extermination slated to be complete in two hundred years or so.

Should they throw in once again with an old ally under the adage that the enemy of my enemy is my friend? But the Tau'ri had cost them so much… what Jaffa would be willing to aid them once again?

The vial paused under Bra'tac's finger tips. Indigo liquid settling within.

But it was not the Tau'ri that was asking for aid, it was O'Neill the God Killer. The man who had taken the first step to free the Jaffa—to free the galaxy from enslavement to the false gods. Also it had been O'Neill that had cautioned his homeworld against allying with the Aschen, let alone joining as members of the Aschen Confederation.

No, no Jaffa would aid Earth. But they would aid O'Neill. Of that Bra'tac had no doubt. Especially the young warriors with only their first to third symbiote who did not wish to journey to Kheb having not lived enough in this life. They would follow O'Neill in droves to fight once more and if the drug worked as Maz'rai said it did, to have access to the drug to continue living.

That following could cost O'Neill's resistance its victory if Teal'c did as he thought to do, announce it to all the warriors of Chulak, for if word of O'Neill's fight was known to the wrong people from the mouths of careless Jaffa then the enemy could prepare or counteract first.

So, he and Teal'c would just have to make sure to be as careful to ally with O'Neill as they had in the beginning when fighting Apophis over a decade ago.

"I believe Teal'c," Bra'tac began to speak softly. "That following O'Neill once again should be
done as cautiously as was done the first time."

"Master Bra'tac, I do not believe that any would want to aid Earth."

Bra'tac nodded, "You are correct. None of our people on Chulak or any other planet would want to aid Earth considering what our previous alliance to them has cost us. But I am not proposing an alliance with Earth and neither was Maz'rai. What was proposed was an alliance with O'Neill and his resistance."

Sudden understanding dawned in Teal'c's eyes.

"A resistance that I understand already has Jaffa allies, many worlds inhabited by humans, what remains of Egeria's children and from the sounds of it, the Asgård themselves." Bra'tac concluded. "You did well to reaffirm your oath to O'Neill."

Teal'c bowed his head at Bra'tac's words. "And for the drug Master?"

Bra'tac looked at the vial underneath his fingertips and picking it up studied the synthetic drug contained within once again. A drug that had originated on a planet formerly of Apophis' domain, called Pangar, and been refined by a joint Tok'ra-Asgård scientist team specifically for Jaffa physiology to end Jaffa dependence on symbiotes. "We will have to control its distribution just as we control the distribution of prim'ta now. The very young will have priority—for if it is as Maz'rai says, if we save them from the Age of Prata Ceremony and they do not receive a prim'ta pouch their offspring will have the biological advantage in eventually redeveloping a natural immune system."

"We will also have to screen them to find those that cannot be helped by the drug as Maz'rai cautioned," Teal'c agreed. "I will visit Ishta to speak to her more about the drug."

"She is our source for the drug and contact for O'Neill?"

"Our source and contact with other resistance Jaffa," Teal'c clarified. "I am able to contact O'Neill directly through the Asgård tablet Maz'rai left in my care."

As Bra'tac offered the vial to him Teal'c closed the old Jaffa's hands around it. "My prim'ta still has time yet to sustain me. It is yours that grows ever restless to claim a host and makes you ill."

"I am an old man Teal'c, even for our people," Bra'tac chastised as he offered the vial once again. "A wonder drug such as this should not be wasted on one such as I. One who is ready to journey to Kheb."

Teal'c shook his head again and released his grasp around his mentor's hand. Bra'tac sighed at the stubbornness of his student and placed the vial upright on the table between them.

"Did we not agree that the drug is to go to the young? Did Maz'rai not say that this drug was for you?"

"You have said you have been ready to journey to Kheb for years," Teal'c countered. "Yet you continued to live to free us from the false gods. Will you not continue to live to see us truly free of them?"

Bra'tac sighed even as he acknowledged in his mind the point that Teal'c had just scored. Matching his eyes to Teal'c's he knew that this would be one subject that his student would demonstrate the full strength of his will.

"Ranoc named you too well," Bra'tac muttered beneath his breath as he began to shed his outer
Teal'c smiled at the lowly voice words knowing that this argument had been won by him. From the satchel that Maz'rai had left with him he found the auto-injector, and feeling that Bra'tac had rolled the drug enough to prepare it for injection, secured the vial in its place. That done, he placed the loaded auto-injector on the table beside Bra'tac.

Bra'tac exposed his pouch and slipped his fingers inside and waited. It did not take long for the goa'uld within to angrily bite down on his fingers and Bra'tac, ignoring his pain, deftly grabbed onto the symbiote and drew it thrashing from his pouch.

Reaching for the tray that held their evening meal Bra'tac seized the knife on the tray and with skilful practice acquired over his long years of service as First Prime waited until the symbiote screeched its protest and slipped the blade of the knife into the open mouth, aiming upwards into the brain. The trashing goa'uld went limp as it died and Bra'tac laid both knife and still impaled symbiote onto the table.

Picking up the auto-injector Bra'tac held it against the side of his abdomen, his eyes catching those of Teal'c. Holding the eyes of the man that was student, son, warrior companion, and friend rolled into one he pressed the device's injector and intoned, "To freedom."
Straightening the pile of applications on his desk Daniel found it difficult, now that the first day of the term was over, to concentrate on school matters. His mind drawing back as it often did to what Janet and Cassie had discovered and then what Janet and himself had discovered when they’d found Jack.

What still had him incredulous was that even more than Jack refusing to help—the man could hold grudges like few he knew—that Sam had refused to help as well. Sam who was—had been—his ally in science and—

A knock on his door interrupted Daniel's thoughts. Looking up from the papers he was still absently squaring off his hands froze at the sight of the man that had just opened his office door.

"Jack?" Daniel questioned incredulously.

"Daniel," Jack stepped into the room and with a few steps covered the distance between the door and the desk.

"How… Wh-what… what are you doing here? In Chicago?" Daniel asked in confusion. He had gotten the impression when he and Janet had left the O'Neill farmhouse that they would never see Jack and Sam again.

"Congratulations Daniel, you've been voted in," Jack declared as he set the file he carried in his hands onto the papers Daniel had been straightening, and thus on top of Daniel's hands.

"Wh-what?" Daniel repeated as he turned his attention to the plain, coil bound papers simply titled 'Veritas.' Automatically his mind translated the word from Latin to its meaning of 'Truth.'

"Read it." Jack said briskly. "You'll find us at the museum if you decide you really want to do something once you know what's in that."

"Us? Jack, wait, what's this about?" Daniel called after Jack's departing back.

"Just read it!" Jack called over his shoulder and exiting the office, closed the door, and left Daniel alone with the file.

Daniel looked at the title again and then taking a breath, turned the first page.

... 

Several hours later Daniel closed the last page and leaned back in his chair. As he looked up at the arched ceiling of his office the tears of sorrow in his blue eyes misted his sight behind his glasses.

Truth was an accurate name for the file. For it was a brutally truthful report.

Reports on the Aschen conquest methods of confederated planets. Volia's report in particular stuck a particularly sensitive cord with Daniel as it had been Volians of Volia that had introduced them to the Aschen and their Confederation.
The Volia report, a combination of archaeological and archival investigation, revealed that the planet had once hosted a thriving urban civilization approximating eighteen-century North America technological development when a flu pandemic killed millions. When the Aschen arrived in ships and offered a vaccine that saved their world, they were seen as heroes—just as on Earth. The Volians joined the Aschen Confederation only to discover almost two decades later that the Aschen vaccine caused sterility. Volia rioted only to be put down by the Aschen and in less than two hundred years the planet went from an urban civilization of millions to a simple agrarian civilization of thousands. All evidence of the once great society and the capital city buried underneath the farms the Aschen now had the Volians farm.

Most damning of all was the related to the Aschen reports concerning the implementation and sterilization progress for each confederate planet. For Volians the flu pandemic and sterilization had all been engineered by the Aschen.

He did not think he wanted to know what Jack had done to get those Aschen reports.

The Aschen believed in the superiority and purity of only humans born on Aschen Prime. It was Hitler all over again—only on a galactic scale.

Wiping at his eyes, Daniel removed and cleaned his glasses before standing. Taking the file in hand he rolled it up, tucked it under an arm, and exiting his office, locked the door. Squaring his shoulders he determinedly strode through the halls of the building that housed his office towards the Oriental Institute Museum.

Towards Jack.

Towards whatever fight Jack was planning for.

...  

In their Chicago hotel room for the night, his sons lying on their bed in the double room absorbed in watching television, Jack finished transmitting notification to resistance groups and individuals that Daniel had been recruited.

The damning hardcopy Daniel had originally read had been reclaimed and Sam had given Daniel an Asgärd tablet and flash-drive containing the Veritas file. The tablet would also serve as a secured communicator with them.

Asgärd tech for sensitive materials and their communication devices was primarily used by the resistance simply because Earth and Aschen had access to their own technologies, and Goa'uld technology, which was used by essentially everyone else.

Powering off the communication stone Jack looked up as Sam emerged from the bathroom towelling her long hair dry. Rising from his chair Jack met her beside the second bed in the room that the O'Neill family would be sharing that night. Sam sat on the edge of the bed and Jack manoeuvred himself behind her on the mattress, his hands going to her lower back and began massaging the sore muscles there.

They did not trust themselves or their technology to Aschen transport terminals so they had had to drive from Turner to Chicago. That they were driving was why Jack had not wanted his wife to come to Chicago with him so late in her last term of pregnancy, even if she was carrying their third child as easily as she had carried their first two. Sam however had vetoed his decision and the family had taken four days, with plenty of breaks along the way whenever Sam had gotten uncomfortable sitting in the car for so long, to drive to the Windy City.
Josh and Matt had been excited about the trip and about doing their travel assignments from their teacher because of their absence from school. Some of which had been completed with their mom in the hours touring the Oriental Institution Museum while waiting for Daniel to read the Veritas file and make up his mind about what he would do.

It had not been a surprise that Daniel had elected to join the resistance for as Ishta had said weeks ago, the archaeologist never could tolerate oppression and deception and had always actively campaigned against them.

Now all the O'Neill family had to do was drive onto Washington and meet with Fraiser.

As Daniel had approached Jack in the company of Janet, it had been decided, and with many of the resistance members knowing Janet by reputation and feeling that her medical knowledge would be an asset, that she would be recruited as well.

For Jack it felt odd that after all these years that Teal'c and Daniel—and maybe Janet—would be joining the fight he and Sam had spend the last six or so years engineering. A bonus considering their dedication and skill, but still odd.

"What is it?" Sam murmured as she turned her head around to look at Jack, feeling the thoughtful nature of her husband even though the hands so blissfully kneading her lower back hadn't paused.

"Nothing really," Jack leaned forward and pressed a kiss to the nape of her neck. "Just thinking that, in a sense, everyone is getting back together."

Sam nodded softly in understanding and turned her head forward again. "So, when we get back to the farm and confirm that Earth is now yellow, then what? Considering that earlier we wanted a green allied planet?"

"Then we pick a date." Jack said softly with steel in his eyes as his hands stopped their kneading and curled around to cradle her stomach and the baby within. "And quarantine begins."
Chapter 16

Chapter 16

Fraiser Residence, Washington, DC
September 10, 2010

Hearing her doorbell being rung Janet paused in the midst of preparing dinner for herself, Cassie, and Dominic.

"I'll get it Mom," Cassie's voice called from the living room and footsteps were heard approaching the front door. The ringing of the doorbell stopped and Boomer gave his happy greeting woof so Janet assumed the door had been opened but there was no sound of talking coming from her entranceway.

Wiping her hands clean Janet emerged from the kitchen to investigate what was going on. Seeing who was standing on her front porch stunted her into silence just as her daughter was. In the doorway, framed by their two young sons, was Jack and an even more pregnant looking Sam.

Cassie who had had a few more moments to recover than her mother finally broke the silence when she gave a little shriek as she barely kept from throwing herself at Sam. Shortly after closing her arms around Sam, Cassie jerked back with a stunned expression on her face when the baby vigorously made its presence know against her own stomach.

"I can't… I can't believe…” Cassie trailed off helplessly as she looked at Sam's pregnant stomach and the dimples and bumps that appeared as the baby kicked out.

Sam reached out and grasping both of Cassie's hands held them to her stomach. Cassie's bottom lip trembled as she blinked back tears as she looked at her hands and felt the baby inside Sam focus its efforts against her palms.

"I know Cassie, I know," Sam said softly. "I am so sorry." Cassie's reserve broke as she gulped back a sob. Sam released her hold on Cassie's hands and reaching out folded the young woman into a hug again.

Leaving Sam and Cassie to their reunion, which Jack had suspected would be quite difficult for the Hanka woman considering Janet had stressed that it had been Cassie's attempts to get pregnant that had led them to discovering the Aschen sterilization program, Jack turned an inquiring look at Janet as he gestured to the black haired man that had appeared behind the doctor.

"Sir—Jack," Janet corrected herself as she began introductions, "you may remember Dominic Klerk."

Jack nodded, remembering the name of the young man that Cassie had spoken of at one of her last birthday's before they had encountered the Aschen.

"Dominic," Janet continued, "this is Jack O'Neill and his sons, Josh and Matt."

The measuring look that Dominic had been giving the grey haired man turned to one of awed surprise. Now that Janet had introduced them, Dominic wondered how he could have missed seeing the younger face of the famous Colonel O'Neill in the older man in the doorway. Especially considering his profession as a journalist for The Washington Post.
The two O'Neill boys chorused their hellos while petting Boomer before Matt politely inquired where the bathroom was. Janet gave instructions as she pointed down the hall and the youngest O'Neill gave a quick thank you and scampered past Janet and Dominic and down the hall.

Exchanging a look with his father, Josh followed his brother at a more leisurely pace as he had to use the bathroom as well.

"I don't mean to be rude, but, what are you doing here?" Janet asked with some amazement. She knew that Sam had promised to contact Cassie, but when the contact had not been forthcoming… she certainly had not expected them to turn up on her doorstep!

"We were in the area," Jack answered obligingly as he took a turn petting Boomer when the Shibu Inu butted his head insistently against his leg, "and had to pay you a visit. If it's a bad time, we can come back sometime tomorrow."

"No, no!" Janet protested, worried that if she turned them away they would not see the O'Neills again. "Now's fine."

"Great," Jack responded and turned back to Sam and Cassie as they ended their reunion.

Wiping away the last of her tears for now, Cassie approached Jack and was enveloped in his arms as the man bent to hug her. "I missed you Uncle Jack," Cassie said softly against Jack's shoulder.

"I missed you too Cassie," Jack murmured his reply against the crown of her head. Shortly after Janet introduced Sam and Dominic, Jack ended his hug with Cassie.

"Where're your sons?" Cassie inquired as she expectantly looked about, after reaching out to grab Boomer's collar so her dog would stop pestering their guests, wondering where the two boys had gone.

"Bathroom," Jack answered for both Cassie and Sam's benefit as his wife was looking about for their sons as well.

"Well, no use standing in the hall," Janet declared, "let's move into the living room where there is room."

The five adults and one dog did so—and were joined later by Josh and Matt who kept themselves occupied with their handheld games—and soon their discussion turned to the reason that the O'Neills were in Washington and had paid a visit to the Janet's house. Giving two copies of the Veritas files to the two women, Cassie shared hers with Dominic saying that her husband had as much at stake as anyone else on Earth.

Janet could see that didn't exactly please Jack or Sam—but especially Jack—considering his dislike of the reporting profession but other than looking extremely disapproving Jack did not say no to Dominic reading Veritas.

There had been long stretches of silence in the living room as the three read the file but soon the two women were firing off medical questions about the sterilization process and anything related. Questions that Sam either answered herself or referred them to the more in-depth reports available in Veritas's appendix.

Dominic had questions of his own which Janet could tell, helped him overcome his awe at being in the presence of the famous Colonel O'Neill and Major Carter—in particular, how they could have kept all this information a secret from Earth.

"You did read about Volia didn't you?" Jack responded, unimpressed by Dominic's threatening
demeanour.

Dominic gave a curt nod.

"What could Earth have done that would have resulted in a more favourable outcome?" Jack asked bluntly.

Dominic opened his mouth to respond before snapping it shut.

Janet knew it was because her son-in-law did not know. Neither did she. Volia had essentially been at the same level of technology as them when contact had been made with Aschen. Then Volians's had had Aschen technology but that had not saved them from the Aschen's retaliation to Volians rioting when they had discovered the source of their plague and sterilization.

"Even if Earth did fight, Earth would still lose through attrition," Jack said softly as he locked eyes with Dominic. "Fighting against the Aschen as long as they have their technology—and we don't understand or can't counter it—is pointless."

"But…but what if it could be countered?" Cassie asked, trying to dispel the tension between her husband and Jack.

Jack turned measuring eyes on Cassie. "Then you have a world of difference and then the fight can begin."

Janet's eyes widened incredulously, understanding as Dominic did not, that Jack had not just said that—but that he meant it. He—Sam—they—had a way of countering the Aschen. Looking at her daughter, she saw that Cassie understood too, and in that moment both women swore in their minds they would do whatever was needed to help.
Daniel stepped off the Aschen transport platform, his blue eyes scanning for the short stature and red hair of Janet in the weekend crowd of the Smithsonian National Zoological Park as he began ambling down Olmstead Walk. Twelve days after the O'Neill's visit he had finally had been able to get away from his busy schedule at the university to meet Janet in person. As he reached the Cheetah Conservation Station area, he spotted Janet observing the zebras and not hurrying his leisurely pace was soon at the medical doctor's side.

"Hello Daniel," Janet greeted.

"Hi Janet," Daniel returned the greeting. Lifting a hand he waved it about to encompass the rest of the park and its pathways, "Walk a bit?"

Janet nodded and stepping away from the zebra habitat fell into step with Daniel as they began to proceed further down Olmstead Walk.

"So," Daniel blew out a breath, "they approached you too?"

Janet nodded again and they walked in silence for a few more moments.

"What I don't get," Daniel began, "is that when we were there, at their farm, they kept pushing us, questioning what we had planned and saying that they wouldn't help us. And yet for the past years they have been amassing a resistance that is more far-flung and powerful than SGC ever was."

Janet looked up at Daniel's pouting expression and internally sighed at the man's incomprehension of the O'Neill's actions. To her, everything was quite clear and practically screamed military action and military thought. "Daniel, considering what the potential cost could be, I can understand their 'need to know' mentality."

"They still could have told us," Daniel grumbled, "I thought we were friends."

Janet shot him a sharp look.

Daniel set his lips in a line, no Janet was right, he had not right to think that they were still friends. He should have realized that when they had turned against Jack's warnings all those years ago.

Dropping the issue, Daniel stuffed his hands into his pockets and told Janet what his part of the O'Neill resistance would be. "So, they want me as the spokesperson for Earth. To broadcast the Veritas file."

Janet's expression turned to one of surprise. "That's huge Daniel. Are you sure you want to do it? Considering if you do you'll be even more famous than you are now and I know how you hate all the publicity."

Daniel nodded. "It's the only way I can see to fix our mistake. To correct the error I made. I was essentially the spokesperson for the Alliance until Kinsey became president and I should be the one to be the spokesperson for the truth."
"Okay, if that's what you feel," Janet replied hearing the conviction in his voice. Then thinking of who was in command of Earth operations questioned, "So you will be with Sam?"

"No," Daniel shook his head. "The broadcast stuff is being handled by Alex Colson and I'll be with him."

One of Janet's eyebrows rose in surprise. "Alex Colson? As in Colson Industries?"

"Yes. It was a surprise to me too, especially considering that not only is he such a prominent businessman but he is a man that believes pretty strongly in the freedom of speech and the rights of the people to know what the government is doing at all times, is a part of the this."

Janet had to agree with that assessment of Alex Colson's personality as she remembered the media storm Colson had raised with Disclosure and other claims that the government was continuing to cover up alien things with the Kinsey administration.

"Makes it all rather devious don't you think?" Daniel mused. "Or an excellent idea to have him on our side anyway, because who would suspect a man who not only proclaims that governments shouldn't keep secrets and carries that belief out by investigating and telling everyone, is a part of an underground resistance?"

"Devious in a word," Janet had to agree and it sounded just like something Jack would think of. "I do wonder how they got Colson to agree to it though."

It was something that intrigued Daniel as well, "Well if I am with him and not just his people, I'll ask him."

Ambling through the park some more they turned off Olmstead Walk onto one of the side paths.

"What about you?" Daniel asked after some moments of companionable silence.

"Me?" Janet looked up at Daniel quizzically.

"Will you be doing anything or are you just in the know?" Daniel clarified.

"I've been offered to head up their medical forces," Janet replied.

"Sounds like an excellent idea after all you have lots of experience being CMO of SGC for years. So, what medical forces do they have?" Daniel questioned.

Janet lifted a shoulder in a shrugging motion. "I am not up-to-date on all the people they consider medical personal or the instruments they have quite yet and won't be until I agree and get the full debriefing."

"You haven't agreed?" Daniel asked in astonishment. "I thought you'd jump at it, find out all they know medically about what the Aschen have done and be able to help research a cure for the sterilization."

Janet's lips twisted into an unhappy expression. "If I agreed, I would be commanding the medical forces not engaged in research."

Daniel blinked. "There's a difference?"

"Yes, what they mean by medical forces are the medical personnel that will be engaged in Phase III on Aschen Prime."
Daniel stopped walking and looked at Janet incredulously. "You mean you would be a part of the invasion?"

Janet stopped walking as well and turned back to look at Daniel and his surprised expression. "Yes," she answered quietly, "I would be the CMO of the invasion fleet."

Daniel blinked owlishly behind his glasses. "And you haven't agreed because…?"

Turning back around Janet started walking again and Daniel had to hurry to catch up with her. Once he had fallen in step beside her Janet answered, "Because I promised Cassie I would help her."

It took Daniel a moment to understand but then he realized the distinction that Janet had made earlier between command and research. "Janet, if they asked you to command they obviously feel you are suited to the position and once this is over, don't you think that there will be time to do research? In fact, it might be better because if Phase III succeeds on Aschen Prime then you'll have access to the Aschen's information."

Janet sighed. "I've considered that as well Daniel and while the doctor in me who's missed being useful is ecstatic at the prospect of being needed again the mother in me wants nothing more than to fulfill my promise to my daughter."

"Janet, I really think that taking the job will fulfill both aspects," Daniel said firmly.

Janet looked up into his face again and even as she saw his conviction, she herself was not convinced. "The other side of the coin is that I am unsure, that because of what they have done to Cassie that I will be able to treat them fairly."

Daniel nearly choked on his laughter and even in the face of Janet's sharp look and clear disapproval of his mirth Daniel managed to calm himself enough to respond. "You're worried about your professionalism. Janet, if you could give aid to Cronus and Apophis just as you did to us, I have no doubt that you'll be able to treat the Aschen with fairness."

Janet sighed in response and grudgingly admitted he was right to herself and as Daniel continued to talk she let herself be persuaded into taking command of the resistance's medical forces.
Teal'c stepped onto Hak'tyl's chappa'ai platform and exchanged greetings with the female warriors on duty. A quick inquiry about their leader had him directed to Ishta's location at the training grounds.

Knowing what he now knew, that most of the women of Hak'tyl were on the drug, as he walked through the settlement Teal'c sought with his senses but could not distinguish any difference in the naquadah of those around him from when he knew they had carried prim'tas. Here O'Neill's resistance had succeeded in not only freeing Jaffa from their biological slavery to the goa'ulds but concealed it successfully.

As Teal'c grew closer to the training ground, the sound of the settlement gave way to the click of bashaak against bashaak and the occasional raised voice of an instructor. He drew to a halt at the tree line and scanned among the training women and girls for the blonde head of Ishta.

Ishta however spotted him before he saw her and handing her bashaak over to Neith called out, "Chel hol Mer Teal'c."

"Chel hol Mer Ishta," Teal'c returned the greeting.

Ishta smiled and after exchanging a quick few quiet words with Neith made her way to Teal'c's side. "What brings you to Hak'tyl so soon after your last visit?"

"Cannot I desire simply to see you again?" Teal'c queried.

"In truth I have come because of the renewal of old alliances."

"Ah," Ishta said lowly with a wealth of understanding invested in the sound before saying cryptically. "Do you wish to renew those alliances and forge new ones or are content with the alliances that stand?"

"We were never content with the alliance that stands," Teal'c rumbled darkly.

"But they have brought you much and taught us much," Ishta pressed as they continued to walk deeper into the forest.

"It is true that the actions of the alliance has brought us together, freed all Jaffa of service to the false gods, and allows me to lead my people in that freedom but the price is too great," Teal'c replied.

"Do not things of worth cost a great deal?" Ishta asked, looking up at Teal'c as he held a branch aside for her to pass by.

"Often they do, but when the price is paid by those who were not supposed to pay then the price
"is too great."

"Your words or Master Bra'tacs?"

"Ours," Teal'c answer succinctly.

"Ah," Ishta murmured beneath her breath and then took an abrupt turn east and shortly they emerged from the tower trees into a small glen where a natural spring bubbled in a carefully shaped and attended pool. Teal'c recognized the glen although this was only the second time that Ishta had guided him to it since they had become lovers.

Gracefully Ishta sank into a cross-legged position on the forest floor and Teal'c mimicked her position as he sat across from her.

"Tell me Teal'c, if you truly wish to renew old alliances why do you still carry a prim'ta?"

Teal'c was surprised by the question having assumed that he simply sensed a naquadah medallion upon his lover like Maz'rai wore. "My prim'ta has still time to sustain me and Master Bra'tac's is old and his prim'ta had grown too mature."

"Of course, I should have considered that," Ishta said with a self-criticizing smile as she studied Teal'c's face and saw his surprise and curiosity. Everyone knew that Bra'tac's advanced age meant that the prim'ta he carried would most likely be his last, as even prim'tas would begin to refuse to sustain him. "And now you wonder how I knew you still carried a prim'ta although the file on the drug clearly states that those on it can no longer sense goa'ulds? I myself still carry a prim'ta."

Ishta's smile grew slightly as she saw that her answer had merely aroused more questions in Teal'c. "Why do I still carry a prim'ta and yet Maz'rai does not—has not for so long that his prim'ta pouch sealed itself? Simple, we Hak'tyl are not as isolated as Apepi and there are other circumstances that led us to consider it prudent for myself and other high ranked Hak'tyls to continue carrying prim'tas."

Teal'c included his head in understanding and suspected that he himself, or more precisely Ishta's relationship with him, was one of the reasons she still had a prim'ta. A sealed prim'ta pouch and easily misplaced medallion would have had him questioning Ishta about things she, and O'Neill's resistance, did not want asked because he had not yet been invited to join.

"You have more questions to ask?"

Teal'c inclined his head. "How is it that the Hak'tyl joined O'Neill's resistance?"

Ishta gave her lover a wry smile. "That is a bit of an embarrassment on our part. Not that we are not happy to aid and serve the resistance in any way possible but our recruitment was not usual."

He could believe that, especially considering the unique nature of the Hak'tyl.

"One of our girls had reached Age of Prata and we organized a raid," Ishta began her story, her face a touch sorrowful as she spoke of a reality that was slowly fracturing the Jaffa even more than they already were. Raiding other worlds and in particular worlds that contained imprisoned queens for symbiotes to sustain their own population.

Chulak was fortunate to have one of Apophis' lesser queens that had been used during the Goa'uld Empire's reign to spawn symbiotes for Jaffa foot soldiers to sustain their population. It also made them a target though for less fortunate Jaffa planets.

"During our retreat, traveling to various other planets to lose any pursuers, our raiding party 'gated
to one planet that was believed to be uninhabited and found ourselves in the midst of a resistance summit. Of course in regular circumstances we would have just held the chappa'ai and traveled to our next destination but to secure the planet the resistance had moved the chappa'ai into the wall of a featureless box-like room, ten feet up from the floor, and of course without a control console,” Ishta finished pragmatically.

One of Teal'c's eyebrows rose upwards. It was a very effective method to secure suspected hostile travelers through the chappa'ai and he wondered if the idea had been O'Neill, Samantha, or someone else's.

"We were as you suspected extremely displeased and slightly more battered from the fall and I am certain that our discussions—as they had noted we carried prim'tas in stasis—would have gone much more roughly if some of the other resistance's Jaffa had not been able to convince us of the truth of the situation and the wisdom of joining with them."

"And the girl that you had sought a prim'ta for? Were you able to return in time to her?"

Ishta's smiled brilliantly as she said with great contentment, "Nesa became the first one of us to truly live free."
Chapter 19

Underground Bunker, O'Neill Farm, Blaine County, MT
October 8, 2010

Sitting at the command centre in the bunker Sam ran a last few diagnostic tests. The date of Operation Quarantine had been selected and all resistance members were working towards full execution.

The operation was divided into four phases.

Phase I would have all Aschen diplomats stationed on federated and allied planets recalled to Aschen Prime and would be implemented after Sam finished the last diagnostic. The call would be technically false, because it was actually ordered by Sam and her assisting computer geeks, but it would be made by the Aschen computer core so no Aschen would question it.

Phase II was the subjugation of the communications systems, governments, and if they still existed defence forces, of yellow and red planets and distribution of the Veritas file. On Earth that involved activating the already planted ground zones around the Reed Terminal and at Area 51, and on mission date deploying the aircraft in delivering the dead zones to the other spaceship yards, and Veritas broadcast with Daniel acting as spokesperson for Earth.

Phase III was actually quarantine of Aschen Prime and would occur at the same time as Phase II. The spaceships involved in that phase were primarily supplied by the Jaffa, but a few ships were being supplied by other resistance planets that were not members of the Confederation. Confederated planets after all did not 'need' spaceships beyond the Aschen's harvesters and other transport ships.

Phase IV was more nebulous because once the Veritas file had been distributed, Phase IV would be the implemented judgement of Aschen Confederate members upon the Aschen. Various proposals had already been drafted with contributions by many different human ethic leaders, and most recently Daniel, but the one constant was that Aschen Prime and its natives would remain in quarantine until they could safely demonstrated they would play nice with the rest of the galaxy.

Finishing her diagnostics and getting the all clear from the results, Sam set Phase I into motion. Light years away the Aschen master computer core received the transmission and then began transmitting the recall orders. Over the next three days all off-world Aschen would begin returning to their homeworld and while there would be questions the Aschen government would not be able to give them answers.

"Phase I operational?" Jack quietly made his way into the command room.

Sam looked up from her computer monitor and nodded, her expression softening at the sight of her husband cradling their sleeping seven-day-old daughter against his chest.

Little Hope O'Neill had been a surprise to them considering Jack's track record of three sons and a history of only sons in the O'Neill family.

They had been expecting another boy and had not even considered girl names. It had been Matt who had shyly offered the name of Hope; saying that he had been hoping for a little sister. Thor upon visiting a day after her birth had approved of Matt's choice stating that it was appropriate for
a future hope for Earth and the to carry that name.

Thus, the youngest O'Neill had been christened Hope.

Sam rose from her seat and moved easily towards them. Her good physical condition before and during her pregnancy paired with another short and easy labour had her well on the road to recovery from her daughter's birth.

Even a week later, Jack still did not like her exerting herself so he closed the distance between them. As they met Sam stepped close to her husband and raising a hand lightly ran her finger tips through the fuzz on Hope's head.

"I just finished talking with Alex about thirty minutes ago and gave him the heads up that Phase I was being implemented within the hour," Sam murmured her blue eyes still on her daughter's fey like features.

Jack made a face. There was no denying that Alex Colson of Colson Industries was a valuable member and technological contributor of the resistance, but Jack did not really like the man—mostly because of Colson's poorly concealed and persistent crush on his wife.

Colson's constant flirting, even during Sam's pregnancy, had had him constantly gritting his teeth and mentally devising ways of eviscerating the man. It was not that he did not believe in or trust Sam whole-heartedly, he did—he just did not trust Colson. He had not even trusted Colson to make him part of the resistance but unfortunate circumstances had led to that development.

He kept his mouth mostly shut though around Colson for now, especially as it was Colson Industries media enterprise and satellites that would be transmitting the Veritas broadcast around the globe.

"And everything else?" he inquired. Sam was the one responsible for coordinating and commanding Phase II on Earth. His responsibility was coordinating and commanding Phase III specifically while overseeing all Phase II operations. That meant that come mission day, he'd be on board the Íðavöllr, the Asgärd battle command ship, which was on loan to him as an Asgärd citizen and would serve as the command vessel of Operation Quarantine.

Sam nodded as she looked from Hope's face to Jack's. "Yes, you already know that Major Davis has put the Washington zones in place and Colonel Maybourne just confirmed that all ground zones have been deployed along the perimeter of Area 51. And the teams that will drop zones into the other 'ship yards have all confirmed the zones have arrived."

"Good," Jack replied. "And the satellite zones?"

"Are all ready for deployment as well."

Jack nodded in acknowledgement and Hope began to make waking noises. Both parents turned their attention back to their daughter as she sleepily blinked baby blue eyes at them.

"Here, why don't you have a seat," Jack gestured with his chin to the chair Sam had just vacated, knowing that if his daughter was awake she would soon be looking for a meal.

Sam moved back into the seat and accepted an even more awake Hope from Jack and settled her daughter into the crook of her arm to nurse. As Hope hungrily settled into eating Sam looked up at her husband who was watching them with an expression of paternal contentment.

"Everything else ready?" Sam questioned, "The boys and Sally?"
"The boys are looking forward to having the run of the ship and Sally's arranged for Tiara to take over the gallery for the day and entire week if needed." Jack replied. "My only concern is with you and Hope being on Earth."

"We've already discussed this," Sam murmured sympathetic to her husband's worries. "I'm the only one that can command Phase II on Earth and because Hope's nursing she has to stay with me. I know you're worried about what Kinsey might attempt to do—if they even figure out where exactly we live in Montana."

Jack looked unhappy. He knew that Kinsey's administration knew that he and Sam were living in Montana as the gallery in Turner was leased under his name and it was that address that his pension was sent to. That Sam was his wife also could not be missed, as while they had been married on Othala, they had still had to notify the US of their marriage upon immigrating back, and per Montana legislation Sam had to have a blood test for rubella and the presence of naquadah had created quite a ruckus even seven years after Disclosure.

But their 640-acre farm was owned by Sam's company, Stjarna Industries. Stjarna had been registered on Othala to Sam in 2004, but how aware Earth was that a naturalized Asgärd citizen owned the company they were uncertain. They were fairly certain however, that no one outside of the Asgärds knew that the O'Neill family were citizens of the race.

Joshua had actually been the first citizen, by merit of birth on Othala, and Jack and Sam had been granted citizenship for their aid in defeating the replicators. Because they were citizens, Asgärd citizenship was automatically conveyed onto all their children.

"And the bunker is more secure than Fort Knox," Sam added. "And when in lockdown the only thing that's getting in or out is what I let in or out."

Jack still looked unhappy but had to accept things as they were. The bunker was actually more secure than Fort Knox or the SGC, or anything Area 51, the White House, or Pentagon could come up with. The bunker after all was shielded with technology created by a race that while SGC had encountered and interacted with, had no opportunity to study their advanced technology.

A race that had the best defence force shields ever devised—the Nox.

So yeah, the bunker was secured.
Chapter 20

O'Neill Farmhouse, Blaine County, MT
October 10, 2010

Sam finished packing the last of the overnight bags for Matt to take with him on board Iðavöllr having already packed Josh's. When Josh and Matt returned home from their sleepover party, her sons and husband would be beamed aboard the Asgård command station and then travel to the rendezvous point where they would meet up with the resistance space forces.

Feeling the eyes of her husband on her Sam zipped up Matt's duffel bag and turned to the door to see Jack leaning against the frame.

"Well," Sam said softly, "the boys' bags are packed."

Jack nodded as he straightened from the doorframe and stepped further into the room. Sam stepped away from the bed where she'd been packing and into her husband's arms.

It felt a little unreal to Sam, even after all these years that they were finally taking action. Years of planning, strategizing, recruiting, negotiating, and stockpiling.

Sam propped her chin on Jack's breastbone and gazed up at him. "So, everything's ready?"

"Yes," Jack rumbled softly, "the neighbours will check on the farm while we're 'gone' and I've moved everything you and Hope will need into the bunker."

"Thank you."

Jack gave Sam a squeeze before releasing her and started to reach for Matt's duffel bag. "They should be here shortly."

"Yeah," Sam agreed softly as she cast one last look around Matt's room. Satisfied that her youngest son had what he would need, and that all the replicator kiron-based toys had been removed from the room just in case Kinsey took offensive action and stormed the farmhouse so that there was no incriminating evidence.

The kiron toys were the only alien things in the house anyway, as they had ensured that all their technology was Earth manufactured with no alien components. She was not too sure that even if the government did storm the farmhouse they would be able to find anything with the current government's dependency on Aschen tech and the farm in a dead zone.

For if all went well, because of the dead zones distributed around Earth, Kinsey's government, especially the NID, would be unable to mobilize because of the loss of their Aschen tech.

Jack and Sam departed Matt's bedroom and made their way down the staircase to the living room where the rest of the bags and box of kiron toys were already waiting.

In the playpen in the living room their ten-day-old daughter was burbling happily away as Hope's dimpled hands grasped the air towards the infant mobile circling above her head.

Just as Jack set the duffel bag with the rest, they heard the sound of a vehicle in the yard. Sam leaned over the playpen and picked up Hope and along with Jack they made their way to the front
porch where they were joined by the dogs.

Jack wrapped his arm around Sam and Hope as they watched Josh and Matt scamper out of the van that had delivered them home from their sleepover party at a friend's house. The boys waving one last goodbye to their school friends in the van as it turned around in their yard and headed back down the road from the O'Neill farm.

"Well, you ready?" Jack asked his sons when they reached the top of the front steps. Both boys nodded enthusiastically as they greeted the dogs.

"Okay, put your things away and one last trip to the bathroom and we'll be on our way."

"'Kay Dad," Josh agreed before darting around the dogs, his parents, and new sister into the house. Kicking off his shoes he went to his room and dumped the dirty clothes into his hamper, stored his sleeping bag back underneath his bed, and then headed for the bathroom.

Matt headed to the bathroom first before doing what his brother had done and was waiting expectantly beside his duffel bag in the living room when the rest of his family joined him.

"Bye Mom," Matt chirped as he wrapped his arms around Sam's legs to give her a hug. Sam passed Hope to Jack to say farewell to her sons more properly.

"Bye Matt," Sam knelt down to give her youngest son a proper hug. "I love you."

"Love you too Mom," Matt replied.

"Bye Mom," Josh came forward to exchange hugs with his mother. "Love you."

"Love you too Josh," Sam returned, "And remember, you and Matt be good on board. Try and keep out of your father's way."

"Yes Mom," Josh answered solemnly.

Sam stood and turned to Jack who stepped forward and after passing their daughter to Sam, gave her and Hope together one last hug.

"I love you," Jack whispered into his wife's ear. "Don't let anything happen to you or Hope."

"I won't," Sam vowed. "I love you too, and remember, Sally besides being your aid is acting as your proxy wife—when she says to eat and sleep, eat and sleep!"

"Yes Ma'am," Jack murmured with a crooked smile as he stepped back. Turning to his sons he asked again, "Ready to go?"

"Yeah!" both boys shouted.

Exchanging one last heartfelt look with Sam, who took three steps back from the three O'Neill males and their luggage; Jack took the white communication stone from his pocket and activated it.

When the white light that had filled the living room had cleared, the three O'Neill males found themselves on the bridge of an Asgard ship. Sally and a dark skinned woman, who would be described as African on Earth, were waiting for them.
"Sir," Sally Kasdan greeted formally, as she stood at attention her bearing revealing her past military service.

"O'Neill," the dark skinned woman greeted from behind the console.

"Sally, Skuld," Jack greeted in return.

Skuld moved another stone on the console and the luggage that had accompanied them disappeared in a second transportation beam. "I have sent your luggage to your quarters."

"Thank you Skuld," Jack responded. "Josh, Matt, you go with Sally and find out where your rooms are, okay?"

Sally gave a courteous nod to the two boys and gestured down a corridor. Obediently and full of enthusiasm Josh and Matt followed her from the bridge.

"Now that you are on board O'Neill," Skuld said gravely, "we are ready to activate Kvillar."

Jack inclined his head in permission.

Nodding her head towards Jack in response, Skuld activated the transporter once again and beamed them into the bay where a stargate, taken from a dead world, was housed. While both stargate and dialling device had been taken, the stargate was also connected to the ship's systems to allow computerized dialling.

Skuld nodded to the two other dark skinned females present in the room and their forms indicating, that like Skuld, they inhabited one of the original five humanoid replicators.

"Urðr," Skuld began, "please begin dialling."

Urðr nodded and touched a few runes on the console she was standing in front of. The chevrons of the stargate engaged and locked and then with another nod to Urðr from Jack, she activated Kvillar.

The stargate program designed by Sam was released into the network and would be rapidly passed along when the network did its periodic correlative updates and time stamped to activate with the commencement of Phase III. Kvillar had been created by Sam to safeguard worlds of the resistance that did not want contact from Aschen Confederation members or supporters, and was similar to the function of the lockout program of SGC's dialling computer. Kvillar however was also programmed so that specified stargate addresses could be quarantined from the rest of the network and that planet unable to dial out.

In this case, the planet designated as P4C-970 and known as Aschen Prime.
Brigadier General Harry Maybourne, a member of the NID and commander of the notorious Area 51, undid the collar of his uniform, propped his feet onto his finely furnished hardwood desk, and leaned back in his chair. On his desk was a bottle of rare single malt whiskey and brandy snifter. Leaning forward a bit Maybourne uncorked the bottle and poured a stream of the amber liquor into the brandy snifter. Setting the bottle down he dropped an ice cube into the glass and swished the whisky around to release its full boutique.

Bringing the edge of the brandy snifter to his nose, he appreciated the whiskey's aroma and glanced at the clock on his desk. As the second hand ticked away, Maybourne raised the glass into the air and saluted sardonically:

"To you O'Neill."

The second hand struck the hour and his office plunged into darkness. Sipping at his beverage he waited the thirty seconds for the base's backup power to engage. It did so efficiently as the naquadah generators restored DET 3 to full power.

Maybourne was in the process of savouring the last of the whiskey in the sniffer when there was a knock on his office door. He tilted his head to see around his boots just as his second, Lieutenant Colonel Albert Reynolds, entered the office.

He raised the glass at Reynolds who stood politely at attention and swallowed the last of the amber liquid. Setting the glass beside the bottle, Maybourne placed the cork back into its place and removed his feet from his desk.

"Time to get back to work?" Maybourne asked indolently.

"Yes Sir," Reynolds replied.

"Well then," he heaved his body from his chair and stood, restoring the collar of his uniform, "break time is over."

Reynolds nodded politely and stepped aside to let his commander precede him into the hallway.

"Tell me Reynolds," Maybourne questioned rhetorically, "why'd I agree to this?"

"Because Mrs O'Neill is a very persuasive woman," the man offered.

Maybourne gave a bark of laughter. "Persuasive yes and O'Neill can be one scary son of a bitch." The colonel held up a hand to forestall anything Reynolds would say in reply. "Why does that man always have to be right? Ah well, we'll be all well to learn from this—never trust bureaucrats, especially an entire bloody planet of them."

"Yes Sir," Reynolds agreed wholeheartedly.

"The squads?" Maybourne questioned as they turned a corner.
"Ready for deployment Sir," Reynolds replied, "just awaiting your order."

Maybourne gave a satisfactory nod. After reaching the command centre, he gave the order and watched as two squadrons of his retrofitted F-301s rose into the atmosphere with satellite zones and a few media satellites strapped to the undersides of their wings instead of missiles.

The F-301s had been outfitted with purely Earth or Goa'uld technology, which is why they were still operational. The ground zones that Maybourne had ordered into place around the entire perimeter of the Nevada base and training grounds the past few weeks had knocked out all Aschen tech in the vicinity. Isolating the region, and Area 51 in particular, from the rest of the world.

"Notify Bravo," Maybourne nodded to Reynolds after the last F-301 disappeared into the blue of the sky. "Area 51 is theirs."

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Jack stood in the centre of Iðavöllr massive holographic command station as he observed the first volley onto the planet below.

The attack had been signalled by the beam out of the Aschen stargate into one of Iðavöllr's holds. The Kvillar program had done its job of stopping Aschen Prime from dialling out for aid but the resistance was taking no chances that the Aschen would be able to crack the program.

Aschen Firespeeders rose from the planet below to meet the collection of Goa'uld udajeets, Asgård vígamaðrs, and other planet's fighters deployed from the bulk of the resistance's fleet. The ships of the fleet that were not present had been deployed to deal with the designated red planets of the Confederation and if felt necessary, to aid the homegrown resistances on the yellow planets.

Taking a moment to look from the fighters before they engaged each other Jack looked around the room, checking to make sure that while his liaisons with planetary and fleet commanders were all looking serious, none were looking concerned as they communicated directly with those commanders. Reassured that Sally, liaison with Sam on Earth, was supporting a half smile even as she was focused on the computer screen she sat before, had Jack turned his attention back to the fighters.

All of the pilots selected for the assault on Aschen Prime were experienced spaceflight veterans that knew how to follow orders. The reason they had been selected. The goal was not to devastate the Aschen but to remove their influence from the rest of the galaxy. To do that, all that had to be done was remove the advantage their advanced technology gave them and then put the planet into quarantine.

With Sam's invention of the dead zones, it was remarkably simple to do in theory, but complicated in implementation.

The pilots of the vígamaðrs engaged the Firespeeders in direct combat as much as possible, letting the udajeets and other fighters get past the first few layers of atmosphere to deploy the ground zones they were carrying. Even as the first of the ground zones began parachuting to the ground the ships that had carried the resistance fighters—a conglomeration of a few hat'aks, mostly alkeshes, and a few other race's spaceships—began deploying the satellite zones in the space around Aschen Prime creating a satellite minefield.

Watching the flashing icons on the holographic screen and once most of the zones had been deployed Jack gave a curt nod. Immediately the satellite zones activated and Firespeeders began drifting aimlessly in space as their crafts died.
"Begin beaming the Firespeeder pilots planet side," Jack ordered.

Firespeeders drifting in space began to light up from within as the installed Scotties on resistance ships began transferring the Aschen pilots back to the surface of their planet. The drifting fighters they let be for a bit as they would be collected while installing the quarantine force field shield around the planet and once collected would be divided as spoils among the resistance groups.

The quarantine shield—that was sort of like the Star Wars planetary shields in Jack's mind, only it kept things in, not out—was another Nox device and like the shield that protected Sam on Earth had been loaned by the pacifists because of the relatively non-violent intentions of the resistance. Of course, getting those shields had been more shocking to him than being naturalized by the Asgård.

As Iðavöllr engaged its telescopes to display scenes on the surface of Aschen Prime, Jack was relieved that none of the Aschen cruisers had been deployed quickly enough. Deployment of the Aschen cruisers before the full complement of dead zones had been activated had been identified as the area for potentially the biggest loss of Aschen life. Large scale deaths were something that Jack did not want because deaths caused resentment and anger and that could lead to more problems for future generations if that anger festered—take the confederate planets of the resistance for example.

He made a mental note when deploying Janet's group to include some of Charlie's people onto the planet. If the Aschen government permitted it, after Phase II was complete the resistance would supply medics to treat the injured Aschen considering their miracle medicine machines would no longer work with the activation of ground and satellite zones.

Moving his eyes from the vista of Aschen Prime and surrounding fleet again, Jack began systematically checking in with his liaisons and getting progress reports about how Phase II was progressing on their respective planets.

Hearing from Sally that Phase II was almost complete on Earth and that Area 51 had deployed the extra Colson's media satellites needed for the Veritas broadcast, Jack knew it was nearly time to make an intergalactic phone call.
Chapter 22

Simmons Air Force Spaceship Yard, Pierce County, WA
October 11, 2010

There was a blip on the Simmons Air Force Spaceship Yard monitoring radar that was soon joined by more flashing icons. The technician on duty, Sergeant Doss, was notified and spinning his chair around from watching the capitol's filmed Columbus Day parade that was just getting started, checked out the radar screen.

Doss stared in disbelief at the script flashing underneath the eight icons on the radar moving in a V formation.

**UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT.**

The Aschen ID program was so good it identified sparrows! And whatever those things were moving into the yard's airspace were a heck of a lot bigger than sparrows.

Reaching over he placed a call to his superior, Colonel Parker, who answered in his usual gruff manner.

"Ah Sir," Doss said uneasily, "we have eight bogeys on the radar."

"Bogeys Sergeant? What are they?"

"Bogeys Sir. The radar says 'unidentified.'"

The next thing Doss heard was a dial tone in his ear and not long after placing the phone back into its cradle Colonel Parker appeared in the radar room. At the colonel's appearance, Doss pointed to the radar and the eight icons on the screen moving steadily closer at six hundred kilometres per hour—standard for the old commercial aircrafts but those bogeys were the size of fighters and most definitely not shaped like bi-planes.

"Get them on the comm," Parker ordered.

Obediently Doss started scanning the airwaves, broadcasting the standard warning, and managed to pick up some chatter but no responses to the yard's hails.

"Pierce-One to Bravo, ETA is twenty-two minutes."

"Bravo copies Pierce-One. Commence with Operation Zone," a feminine voice decisively ordered.

"Roger Bravo. Commencing Operation Zone."

Doss tried on the radio again, "To the unidentified aircrafts approaching you are entering a restricted zone. Divert your course."

Even before the sergeant had finished speaking Parker was calling the squad on standby and had them scramble some fighters into the air. Within three minutes six F-301s of the defence squadron were suited up and in the air moving to intercept the approaching bogeys.
Parker claimed a radio headset and got on line with the squad leader, Lieutenant Colonel Bryce Ferguson. "We have detected eight incoming bogeys approaching the yard. Bogeys are not responding to warning. Can you confirm visual?"

"On our way Sir, but we won't see them for several minutes," Ferguson responded.

"Colonel," Doss turned to Parker, "they're picking up speed and their chatter indicates that they know the '301s are approaching. Still no response to our hails."

Hearing that and taking another look at the radar Parker snapped into his headset: "Get those bogeys in sight Blue Team!"

Immediately the deployed '301s increased their speed.

Parker turned to look at Doss. "How much time before they're in firing range?"

Doss lifted his shoulders in a helpless shrug. "Depends what they are Sir. If they've got missiles they could've hit us long ago."

Suddenly the bogeys radio chatter cut in again.

"Whooee!" a Texas drawl cut through the airwaves, "I got a visual on the Mongooses!"

"Visual confirmed," the voice of bogey Pierce-One responded. "Pierce-One to Bravo we have visual on some Mongooses."

"Any Firespeeders?" the feminine voice asked.

Doss and Parker were definitely looked concerned by now. The F-301's were named Mongooses, for the rodent that was known to eat snakes considering the aircraft had been designed to fight against Goa'uld forces, and Firespeeders was the name of the Aschen fighters.

"Negative Bravo."

"Number of Mongooses?" the woman asked.

"Six."

"Have three engage the Mongooses. The rest remain on target."

"Copy that Bravo. Pierce-Three, Pierce-Four, and Pierce-Eight you heard Bravo—engage those Mongooses."

"Roger that Pierce-One," three voices chorused. On screen, three of the bogeys broke formation by accelerating rapidly. The five bogeys designated to remain on course reformed their V formation.

"Blue Team, do you have visual?" Parker barked.

"Yes Sir. They don't look like any fighter I've seen," Ferguson responded as he transmitted video back to base. "Only paint they have is Papa-One to Papa-Eight."

Looking at the silver, angular fighters fast approaching Colonel Parker had to agree that they did not look like any aircraft anyone on Earth had ever designed before. They did not even look like any of the fictional fighters in shows like Star Wars or Wormhole X-Treme either. As Ferguson reported, the only paint on their metallic silver bodies was the large P-1 to P-8 on their tail fins.
"Blue Team, assume hostiles. You are cleared to fire," Parker ordered.

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In his F-301 Mongoose cockpit, Lieutenant Colonel Bryce Ferguson murmured to his co-pilot, "Ready Shaft?"

"Bring it on Fergie!" Major Cameron Mitchell exclaimed. "Let's show these bogeys we're more than enough for all eight of them."

Ferguson smirked behind his air mask as he let the craft's automatic guiding system lock onto the approaching lead bogey, P-3. Pressing the fire button on his stick Ferguson and Mitchell watched a missile drop from the wing and blaze away.

The missile was one hundred plus pound of high explosive that when detonated generated a blast with a force of over ten thousand pounds per square inch and would pulverize any object within a radius of several hundred yards. More than enough to deal with the oncoming target.

With the missile launch, the bogeys on the tail of bogey P-3 banked away and the missile impacted dead on the bogey's nosecone.

Premature cheers of success from the Blue Team were cut off by strangled gasps when P-3 emerged from the impact cloud. Shielding technology shimmering bluely in the air like a second skin at the missile's impact site.

Frantically Ferguson radioed a report of the bogeys' defence shields to the base. He did not know anything smaller than a Goa'uld teltac could be shielded!

"Come on 'goosies," the Texan voice drawled over the radio again just as Ferguson finished his report. "Let's see if you really earned your wings."

Then a Texan yell was hollered through the airwaves and bogeys P-3, P-4, and P-8 began their deadly dance.

Using the force shields and sharp edged wing-designs the bogeys used their fighters as weapons themselves as they engaged the '301 squad in an aerial dogfight that they could not combat. A dogfight they had no experience with either as the bogeys used close combat by cutting their shielded wings through the wings and tails of the '301s, forcing the pilots to bail as their fighters were knocked from the sky.

The bogeys waved their wings saucily at the parachuting men, while the six '301s fell to crash into the ground hundreds of feet below, before following the flight path of the other five bogeys.

Back at base the twelve remaining fighters of the F-301 squadron was being scrambled but by then it was too late. The other five bogeys had reached their target areas encircling the yard perimeter and dropped their loads.

The devices floated down on parachutes, activating in mid-air and all Aschen based technology on base, no matter how minor, died. Shutting down the yard in a fraction of a second.
Chapter 23

White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC
October 11, 2010

On a balcony observing the selective group in the White House ballroom below President Robert Kinsey was looking forward to the day's Columbus Day celebrations, for to him, the day symbolized progression and the power of God.

Deciding to join the mingling crowd Kinsey turned away from the railing just as the lights of the ballroom flickered and died. The light in the room dimmed significantly although the morning light still streamed in from the shaded windows. Casting an annoyed look about, Kinsey turned towards the closest member of his Secret Service agents.

Agent Harris gave the president a puzzled look in response as his hand tapped on his earpiece. He was not hearing anything on the radio. In fact, he would have to say the earpiece was not working.

Harris and the three other agents closed in around Kinsey just as the White House's back up lighting engaged.

Kinsey was just beginning to demand Harris tell him what was going on when Major General Frank Simmons and aids hurried towards the group.

"Well Frank?" Kinsey turned his ire on the military man.

"Mister President," Simmons said respectfully. "We have a… situation."

"What? Well, fix it!" Kinsey snapped in annoyance.

"We're trying Sir," Simmons responded, his tone not very confident. "There is a call for you Sir."

"A call for me?" Kinsey raised an eyebrow superciliously. "No one calls me General, I call them."

"I think you'll want to take this one Sir," Simmons said softly. "It's on the old Goa'uld long-range communication orb in your office. And it's Jack O'Neill."

"O'Neill," Kinsey sneered even as he looked slightly baffled. What would his defeated nemesis doing calling him on Goa'uld technology?

"He says Sir, that you would have questions for him. Like what just caused the White House's power outage."

Kinsey's face turned furious at the clear implications that O'Neill knew of, or had caused, the power outage his residence was still experiencing. Storming off in the direction that Simmons had just come from, the general, aids, and bodyguards hurried to keep up.

Finally Kinsey reached the Oval Office and found, that just as Frank had said, the one of Apophis' soccer ball sized Goa'uld long-distance communication orbs was activated on his desk and the face of O'Neill was within the sphere.

"Hello Bob," Jack greeted with a smirk from within the orb.
"O'Neill," Kinsey growled, "I do not know what you expect to accomplish with this prank but you will not get away with it!"

Jack looked amused though his eyes were scornful. "Prank Bob? I think most governments call these sorts of things _coup d'état_... although I'm not really going to take over—too much work."

"A coup?" Kinsey gave a bark of laughter. "I know all about your measly resistance O'Neill, preaching for freedom from the Confederation. You can't do a thing to overthrow me. Give up O'Neill. You've lost. Be grateful that I let you retreat to the wilds of Montana!"

"Measly?" Now Jack looked very, very amused. "I'll tell my one thousand one hundred ninety-two planets you said that."

Kinsey blanched as all the blood drained from his face. That... that... that was impossible! All the reports had said that O'Neill's resistance was small and disorganized with no foundation. That even if O'Neill did attempt anything, it would easily be countered by his people and most importantly, their Aschen technology.

"You're bluffing," Kinsey said shakily.

Jack gave an enigmatic smile that was entirely too truthful. "Well, you'll see the truth of my claims soon enough won't you?"

Kinsey opened his mouth again to speak and Jack cut him off.

"But it won't really be the resistance you will be answering to Kinsey," Jack's head nodded at another Goa'uld orb that was on display on a nearby shelf, an orb that would pick up the Veritas broadcast. The orbs, like other artefacts on display like a _vo'cume_, were part of Kinsey's trophy collection of Goa'uld tech. Not that Goa'uld devices were all that he collected, as attested by the GDO on his desk. "But the people of Earth. I think you should watch the news."

Still pale Kinsey gestured imperiously to Simmons and the general obediently turned the second orb on. Using an Earth made controller Simmons flicked through a couple of channels but it did not matter, the only channel that was working was the one with the Veritas broadcast.

As Dr Daniel Jackson's grave face was projected and solemnly apologized to the world for Earth's alliance with the Aschen and began disclosing the consequences of the Alliance, Kinsey felt short of breath and groped for a seat.

"It hasn't gotten to the good part yet," Jack needled, "but I must say, you're going to have a hard time claiming innocence when your entire campaign is based on the claim that you're responsible for the Alliance. And when it gets out that you agreed to over thirty percent sterilization of Earth in certain, non disclosed details of the treaty..."

Jack deliberately trailed off and let the unsaid say more than the spoken could.

Kinsey in his greed had bowed to the Aschen demands that Earth restrict its population growth by thirty percent. A fact that those that had signed the Alliance had kept concealed from the world.

Simmons wiped his sweating brow with a handkerchief. Cursing Jack O'Neill in his mind even if he had to admit a grudging admiration of the man's tactics. O'Neill was not really engaging in a coup and taking control of the government—he didn't have to—all he had to do was let the people of the government crucify Kinsey and his administration.

"Enjoy hearing the _veritas_," Jack curtly nodded and the orb snapped off.
"Harris, find Faxon." Kinsey ordered in voice that threatened to shake, "He'll be able to contact the Aschen."

Harris moved first to the phone on the Resolute desk and when hearing nothing, not even a dial tone on a hunch he moved to the president's transport pad and pressed a key on the console to dial the Reed Terminal. Pressing a few more keys confirmed for him what he had already feared: the Aschen device was dead.

"Sorry Sir, neither the phone nor the transport is working." Harris reported.

"What?" Kinsey exclaimed as he rose up from his seat. "Of course it works!"

Declining to argue Harris just stepped away from the transport console and let the president try pressing keys himself. After a few desperate and forceful jabs at the console, Kinsey made a sound in the back of his throat and turned to Harris.

"Well, then, order me a car!"

"I don't think that will work Sir," Harris said regretfully.


"Because Sir, the lights are Aschen, the phones are Aschen, the transports are Aschen, and the cars are Aschen."

A look of horror crossed Kinsey's face as he began to realize the true state of his situation.

"The stargate," Kinsey groped desperately for escape. "What about the stargate?"

Harris did not have an answer for that but Simmons had his suspicions that O'Neill had also dealt with the one sure escape route off the planet. O'Neill had not seemed to leave anything else up to chance.

"I'll investigate Sir," Simmons offered.

"You do that Frank," Kinsey ordered, "and find out what else O'Neill has done!"

"Yes Sir," Simmons replied and turning about, departed the Oval Office with his aids on his heels. It would take time but if they could get the old communication system up they could start figuring out how reaching O'Neill's actions were.

But even if they were able to counter some things, Simmons suspected that the outcry from the planet's population could not be moderated and countered. They had thought themselves masters of their world and were just discovering that the Piped Piper had returned to town.
Chapter 24

Somewhere in Washington, DC
October 11, 2010

Crowded into the basement of a Washington basement was members of the Air Force and a scientific examination team, one of the scientists, Doctor Bill Lee studied the chest-sized device that was quietly humming.

"Fascinating, just fascinating," Lee murmured beneath his breath as he walked around the device once again with an Earth made Universal Tricorder Device in hand looking at the readings on the screen. It had been ages since he had examined such a complex and ingenious device and his scientific mind was doing leaps of joy.

"I don't care what you think about the device Dr Lee," General Simmons snapped, "tell me what they are!"

Lee looked up from the UTD screen. "They?"

"Yes, there are more than this one," Simmons said shortly.

"Can I see them?" Lee inquired eagerly.

"No, they're in different locations," Simmons answered curtly, "and are all the same. Tell me what they are."

"Well, considering what they seem to be doing I'd say these are all… Anti-Aschen Tech devices that fulfill the purpose of electromagnetic field disrupters," Lee replied. "Only of course these AATs work on Aschen tech, not electricity."

"Okay," Frank breathed through his nose to calm himself. At least now he had gotten a straight answer about what the devices were. "One of my teams tried to move it but found them to heavy. Why's that?"

Hearing the general had attempted to move one of the devices—if they truly were all the same—Lee looked very alarmed. "Oh, no General. You mustn't move them!"

"And why not?" Simmons growled. "They're disrupting—"

"They're geo-locked!" Lee interrupted.

Simmons looked at the doctor blankly. "What?"

Lee gestured to the side of the AAT device that had a touch pad, "That's a geo-lock manufactured by Colson Industries. Generally, it allows technology to be tracked so that it cannot be stolen. But it can also be used to restrict things to a certain geographical location."

"So?" Simmons asked. "We contact Colson and get him to remove the locks."

Lee looked pitying at the general. "Just because they're manufactured by Colson Industries doesn't mean that Colson has any more control over them anymore—I would say doesn't actually, considering the sophistication of this device."
Simmons huffed again. "If what you say is true, I still don't understand why they couldn't move it—don't those geo-locks just set off alarms?"

"Generally yes, but in this case, considering that a large percentage of the device is made of refined naquadah it would be too heavy for just a group of men to handle. A good thing too."

"Why is that a good thing Doctor?" Simmons asked sarcastically.

Lee adjusted his glasses and gestured to the touch pad again. "Because the geo-lock is attached to a detonator. If the GPS location coded had changed by a single decimal place the device would have exploded."

Simmons jabbed a finger at the humming device. "You're telling me that thing is a bomb?"

"No," Lee adjusted his glasses again. "It's an AAT but who ever designed it really didn't want you to move it. And if the weight of the naquadah wasn't enough, they added a gravity cup to the bottom of the device. They really didn't want the device moved."

"Gravity cup?" Simmons face screwed up.

Lee handed the UTD he was holding off to an assistant and accepted a notepad in return. Tearing a page off the pad he approached the chest like device and bending over, held the paper against the bottom. That done Lee pulled his hand back and the paper tore with a distinctive ripping sound. The edge of the paper remaining fastened to the bottom of the device and floor.

"Gravity cup," Lee repeated. "Not only did they not want us to move the devices, they didn't want us to accidentally move them and set off the detonators."

"Why?" Simmons questioned.

Lee scrunched up his face in thought. "You said there were more of these devices, how many?"

"Three," Simmons responded.

"Do you have a map of the city?" Lee asked.

Simmons ordered a map to be brought to the basement and within moments, it was spread out on a nearby table.

"This device is here," Lee coloured in a red circle at their location and held out the pen to General Simmons. "Where are the others?"

Simmons looked at his aid who obligingly stepped forward and inked the other three devices onto the map and handed the red pen back to the doctor.

Lee took out a blue pen and inked circles around the four red dots on the map—the estimated extent of their Aschen tech killing abilities. That done he studied the map some more and then took a black pen and drew a circle that connected the red dots.

"Considering the extent of the blackout I would surmise that you'll find more devices here," Lee began inking eight small red X figures onto the black circle roughly equal distances apart taking into consideration city streets. "Judging from the distance between these two devices," he indicated two circles, "they distributed the devices evenly along this circumference."

Simmons passed the information on and soon the hunt was on for the other AAT devices. After a short time, confirmation came that eight more devices had been found in the areas where Dr Lee
had indicated they would be. Studying the map Frank could not quite see the sense of the circle's placement.

"Why here?" Simmons asked.

"What?" Lee looked up at the general.

"Why here," Simmons traced the black circle on the map, "and not at the White House or the Pentagon?"

Lee looked at General Simmons strangely. "I thought it was obvious. It's what is at the epicentre."

Simmons looked at the map and flushed a ruby shade when he realized what he had overlooked. The blackout at the White House had not been the focus of the attack, but the result of the president's residence located near the outer radius of one or two of the AAT devices.

For right at the centre of the black circle was the J. R. Reed Space Terminal.

"My advice General," Lee advised, "don't try moving the devices or tampering with them in any way. If it was my design, I would only allow one chance to input the counter code for the geolock and then trigger the detonation."

"How big an explosion would that be?"

Lee looked thoughtful and then picking up the pen again scribbled some equations on the outer edge of the map. Studying the answer, he frowned and did some more mathematic computations.

"Well, consider each device not only has a refined naquadah body and components but is powered by a naquadria generator…" Lee trailed off and muttering under his breath wrote more equations. "Triggering one device would start a proximity chain reaction with the other AATs… Then factor in the stargate…"

Lee muttered some more and studied the string of figures and numbers on the map he had just computed.

"Well Doctor?" Simmons demanded impatiently.

Lee looked up from his math and looking owlishly at the major general from behind his glasses said with weak humour: "Ah… Goodbye continental North America?"
In the news room of *The Washington Post* speechless investigative reporters and photographers watched the Veritas broadcast. Recorders on and fingers flying across notepads as all but one thought, *How could I have missed this story?*

The one that did not think that thought, Dominic Klerk, merely sat back in the chair at his desk and appreciated Daniel Jackson's showmanship on screen. The forty-minute broadcast ended and began again only this time Dr Jackson was speaking in Mandarin as he repeated the broadcast.

Dominic knew that the broadcast was being filmed live in multiple languages, with only the few languages that Dr Jackson did not speak, that would be translated and subtitled by a fluent speaker.

"Alright," Marcus Brauchli began, "the first person who can get their copy to me—"

A flash drive whizzed through the air and Marcus caught the gadget and turned to look at who had thrown the device. Journalist Dominic Klerk held his boss's gaze and schooled his features to look obliging.

"You..." Marcus trailed off for a moment as his face began to get a bit red as he realized what was meant by Dominic already having the flash drive prepared. "You knew? And did nothing? You sat on this story!?"

"For an exclusive interview with the people who compiled the Veritas report, yes, I sat on it." Dominic answered calmly. "On the flash drive is a transcript and video recording of the Veritas broadcast as well as my write up."

Marcus's mouth opened and closed like a fish out of water. An expression that none of the people in the newsroom had ever seen the senior editor sport.

Marcus coughed, recovered, and raked a hand through his short hair. "Okay, okay. That's good, that's really good."

It was better than good and Dominic knew it. This would surpass the paper's investigation into the Watergate Scandal in the 1970s and his exclusive and inside track would ensure a Pulitzer Prize for him.

"Okay people," Marcus called out to everyone, "let's get this to press and in the air. We have a story to break!"

The newsroom exploded into a flurry of action as Marcus plugged the flash drive into his computer and before opening up Dominic's article to read he attached the Veritas transcript and recordings and distributed them to everyone in the office. The noise of voices chatting on phones and into recorders as well as keyboards clattering filled the room again as everyone got to work reading what Dominic had supplied and began their own research.

Dominic went back to working on the article he had been writing before the Veritas broadcast had
began. This one about the blackouts experienced by areas of Washington and AF spaceship yards throughout the country engineered by the resistance against the Aschen to neutralize their technology.

The rest of the world did not know yet, but Veritas was just a part of Phase II of Operation Quarantine. Earth was just a minor player in a much larger resistance that encompassed one thousand one hundred ninety-two planets of the galaxy and led by a falsely discredited man who was about to regain his place in history as the hero he was.

Even now, Dominic was still awed thinking of his meeting with Jack O'Neill. He knew, that even with the exclusive rights to personal interviews with Jack and Samantha so that he would not break the story until the resistance released the Veritas broadcast—that the man would be difficult to interview to put things mildly.

‘Closed mouth’ was an adage that applied all too well to O'Neill and he seemed to epitomize Sun Tzu's military treatise. It was a good thing Cassie had given him the book and insisted he read it to understand her 'Uncle Jack' a bit better to interview him more efficiently.

Samantha O'Neill would also be an interesting challenge and, even without her commanding the coup of Earth, an investigative triumph on her own. As far as the public of Earth was concerned Samantha O'Neill née Carter was a missing person. Disclosing her presence on Earth, and that she had been living on a Montana farm since 2007, would stun a lot of people, especially the conspiracy theorists.

Not that those people had not gone nuts ten years ago with the Stargate program's disclosure and the alliance with the Aschen Confederation.

The next article he was already composing in his mind was regarding the certain activities of President Kinsey before the senator had gained the presidential office and activities that had occurred once he had been in power. The resulting personal scandal Dominic was certain was going to be much, much worse than Bill Clinton's scandal involving a White House intern.

In Kinsey's case, the public and legal censure would be far harsher and totally deserved by the man. Dominic was looking forward to countering whatever excuse Kinsey offered to the public for, because of his connection via his wife with the resistance leaders, he had far more damaging ammunition on the man than he even suspected could exist.

It was going to be an interesting week. He could hardly wait to see how things unfolded.

Hearing her newsreader chime, Cassandra Klerk paused her reading of a medical journal online. She reached for the device that she had set on the desk beside her in anticipation of this event and activated the e-reader to see the first page of The Washington Post displayed.

Dominating the front page was the headline THE TRUTH. Beneath the headline was a large picture of a studious looking Daniel that Cassie knew had been captured from the broadcast itself as well as the article written by her husband.

The headline, picture, and article had the front page to themselves. She did not think since the end of one of Earth's world wars had a single event dominated the front page.

Cassie smiled with pride at seeing Dominic's name as the writer. Reporting on this, Operation Quarantine, and the interviews with the O'Neills would get his name into history but she knew that he had the sensitivity to handle the information that Jack and Sam handed him respectfully.
She settled in to read her husband's words and once reaching the end of the article clicked on the offered link for a copy of the Veritas file which was offered along with a transcript of Daniel's broadcast and video recordings as well. All provided to her husband for the paper she knew by the O'Neills.

Scanning over parts of the thick report Cassie did not spot anything immediately that was different from the file that had been shown to her, Dominic, and her mom when the O'Neill family had visited her mom back in September. It seemed that the file had been released whole cloth.

But in Dominic's article, or anyone else's, there was no mention of the blackout around the Reed Terminal in the city or other blackouts at certain AF installations around the country, particularly the spaceship yards and the infamously named Area 51. Wondering if those blackouts were even known yet, Cassie set the newssheet e-reader down and turning her attention back to her computer, started checking out twitter, facebook, forums and other online discussion sites for more news.
Chapter 26

Colson Industries Headquarters, Seattle, WA
October 11, 2010

Daniel watched in a highly secured room of Colson Industries Headquarters in Seattle as the broadcast crew that he had just spent the last hours working with began packing up the equipment.

Ingrid Torrance, a member of Colson's staff, appeared by his elbow again and gestured to the door, "Dr Jackson if you would accompany me please?"

"Why?" Daniel asked curiously. Miss Torrance had been his guide and intermediate with Colson throughout his stay but that did not mean he knew what was going on.

"The convoy to ferry you to the safe house is ready to depart," Torrance replied pleasantly and gestured for him to follow her again. Having nothing else to do and recalling that there had been something mentioned about a Colson safe house in the files he had been given, Daniel gathered his things and followed her into the elevator that would led to the building's underground parking area.

"Is a safe house really necessary?" Daniel asked as the elevator began its decent.

"It is believed prudent," Torrance responded pleasantly. "You are a very important figure Dr Jackson and it would be most regretful if anything was to happen to you. Especially while on company grounds."

The door of the elevator opened and Torrance began to walk briskly from the elevator towards the only group of vehicles in this level of the underground parking lot. Daniel blinked at her departing back for some minutes before he got over his surprise at what her words had implied and hurried to catch up with her.

Before he could ask her more questions, Torrance had reached one of the dark coloured limos with tinted windows and opening the door, gestured for Daniel to enter. "Have a pleasant journey Dr Jackson."

"Ah, yeah, thanks," Daniel replied as he juggled his things and slid into the vehicle. It took only a few moments for his eyes to adjust to the dim interior of the vehicle and discover that he was not alone. Seated across from him was the other half of Colson Industries, Brian Vogler.

"Mr Vogler," Daniel greeted in surprise.

"Dr Jackson," Brian returned the greeting urbanely. "I must compliment you on how you handled the broadcast and say I am tremendously impressed by the number of languages you know."

"Thank you," Daniel returned politely. "If you don't mind me asking, where exactly are we going?"

"We will be joining Alex at the airfield in approximately thirteen minutes."

That was not quite the answer Daniel had been looking for but as Brian seemed perfectly content to spend the rest of the ride in silence, Daniel did not press the issue. He had already spent some time in the company of Alex Colson and his much more pragmatic business partner and while he
had only engaged in light conversation with Brian he knew the man to be much more closed
mouthed than Alex.

As Brian said, thirteen minutes later the convoy was at the airfield and they were being ushered to
a small business jet waiting on the tarmac. Boarding the plane Daniel found Alex waiting
expectantly and shortly after the two men exchanged greetings, the plane was taxiing down the
runway and airborne.

Alex informed Daniel about the length of their flight and as they settled in to their seats, Daniel
took the opportunity after some light conversation to question Alex about what both he and Janet
had wondered about four weeks ago while at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park.

"Alex, I was just wondering how you became a part of this?" Daniel asked.

"They approached Brian," Alex admitted freely. Daniel glanced over at Brian but the man had not
even look up from his newssheet e-reader at the mention of his name. "It seems they profiled and
deemed me a security risk to the resistance but they needed a media enterprise to pull off the
Veritas broadcast on Earth."

"So then they approached you?"

"No, Brian joined them and I probably would have never known if I hadn't accidentally picked up
and activated Brian's communication stone at a family dinner at his house about a year later.
Needless to say," Alex's expression turned wry, "no-one was pleased by that."

Daniel could believe that. Particularly Jack's reaction—not just Alex's at discovering that his
childhood friend and business partner was a part of an underground resistance that was plotting to
overthrow the Aschen Alliance and by association the US government.

"So how did they convince you to join?"

"They almost didn't," Alex admitted, "as I am sure you know of my conviction in freedom of
speech and that people have the right to know what their government is doing."

Daniel nodded.

"I was as you probably suspect hurt by Brian's deception as well as angered by what the resistance
was concealing about the Alliance and Aschen by not publicizing what they knew. And probably
would have sworn to blab what I knew left, right, and centre which would have the resistance
taking some sort of drastic measure to quiet me—when Brian pointed something important out.

"I believe in the right of the people to know what their government is doing. The resistance is not
a government and has no intention of becoming a government and perpetuate the mistakes of
history. Knowing O'Neill as I do now, I also know that I can trust that the resistance never
becomes a government as well."

"That is a very fine line," Daniel commented.

"Very fine," Alex agreed.

Brian snorted as he put down his newsreader. "That was one point. What really changed Alex's
mind was that O'Neill made a point of showing in graphic detail how many had died by Aschen
hands, by the Kinsey administrations, and how many would die if he did not in the very least
learn to keep his mouth shut."

Brian and Alex exchanged measured looks but Alex was the one to look away. The clash over the
resistance had been one of the first times in their long relationship where Brian's pragmatism had won over Alex's idealism.

"Yes, that too," Alex said pensively. "It seemed that in this case, if there was to be freedom of speech in the future for the galaxy then I would need to exercise control over mine first."

Silence descended upon the three men for the last thirty minutes of their flight. Only when they were touching down at their destination did Alex seemed to rouse himself from his melancholy thoughts.

As they departed the business jet Alex smiled at the brown haired young man with blue eyes who had piloted their aircraft. The man was in his late twenties or maybe early thirties but it had gotten hard to judge a person's age on Earth since the populations' inoculated by the anti-aging vaccine.

"Excellent landing as always Jorge, thank you. I am glad you were able to make it to Seattle in time from the activity in Pierce to pilot us."

"You are welcome," Jorge returned respectfully in his strong Texan accent before turning to face Daniel.

"Yes, that was a very smooth landing," Daniel said as he studied the face of the young man and wondered why the pilot's face seemed familiar. He was quite certain that he had not seen him in Colson employment before nor when boarding the plane back in Seattle. His brows furrowing slightly Daniel asked, "I am sorry. But your face seems familiar. Have we met before?"

"Perhaps in another life, another time," Jorge quipped with a grin and twinkle in his blue eyes.

Daniel shook his head in amusement at the pilot's jovial response and dismissing the sense of familiarity from his mind, followed Alex from the plane. After Brian departed the business jet as well Jorge turned back to enter the cockpit.

"Definitely another life and in another time son," Jorge Harmon drawled in a tone of voice that if Daniel had heard would have instantly had him connecting the youthful face of the pilot—a face he had seen before in 1969—with the dead man that had commanded SGC during its existence.
Janet looked up from her reading when the communicator in the room that had been assigned as her office on board the Asgård command ship chimed and a holographic projection of Jack's head and shoulders appeared.

"Prepare your team to depart to Aschen Prime with the Tok'ra in ten minutes. A squad will accompany you. They already know the deal." Jack ordered curtly and his image winked out again.

Janet set aside the tablet she had been studying and smoothly rose to her feet. Pressing the comm button on her desk, she calmly informed the medics under her command that they would be departing for Aschen Prime in five minutes.

She knew Jack had said ten minutes but assumed that the time limit had been for them to get to the transport centre with all their supplies and personal and not just be prepared by. They were geared up in field uniforms, ready, and all assembled in seven minutes in the main beaming room where their military escort and eighteen Tok'ra in their signature brown leathers were already waiting for them.

"Dr Fraiser," the youngest of the Tok'ra greeted respectfully with a warm smile of recognition. "We and our seneb'keshwt are at your disposal while on Aschen Prime."

"Thank you, I know using the healing devices are draining so I intend to use you to diagnose and stabilize the most critical that cannot be treated on Aschen Prime," Janet said as she looked searchingly at the young man as she rummage around her memory for who this Tok'ra could be. She did not remember him from any of SGC’s interactions with the Goa'uld resistance although she had mostly interacted with scientists such as Anise-Freya but his tone of voice indicated he had had personal contact with her.

"I see you have difficulty in recognizing my host," the ducal tones of the symbiote rumbled from the Tok'ra's throat. Earning a few looks from a few of her human personal, the curious ones indicating they had never encountered a symbiote and host before and wary ones indicating perhaps they knew too much about the Goa'uld.

"Yes, I am sorry. Were you in a previous host when we met? I do not remember you coming to SGC," Janet apologized.

"That is because I did not ever come to the SGC but left from it," the host responded with amusement.

Janet blinked in surprise as she suddenly understood just who the Tok'ra host was, the young Reetou boy. "Charlie! It is a pleasure to see you."

The Tok'ra smiled boyishly and inclined his head in confirmation just as white light enveloped them all and they were transported by the Íðavöllr beaming system to the defence instillation on Aschen Prime where the largest number of injuries had occurred.
Briskly Janet stepped forward from the group to demonstrate her leadership and was met by an Aschen in slightly torn grey clothing who otherwise looked unharmed.

"I am Dellen," the Aschen greeted firmly.

"Dr Fraiser," Janet returned.

Dellen's brow furrowed slightly before clearing. "Ah yes, Earth's title for a health practitioner."

Janet gave a brisk nod. "I understand that you already know the conditions for our assistance?"

"Very clearly," Dellen nodded. "I will be your guide while at this facility."

"Good, but first we'll take a look at you." Janet said critically now close enough to discern Dellen wore a defence uniform and if he was of high rank as she suspected, had been on board one of the Aschen battleships when it had crashed back to Aschen Prime.

"I assure you I am unharmed," Dellen drew himself upright. "There are others that require treatment."

"Be as that may," Janet said as she motioned a nurse forward with a kit. "You are still getting checked out. We don't want you dropping dead from internal injuries you don't tell us about."

Still looking affronted but resigned, Dellen submitted himself to Janet's care as she snapped on examination gloves.

... Janet leaned over an unconscious Aschen soldier strapped to a stretcher and probed his abdomen to find it unnaturally hard. Hissing beneath her breath at the conclusion she came to she looked up and caught the eye of the closest Tok'ra who happened to be Charlie.

Giving Charlie time to finish telling his diagnostic to the human medic beside the soldier he'd just finished scanning with his healing device, Janet tagged the man and scribbled what injuries she'd found onto that tag.

"Internal bleeding," Janet said quietly once Charlie was crouched by her side. "Do what you can to stabilize him and mark on his tag where the bleeding originated."

Charlie gave a tired nod of agreement and placed his hand covered with the healing device over the man's abdomen.

Janet could understand the Tok'ra's tiredness considering they had been using their healing devices within minutes of arriving on the planet's surface. She herself was beginning to tire as the med team moved from location to location and all she was doing was diagnosing and treating the most minor injuries—triage in other words.

Tucking a strand of hair that had escaped from her bun back behind her ear Janet stood and moved to the next Aschen to be examined. As she approached her patient there was a sudden disturbance behind her and she turned around just as voices began to shout.

A crazed looking Aschen in a torn uniform wielding one of the Aschen's now inert pacifying rods like a club was charging across the room towards her. Before she had time to consider her reaction Charlie was between her and the charging Aschen and what sounded like the hum of an ashrak ring weapon filled the room.
Before however even Charlie could intercept the crazed Aschen and use his terrible weapon, the man was tackled from behind by not just green clothed resistance soldiers but a grey Aschen uniform. The four men wrestled him to the ground and soon enough the attacker lay weeping underneath Dellen. Sobbing brokenly in his native Aschen tongue up at his commander.

A few sharp words from Dellen in the same language had the attacker fall silent although he continued to cry. Dellen gestured imperiously to two other Aschens in the room and they obeyed, picking the crying man up and ushering him from the room with resistance guards on their heels.

Dellen rose to his feet and after a sharp tug on the hem of his uniform said briskly. "My apology doctor. Such a disturbance will not happen again."

"Why did it happen in the first place?" Janet questioned sharply, not liking the fact that there seem to be division in the Aschen ranks and how roughly the attacker-then-weepier had been handled.

"His partner died," Dellen stated coldly.

"From what?" Janet demanded.

Dellen snapped a question in Aschen to one of those that had followed the attacker into the room and not left. Once he had received an answer, he turned back to Janet. "From a perforated lung."

"I asked to be shown the most critical! Why was that man's partner not among them?" Janet demeaned furiously.

"He died an hour after our former Supreme Minister refused to accept Commander O'Neill's offer of health practitioners," Dellen responded icily.
Chapter 28

Underground Bunker, O'Neill Farm, Blaine County, MT
October 11, 2010

Shifting Hope from her position nursing in the crook of her arm to her shoulder, Sam gently patted her daughter on the back as she watched the multiple monitors cued to the various big news broadcasts.

It had been some hours since Phase II had been implemented on Earth and only now was the population really becoming aware and expressing their outrage at the Kinsey administration. Thankfully, the world seemed to be abiding by Daniel's request in the Veritas broadcast to express themselves through peaceful means via petitions, online discussions, and organized public marches.

What she was waiting for however, was the White House press conference that was scheduled to occur in a few minutes. She was interested to see how Kinsey attempted to spin this in his favour, especially as she had seen the back of Dominic's head in the crowd of the reporters already present.

The crowd on screen before the podium grew hushed as President Kinsey appeared onstage, approached the microphone, and gazed upon the expectant faces with a sombre expression.

"My fellow Americans," Kinsey began solemnly, "today is a distressing day in our nation brought on by the vicious attacks of partisan forces on the peace that I have established on God's Earth."

Kinsey looked down and shuffled some of the papers he had carried on stage, "In this 'report' that was released to you, these partisans claim to be telling you 'the truth' regarding our esteemed allies. But the person responsible for the report, the former leader of the team coded SG-1, has falsified reports before."

Kinsey looked up and speared a look at the cameras and watching journalists. "Case in point, the first mission report to the planet Abydos in 1994, the team leader Colonel Jack O'Neill claimed that Dr Daniel Jackson had died and he had destroyed the stargate. And yet, one year later O'Neill was able to return to Abydos and retrieve Dr Jackson."

Sam had to acknowledge that point, but really, Daniel's death had been reported truthfully, Jack had just neglected to mention that Daniel had also been resurrected by Ra.

"As for Dr Jackson, while it is true that he provided the key to opening the stargate network, O'Neill's actions on Abydos undoubtedly left the good doctor feeling indebted to O'Neill which allowed O'Neill to persuade him to act as a figurehead for the broadcast dubbed Veritas."

Sam snorted forcefully, the action causing Hope to wiggle against her mother's shoulder so Sam shifted the infant girl into her arms. Like anyone could persuade Daniel to be a figurehead for anything he did not want to do, especially stand behind a cause he did not believe in full-heartedly.

"As it has been proven, O'Neill has falsified reports before. And in this Veritas report, it is claimed that 'ninety percent' of Earth has been sterilized. Where and how did O'Neill get those figures from? Should we Americans believe them without question for it they are true, why would O'Neill
take so long before reacting? Why would O'Neill, if he truly had the best interests of Earth at heart, allow the majority of the planet to become infertile before taking action?"

Kinsey assumed a pious expression and continued, "I assure you, that God would not allow such actions to happen to his Earth. Perhaps what O'Neill has seen and claimed to be deliberately inflicted sterility is but the measures of God to ensure that only the most faithful and fittest survive? So keep your faith as we, my Americans, are all one nation under God."

Sam snorted. God had nothing to do with it. And if she was not already familiar with Kinsey's dogma, she'd be tempted to ask him to undergo an MRI to see if he had been infested by a Goa'uld.

"It is tragic that a man as damaged as O'Neill, a man unquestionably troubled and driven to the edge of any normal man's sanity by his years of black ops, could persuade the poor doctor to be a figurehead. But Dr Jackson is well aware of the former colonel's tragic past with the accidental shooting of O'Neill's son with his own service revolver. Such knowledge undoubtedly left Dr Jackson unwisely sympathetic to a man who has demonstrated a casual regard for his life, the men under his command, and for the safety of Earth with O'Neill's acceptance of the first Abydos mission in which he transported a bomb through the stargate to detonate on the other side."

Sam growled in the back of her throat and jiggled a burbling Hope. Jack's frail psychological state had been taken advantage of by West and he had been ordered to blow that bomb! Hope's burbling helped calm her down as Sam reminded herself that whatever Kinsey was, he was an experienced spin doctor.

"This Veritas broadcast and other events that the partisan forces have perpetrated—blackouts here in the capital targeting the stargate and AF installations across the country are retaliatory attacks led by O'Neill caused by the man's unwarranted hostility towards me. I regret, my fellow Americans that O'Neill has taken such cowardly actions as to involve you in his vendetta."

Sam hooted softly with laughter. The president better hope that no one took a look again at the declassified security feeds for the former SGC base as anyone watching them would clearly see Kinsey's hostility towards Jack and in turn, Jack's apathy towards the then senator as Kinsey attempted to throw the weight of his position around.

"O'Neill's vendetta has reached out to touch and involve many, such as resentful individuals of the Jaffa people for our establishment of peace in the galaxy through the eradication of the Goa'ulds. Those Jaffa are resentful of our successful division of the tonic that have freed so many humans from slavery on so many worlds. Freeing those humans from the yoke of slavery under of the Goa'ulds and their Jaffa soldiers."

Sam noted, not unexpectedly, that Kinsey made no reference to the fact that with the death of the goa'ulds from the 'tonic' that the Jaffa were also a dying people and would be very understandably resentful towards the Confederation. Nor that the 'Jaffa soldiers' had been under their own yoke of slavery, bound by their very lives to serve.

"With these guerrilla attacks upon us and our freedom, I have learned more distressing news. One of the most intelligent women on the planet that went missing ten years ago has been found. I am speaking of the former Major Samantha Carter."

The crowd on screen before Kinsey stirred noticeably and even Sam perked up. Kinsey looked extremely sorrowfully at the cameras.

"I regret to inform you, that Samantha Carter has been found but not yet rescued. Yes, rescued," Kinsey repeated. "Ten years ago, Miss Carter suffered something that no woman should, a
betrayal of trust by her superior officer and her commanding officer, a man who she was taught to trust, who absconded with her."

Sam's jaw dropped. She did not know whether to rant with anger or laugh hysterically at Kinsey's audacity.

"Through devious methods that are not yet fully understood he brainwashed Miss Carter into believing his dogma and while keeping her imprisoned, impregnated her. Forcing Miss Carter to bear his children when the death of his son Charlie clearly reveals his unfit nature to be a father. Clearly suffering from Stockholm's syndrome Miss Carter manufactured the devious devices at O'Neill's command in O'Neill's attempt to regain control of the stargate to further his guerrilla warfare. Devices so dangerous that if detonated will destroy continental America."

Sam did not know how he expected to get away with statements such as that. Especially considering she was the one commanding Phase II on Earth. Oh how that would screw things up for the president when that came to light. And where did he get the idea anyway that the zones were bombs? The only dangerous element, the naquadrian power source, had second external trigger to stabilize the unstable element in case of physical handling as opposed to bulk computerized control. The man only had to think—as if they would do anything like that while she and their daughter were on the continent in question.

Okay, it was official, Sam decided. Kinsey had finally snapped.
Chapter 29

White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC
October 11, 2010

In the room with the rest of the media for President Kinsey’s press conference Dominic listened to the president’s speech’s closing remarks, barely resisting the urge as he had for the entire speech to interrupt Kinsey’s outlandish spin on the situation with hard questions.

From the looks on the faces of those around him, he was not the only one with hard questions.

Kinsey called for the first of the questions with his usual paternal expression and the first volley began.

"Mr President, in your closing statement you just said that Jack O’Neill impregnated Samantha Carter, correct?" a reporter for FOX News questioned.

"That is correct," Kinsey replied sorrowfully.

"Then, if Samantha Carter has been pregnant and born children, that means she is not infertile. And it is a known fact that O'Neill refused the anti-aging vaccine and that the Veritas report states the vaccine is the method of sterilizing Earth. And if he 'absconded,' the FOX News reporter's diversion for the word could be clearly heard, "with Carter then would it be safe to infer that Carter was also not vaccinated?"

Kinsey cleared his throat, "As Miss Carter has not been safely recovered, I am unable to answer if Miss Carter was vaccinated or not."

"Is it not a fact," a voice in the crowd shouted out, "that thousands of peoples have gone to Earth doctors since Veritas was broadcast and confirmed that they are infertile—adding confirmation that O'Neill's figure of ninety percent is right? That the World Health Organization, because of all these reports, has declared the situation a pandemic?"

Kinsey ignored that question as another reporter was selected to poses his questions.

"President Kinsey," the man began, "you made mention that O'Neill had support from the aliens and mentioned specifically the Jaffa. The Jaffa, who initially rebelled and aided Earth in the war against the Goa'uld—Mer Teal'c and Master Bra'tac in particular—who have died in the thousands since the goa'uld tonic was released by Confederated operations and are dying off in great numbers with each passing year? Why Mr President—"

"I am afraid I am not able to answer for the mindset of the Jaffa," Kinsey cut the man off and quickly called for the next question from The Washington Post.

Dominic restrained himself mightily and, as everyone else seemed to be working backwards with the president's speech, questioned him about Jack's vendetta against Kinsey. "Mr President would you please expand upon the mentioned hostility that O'Neill has for you? Surely you must have some idea about why he would be so unreasonable."

Pleased with the tone of voice and seemingly sympathetic question, Kinsey responded. "O'Neill, as a military man, hated the idea of more civilian control over the then operating Stargate program
and resisted all my efforts to have more civilian control to disclose the program to the public."

"I see. More civilian control. So it has nothing to do with your blackmail of the late General George Hammond into retiring in 2001 by threatening his granddaughters?"

Kinsey's face went white and he was not the only one to stare in surprise at Dominic.

"Evidence of which was taken from your computer regarding not only the threats to the late Hammond, but your connections to rouge NID actions over the preceding year and a half; including secret operations that were run out of Area 51 and involvements with the Russians…." Dominic trailed off.

"I do not know where you got your 'evidence' but I assure you it is false!" Kinsey snapped. "You should take more pride in investigative integrity by validating such nonsense."

"Evidence?" Dominic snapped, "Then how's this for evidence. Three years ago my wife and I were inoculated and shortly afterwards we attempted to have children. For three years we tried with our Aschen doctor saying all along that there was nothing wrong with us! Finally, after the last trip to our Aschen doctor I convinced my wife to see an Earth doctor who revealed to us that my wife's couldn't have children. Then I went in for testing myself and the doctor told me the same thing—no, didn't just tell me, showed me using Aschen machines! We were both infertile and our Aschen doctor had lied to us!"

A murmur rose in the crowd around him, it was unfortunately an all too familiar and personal tale to them as well. The eyes that looked at him sympathetically turned very hostile however when they turned back to look at the president at the podium.

"Then my wife," Dominic forged onward as his rage at the situation bubbled over, "a student of medicine herself, accessed the Aschen medical sub-core and read in their own writing that ninety percent of Earth had been sterilized because of the anti-aging vaccine!"

"It's in their computers Kinsey!" Dominic yelled in anger. "Just as is the clause of the treaty with your signature agreeing to the Aschen sterilizing part of Earth's population!"

The mood of the media crowd swelling further with anger, the secret service agents and other military personnel moved forward and hustled Kinsey from the stage. The world watched his retreating back and not one, now that they had heard the reports questions, believed much, if any of the speech that the president had just given in his defence and attempted to cast public opinion against O'Neill.

Dominic reined in his temper, displeased that he had let it get the better of himself especially in a professional situation such as this. But what the Aschen had done to him, done to his Cassie, was just too personal to be pushed aside all the time.

Later back at his desk at the Post's headquarters, Dominic went over Kinsey's televised speech once again. The other reporters had asked good questions and even his own had been fine, even with his loss of control, there had been other points of Kinsey's speech that had not been addressed or questioned.

While he had a feeling that many other people would be covering the points addressed, with most focused on the Veritas file and the WHO reports, he in particular would address Kinsey's attempt to slander O'Neill's reputation.
As for Kinsey's ludicrous claims that O'Neill's wife—he noted the president had been careful to not mention the O'Neill's marital relation—had been abducted, brainwashed, and forcefully impregnated he would let the interview with Mrs O'Neill address those issues.

Dominic turned his efforts back to removing whatever tarnish O'Neill's reputation might have acquired from Kinsey's remarks by first paying a visit to the online Stargate Program Archive. Like the Blue Book Archive provided access to the government UFO documents of the Project Blue Book study, the Stargate Program Archive was the official online database providing access to the over 50,000 AF documents and mission reports of the above top-secret program and its three operational phases during its seventy-seven years of existence, from 1928 to 2005.

His search though the mass of data would take time because he did not know the file name or where it had been filed. He was looking in particular for a psychological report that reported retired Colonel O'Neill as unfit for duty—a report that Major General W. O. West ignored as well as West's orders to O'Neill to detonate the bomb once the reconnaissance team to Abydos had returned to Earth.

A report he remembered his mother-in-law Janet ranting about during one documentary they had watched about the establishment of the Stargate program some years back and how it had been clearly skewed to slander SG-1—not unexpected as the documentary had noted President Robert Kinsey as a major contributor.

Now, if he could just find it in the archive… Dominic was relieved some minutes later after search and entering various search parameters he spied the file and opening it up, got down to work.
Chapter 30

Underground Bunker, O'Neill Farm, Blaine County, MT
October 11, 2010

Hope asleep in her bassinet beside her, Sam teleconferenced with her eldest child as Josh
described his view of the space battle over Aschen Prime. As they talked, she was pleased that
while Josh had been understandably excited to see the battle and so many spaceships, he did have
some understanding of the magnitude of the resistance's actions and the cost it would have to
people.

As mother and son concluded their conversation and wished each other a good night, Josh turned
the chair he had been seated on over to Sally.

"How is he Sally?" Sam asked anxiously, the 'he' referring to her husband.

"He's doing fine Sam," Sally reassured. "The execution of Phase III for Aschen Prime under his
command went as smoothly as any operation I've known."

"And the other Phase II operations?" Sam inquired.

"Were all successful," Sally reported.

Sam relaxed marginally, even though she knew that even if something was successful did not
really mean there had not been problems or loss of life. She would wait either until she spoke with
Jack, or like everyone else, wait until the debriefing of Phase II commanders. Those debriefings
were scheduled to occur in the time before the deliberative assembly began.

"That 'doing fine,' is that his verdict or yours?" Sam pressed for details.

"Mine," Sally replied, "I didn't directly question him, knowing what he'd say."

Sam gave a nod of understanding, well aware of her husband's responses to questions about his
well-being, especially emotional well-being.

"I have observed at times that both the commander and husband are missing you," Sally
continued, "but he seems to be following my orders to rest with the boys and eat well which I take
from what Josh has told me, is because you ordered him to see me as a proxy wife?"

Sam chuckled and confirmed the information, "Yes, on the day they left I said as much to him.
Not that before he really had any trouble balancing what was required of him by his work and his
personal life. But this is just different and I want to make sure."

Sally looked sympathetic, understanding that Sam was inferring to Jack's known willingness to
break for pie or cake and ability to separate his military life from his personal life and enjoy his
downtime. But now, while this was military in action and execution, the resistance had become
the life of the O'Neills and the situation was very much different for the amount and emotional
investment they put into fighting the Aschen.

Hearing a chime in the background, Sally glanced over her shoulder at what was behind her off
screen and then turned back to Sam. Straightening her posture subtly Sally stated formally, "The
Commander will speak with you now ma'am."
"Thank you Sally," Sam responded as Sally rose from the chair and her husband took the other woman's seat in front of the communication screen.

"Hi you," Jack said softly as his dark brown eyes studied his wife's face.

"Hi," Sam responded softly as in turn, her blue eyes were studying his face closely, looking for the signs of fatigue, stress, or other emotional upset. He did look slightly worn, but not as much as she'd expected considering the magnitude of what he'd just commanded.

An uprising that, because of the Aschen's use of the biological weapon against the System Lords, had been far greater than and just as impacting for the galaxy as the end of the Goa'uld.

"How are things?" Sam questioned quietly.

"Things could also be better," Jack answered referring obliquely to the fact that no military action did not have its costs, "but better than I expected things to go."

"And on Aschen Prime?"

Jack's lips thinned as he raised a hand and rubbed at the back of his neck. "The Supreme Minister refused our offer of medics in the first few hours after knocking out all their technology."

"The first few hours?" Sam inquired, picking up on his wording and wondering what had happened. She knew that Phase II on Aschen Prime had included the full deployment of zones on the planet and in the space around the planet that would effectively plunge Aschen Prime into a planetary blackout.

Jack held his wife's eyes. "Seems today we weren't the only ones playing coup leaders. A few hours later Iðavöllr was contacted by a new Supreme Minister, the understudy of the former Agricultural Minister if I remember correctly, to accept the offer of medics."

"And how did that go?"

"Fine," Jack responded honestly with a ghost of a smile in his eyes, "seems they aren't any better at handling a miniature Napoleon than we are."

Sam's lips curved up slight as she shared her husband's moment of humour.

"Taking Charlie's group with her to treat the most serious, Fraiser's medics dealt with the injuries and dispensed advice A few hours after getting everyone off the planet again we recalled a few of the zones from the residential areas and the generators that power them."

"And the zones?" Sam inquired, wondering what shape they had come back in being in hostile territory for many hours even if their retrieval indicated they were operational—retrieval meant the gravity devices had been reversed and the zones had simply floated into space to be collected.

"The techs report tool marks on a less than a dozen, but considering that any devices they would have used on the zones were knocked out by the zones, that the Aschen didn't do as much to them as we expected."

Sam nodded and made a mental note to look at the techs reports. That a few of the zones had tool marks intrigued her simply because it meant that some Aschen had taken the initiative and attempted to discern things about the dead zones without using Aschen tech. Indicating that some individuals might not be as dependent on Aschen technology and philosophy as they thought.
"And yourself?" Jack inquired, his tone indicating that the question was personal and not about her command of Phase II on Earth.

Sam gave a soft reassuring smile to her husband as she reached to the side and pulled Hope’s bassinet into view for Jack before speaking. "Missing you getting up in the middle of the night to fetch her for me, but we’re doing fine."

Jack’s expression softened as he looked at the sleeping face of his daughter tucked into her bassinet. He could not wait to return home but knew that his separation from wife and infant daughter would continue for a little bit of time yet. Phase I, II, and III of Operation Quarantine were complete and now came for the most difficult part really, Phase IV.

For the one thousand one hundred ninety-two planets and other planets of the Confederation to decide on a course of action in regards of the Aschen’s punishment. That was simply planets and did not taking into consideration the different nations on the planets that would have to be taken into consideration. Earth of course was the most divided of worlds, but there were other planets with other political factions that would have to be heard and taken into consideration.

A massive galactic deliberative assembly was being scheduled to take place on Alaris and Jack only hoped that the politics that followed did not make him regret freeing the Confederation from the Aschen.
Secured in the basement of the White House accompanied by his secret service agents and other top military officials, President Robert Kinsey slammed his fists down on the table he stood in front of.

"Your analysts said O'Neill wasn't a threat!" Kinsey roared at the NID director, two special agents, and five members of the Committee seated before him. "That his 'resistance' would amount to nothing more than grumblings and conspiracy theories in rags like The Enquirer!"

"We may have miscalculated his threat level—" NID Director Lawrence Black began but was cut off by Kinsey.

"May have? May have! Like heck one thousand one hundred ninety-two planets is just a 'miscalculation' of threat level! The Confederation doesn't even have that many planets itself!"

"Are you certain that he was not just bluffing about the number of planets?" Committee member Harvey Gold questioned as everyone in the room had viewed the recording of the conversation between the president and O'Neill soon after gathering.

"The number doesn't really matter does it Harvey?" Kinsey growled as he glared at the man. "The stargate and 'ship yards are all useless because of those damned Aschen tech killers. We've lost control of Area 51 to this mysterious Bravo and we can't find a single resistance member or fighter that the 'ship yards saw anywhere. And do you see any Aschen on the planet?!"

Both civilians and military seated at the table all looked uncomfortable as they shifted uneasily in their seats. That had also been a point brought up in the briefing that all the Aschen had departed Earth three days prior to the invasion and no one had clued in on it.

"As for the number of planets O'Neill claims to have allied with him, you tell him Frank," Kinsey waved his hand at Major General Simmons and sank into his chair, his face still glowering.

"As the technology and communication systems of the SGC were deemed obsolete from the influx of Aschen tech at the time of the Alliance's signing, that technology remained in the old military instillation and was left in place as they were when the base was turned into a museum," General Frank Simmons began to speak. "With everything still there it was simply a matter of establishing power to all systems and employing NID technicians and personnel to re-man the base."

"Why not recall the old SGC personnel?" Don Mackay of the Committee irrupted to question. "Wouldn't they be more experienced?"

"Given the fact that O'Neill is leading this, it was deemed an unwise choice to reactivate and recall all those who previously served with him," Simmons said dryly, taking personal pleasure in making Mackay flush with embarrassment by pointing out that critical fact. "Seventy percent of the systems have been restored with priority given of course to the galactic communications and monitoring technology. Listening to those much like you would listen to and flip through analogue radio stations reveals that the galaxy is cluttered with transmissions about 'O'Neill' or 'O'Neill's
"You've actually been able to hear the resistance transmissions?" Dale Wilson, another Committee member, demanded to know.

"No," Simmons replied sharply. "We're hearing everyone else talk about it. And I have to say, from the sheer number of transmissions and location origins, even with NID technicians only really being able to understand the English or Goa'uld being said, if O'Neill has less than a thousand planets assisting him I would be surprised."

"Why aren't we hearing anything from O'Neill's people?" Wilson questioned. "How are they securing their transmissions?"

"We have two hypotheses," Special Agent Mark Devlin of the NID began, "either Samantha Carter has devised a secure galactic communications network or they are using Asgärd tech."

"Asgärd tech? Why would they be using Asgärd tech? We haven't heard from those aliens since, from before the Alliance was signed," Gold demanded to know.

"Earth hasn't heard from them, but that does not mean O'Neill has not," Devlin said bluntly. "O'Neill's command ship has been positively identified from different sources as an Asgärd vessel."

All five Committee members looked stunned by that revelation while the rest at the table just looked grim faced.

"We are assuming that the access to Asgärd tech, as well as the fact that there is most assuredly an Aschen tech killer on the O'Neill's property in Montana, is why our team was unable to locate anything during our search of the farmhouse, surrounding buildings, and land." Black stated. "We still have agents on site as well as at O'Neill's pottery shop in the nearby town of Turner in case the O'Neills or anyone of the resistance appears there."

"You found nothing?" Mackay questioned incredulously.

"The only things there are two dogs, forty-eight chickens, twenty-four turkeys, six goats, and old Earth technology," Black answered.

"Dammit, there must have been something!" Mackay growled and engaged in a staring contest with the NID Director.

"So we have none of the O'Neill family and have been unable to locate Jackson. Could we find and use some other individual that they were close to previously?" Gold questioned abruptly.

"Look into it," Kinsey growled at Black before turning his attention to Simmons. "I want everything you can get about what is happening out there and get me back my ships and Area 51."

"Of course Mr President," Simmons affirmed as those military officers with him understood the nonverbal dismissal and nodding their heads proceeded to stand. The NID agents and Committee members watched the group of uniforms file from the room and looked back to Kinsey.

"Well?" Kinsey growled at Black. "What are you waiting for? Get me something I can use against O'Neill!"

"Yes Sir," Black said stiffly as he too stood and exited the room followed by the two special agents that had accompanied him to the debriefing.
Kinsey and the five Committee members regarded each other from across the table that stood between them. The five businessmen were powerful men; their power initially gained from acquiring and analyzing stolen alien technology for the purpose of finding commercial applications which made them billions by incorporating alien advancements into their product lines. Later they had controlled the influx of Aschen tech on Earth. But their power and influence was private, not political and that power they gained by financing politicians, like Senator, then President Kinsey.

This meant, as much as it grated on them, they needed what the other could offer. With some of the other unsavoury dealings between them, each thought they had a hold over the other. Also both were planning, with the current chaotic political situation which was likely only to escalate, to hold the other accountable to the public.

What they failed to grasp however was that for this the public would not be satisfied with sacrificial blood but would hold all of them accountable.
Chapter 32

Highway #95, NV  
October 13, 2010

Daniel used his Asgärd tablet early Wednesday morning to surf Earth’s news channels and electronic newspapers. Reading up about the latest events and developments as well as continuing impact of Veritas as the diplomatic convoy he was a part of travelled from Las Vegas to Nevada Test and Training Range Air Force Base to board the vessel USAF Clymene.

Not surprising, with Phase IV deliberative assembly scheduled to commence on Alaris on October 15th, there had been a huge rush by various nations of Earth to have ambassadors and dignitaries in attendance only to learn that the sole method of transportation off the planet was strictly controlled and firmly under resistance control.

The notoriously infamous Area 51.

The other spaceship yards and the Reed Terminal were still shut down by Aschen tech killers and while technically the stargate could still be utilized, if a generator was hooked up as a power source and the device dialled manually, the resistance had decreed that Alaris's stargate would only accept incoming calls from planets without spaceflight capacities.

That meant the Earth diplomats were being ferried by the six Prometheus-class ships: the flagship Prometheus as well as Iapetus, Atlas, Menoetius, Epimetheus and the ship he was boarding, Clymene. Ships under the control of infamous Phase II Commander ‘Bravo’ that was now known worldwide to be retired Major Samantha O'Neill née Carter and manned by Colonel Maybourne's staff.

Each recognized Earth government was permitted one ambassador, the UN organization one representative, and each was permitted one aid and no further staff. The dignitary list of three hundred and thirty had been selected and submitted after the completion of Phase III on Aschen Prime. That was why the United States ambassador was the unpopular choice of the Earth-Aschen Ambassador Joseph Faxon. The list had already been approved by the resistance and no substitutions would be permitted even if an ambassador or aid died.

Those rules had been a bit startling for Daniel to learn but after thinking on it, something that removed any possibility of political jockeying, blackmail, or assassination to remove a selected ambassador or aid. Each nation knew they only had one chance and made sure their choices remained in perfect health.

It had allowed him to end his two days hiding with Colson as he had been chosen by the UN organization to serve as the aid to their representative, Dr Elizabeth Weir. That announcement in the news had surprised him, even with his own desperate wish to attend the Phase IV deliberative assembly, as had the public support for the UN choosing him. In fact, as much as people were acknowledging Dr Weir credentials for the role, having mediated a dozen of the most sensitive international treaties including high-level negotiations for the UN, their opinion was that he himself would have been much better suited as UN representative considering his past of mediating nearly a hundred galactic treaties.

Daniel looked up from his tablet as he thought about Weir to look at his brunette and pristinely dressed car companion just as the woman's brown eyes looked up from her own electronic reader.
As their eyes held, Daniel had to acknowledge to himself that maybe even he was a little resentful that Weir had been chosen but he would do his best to guide her through the labyrinth that was alien diplomacy.

"Is there anything you can tell me about Alaris yourself Dr Jackson?" Weir inquired politely as Daniel continued to hold her gaze.

Daniel blinked and gave a regretful shake of his head. "I have never been to Alaris personally so, as you, only have SG-12 reports and the resistance's orientation file on the planet to go by."

"SG-12?" Weir's brow furrowed.

"Yes, SG-12 preformed reconnaissance on the planet back in 2000."

Weir gave a sigh and shake of her head. "See Doctor, you already know more than I do. I was not aware that the planet had been visited by a StarGate Command team. I was under the impression that the resistance had specified that Alaris had no affiliation with themselves or any other involved party, was in fact, neutral ground?"

"That is correct. Alaris has no native sentient inhabitants and thus no affiliation with any political group or nation."

"If it has no one living their Doctor, then why is it named Alaris? Would it not just be designated by an alphabet-numerical code?"

"While Alaris has no natives it has served as neutral ground to negotiate treaties for the Goa'uld and other local planetary governments in the past and because of the planet's relatively poor resource supply in comparison to its neighbour it was never claimed or developed."

"Poor resource supply?" Weir frowned. "What about weather? Is that unpredictable or dangerous?"

"Actually, Alaris is very Earth-like in environment but what I meant by poor resources is the absence of large deposits of naquadah, trinium, gold, or other materials used by space faring races."

"If it is Earth-like, why was it not claimed by the Confederation for farming?" Weir inquired curiously.

It was Daniel's turn to frown. "I am unsure why Alaris wasn't made into an agricultural planet after Earth shared the address with the Aschen but perhaps it was scheduled for development in future as they seemed more interested in forming alliances with inhabited worlds." It gave him a chill to think that maybe the Aschen had preferred inhabited worlds to have a small, controlled, and essentially enslaved workforce.

Weir nodded in understanding, tapped the screen of her e-reader and tilted the screen so that he could see pages from the orientation file. "Do you know any of the ambassadors from the groups in attendance?"

Daniel turned his attention to his own tablet and opening up the orientation file started at the top of the list. Rambling off which planets he knew off, which ones he had visited, and which ambassadors he knew or knew of.

The ambassadors of the nine allied plants of the Confederation he knew: Ehud Benyamin and aid Leor Yonatan of Taldor; Kalan and his son and aid Tomin of Orban; Nodaal and his wife and aid Layale of Vyus; Nyan of the Bedrosian he knew personally and Ar't of the Optrican by
reputation; Farrell of the Eurondans and Gaynor of the Bredan; Marul's grandson Gervas of Latona; Lucia Tarthus of the Andari, Vin Eremal of the Tiranian, and Gillian Dreylock of the Kelownan for Langara; and Pharrin and Tryan of Talthus.

He knew most of the thirty-three federated plants and his thoughts dwelled in particular on those people and worlds that Earth had been responsible for introducing to the Aschen: his brother-in-law Skaara of Abydos; Abu of the Shavadai; Melosha of the Land of the Light; Darcy of Avnil where Sam's former fiancé had gone nuts. Alekos and his wife Thetys as aid of Argos; Kendra who they had met on Cimmeria for her homeworld Jebanna; Hanno of Cartago; Talia of Nasya; Gillian and aid Cathy of Nedrag, the garden world of the Keeper that still bothered his dreams on occasion. Queen Shyla's representative Anram of Terellan; Princess La Moor of Madrona; Elder John Taylor and Mary Mennell of Christia; Paynan and aid Garan of Edora. Eliam and his aid-wife Nikka of the Enkarans; Brenna of Iceae who's planet had shed the ice age that gripped it because of the Aschen; and Darian and his aid and wife Hira of Juna.

He knew a larger amount then he had suspect of the fifty-eight planets that had treaties with the Confederation with most of them being Jaffa planets like Chulak, with Rya'c serving as representative and Neith of Hak'tyl. He was quite looking forward to the deliberative assembly, not just for what would be negotiated but for the change to meet up with some old friends and acquaintances he had not seen in years.

Daniel couldn't imagine the logistical nightmare of hosting all the delegates—with three hundred ninety diplomats from Earth alone—and wondered how the resistance was going to manage it even with the requirement that all nations supply their own supplies and quarters.

Even as Daniel continued talking to Weir for the rest of their journey on the road his own thoughts turned to thinking about Jack. He was anxious to be reunited with Jack and Janet, but meeting up with Jack again was causing him the most anxiety.

Janet had kept up a steady stream of communication via their Asgärd tablets so he knew essentially what she had been doing and involved in since her departure to Aschen Prime. Jack however he hadn't heard from directly since the O'Neill family had visited him in Chicago.

His major worry at the moment was how politically correct Jack was going to be at the deliberative assembly—how diplomatic Jack was being right now as well—without him present. At the very least, his presence on Alaris would allow him to buffer the military man's words and attitudes before Jack bluntly stated them or offended any alien with his actions.
Chapter 33

Diplomatic Encampment, Alaris
Three Days before the Confederation Deliberative Assembly

Surveying the work being done on Alaris to prepare for the coming onslaught of dignitaries and support staff, Jack was pleased with the rapid progress. A click sound issued from the communication stone affixed to his shoulder and he raised a hand to touch a finger to the device.

"O'Neill," he issued.

"Commander, the Nox delegation has arrived."

Jack turned on his heels to look towards the stargate platform in the distance and squinted. He could make out that the 'gate was engaged and a diminutive group of forms stood before the transportation device. "Thanks for the report, please escort them to their pavilion."

"Yes Sir," was the response and the communication ended with another click sound from the stone.

Checking in with Sally so his aid knew where he was going, Jack began to make his own way to the pavilion that had been set up for the Nox separate from the rest of the encampment. While the Nox had space-faring capabilities it was their floating cities that were capable of space flight and the sheer size and population on those cities meant the city-ships were moved only when a planet suffered a catastrophe. The Nox also preferred using the stargate network to developing smaller forms of spacecrafts and thus mining the resources of their worlds, hence their arrival via stargate.

Walking briskly, he arrived at the prepared pavilion in good time but well after the Nox had settled in. The Nox’s standard hanging from its horizontal crossbar, the purple silhouette of a fenri on a gold background, was rustling softly in the light breeze as it stood before the pavilion area. Jack noted that four of the nine tents set up for the Nox had already vanished.

Of the Nox that were visible, Jack recognized Lya, Anteaus, and a few others that he had interacted with since the pacifists' support of the resistance cause. Lya detached herself from the group of Nox she was with and approached him.

"Hello O'Neill," Lya greeted in her soft tone.

"Hello Lya," Jack returned the greeting respectfully. "Are the accommodations satisfactory?"

"They shall serve us," Lya acknowledged as she swept her arm in a motion indicating the area beyond the pavilion. "We thank you for the return of some of our devices."

"And we can't say thank you enough for their loan," Jack acknowledged the invaluable contribution of the Nox devices to the resistance as the Nox had walked the fine line of their pacifism as Lya had done years ago on Tollana when Skarra had gained his freedom: agreeing to hide weapons but having no involvement in using them. That and their absolute repugnance of the Aschens’ environmental manipulation. As nature activists on Earth had shown, it was not safe to anger environmentalists—and a lot more stupid to piss off the Four Great Races' equivalent of tree huggers.
It was not only the underground bunker on his farm that was concealed by Nox invisibility technology but countless hangers hiding resistance ships and fighters on planets with significant resistance presence. And most important of all, used to hide the scattered off-world haven settlements where the families of resistance members, particularly from the dangerous allied worlds, could safely live.

A majority of the devices would remain in place until the situation with the Aschen was well settled but the ones used to hide the Asgård fighters in particular were no longer needed on the worlds that had supported vígamáðrs fleets as the crafts were being returned to the Asgård.

"O'Neill, if you would walk with me?" Lya inquired.

Jack inclined his head respectfully and fell into step with the petite alien as she lead the way deeper into the lightly forested area on the edge of the open grassland that had been selected as the deliberative assembly location.

"O'Neill, I can sense that you are conflicted," Lya spoke softly as she tilted her head up to look at the much larger human that walked beside her. "What troubles you now?"

Jack resisted the urge to alternately sigh and grumble in aggravation. Years of interacting with the Nox and knowledge from the Asgård about their empathetic nature—a major reason they were all so adamantly pacifist—had him understanding why Lya was asking such a question and her earnest desire to have his emotions tranquil. No one liked to be under a constant barrage of headache inducing noise, which was what conflicting and negative emotions were like to the empathetic Nox.

"No longer at peace am I?" Jack quipped, referring back to their last meeting in which Lya had complimented him on being emotionally balanced.

Lya tilted her head to the side. "No, you are still at peace but you are troubled."

Jack resisted the urge to rub his forehead. That statement was contradictory to him but obviously Lya was speaking Nox, or, using poorly defined English terms in a Nox way. His years of interaction helped him as he asked, "I am sorry Lya, but how can I be peaceful if I am troubled?"

"Your core state has not changed. You are centred as you have been for the past four of your years. It is your surface that is troubled."

"My core state?" Jack could not stop himself from asking, not remembering Lya or any other Nox speaking of such a thing before.

"Your core is… I do not know the English words to describe it. I can tell you this, when we first met and preformed the Ritual of Life upon you, all that you were was known to us and it… concerned us. Such an unsettled core state allows one to function as you were doing but it does not allow one to live. While your surface has continued to be troubled by the path you have set yourself upon, your core has centred." Lya gave him a soft smile. "You may define yourself as a soldier O'Neill, but your core defines you as a protector."

Jack thought he got the jest of what Lya was saying but like his wife's technobabble, most of it was beyond his comprehension. "So, right now I am upset because… why?"

"Only you know that O'Neill, but I might say it is because of the stage in the path you have reached. You have forged yourself into a mighty tool O'Neill, but even the greatest of tools reach a time when they must be set aside or forged into something new."

"Easier said than done."
"It can be if one does not have the courage to become something more," Lya counselled.

"So, basically you're telling me to stop being upset that I've done what I said I would do and get on with the last step?" Jack summed dryly. "And trust that the people will make the right choice with this last step?"

Lya nodded her head gently. "We trusted you O'Neill to make the right choice when you came to us and asked for guidance. How can you not extend that trust to your people?"

"It isn't that simple Lya," Jack said regretfully, hating to disillusion the gentle alien as their circling walk brought them back to the Nox pavilion. "Freedom does not bring unity and universal good will between people."

"That is your belief O'Neill, but we trust that it will happen. Not in your lifetime we agree, but it will happen for you have shown us how great the Fifth Race shall be."
Chapter 34

Georgetown University School of Medicine, 37th and O Street NW, Washington, DC
October 13, 2010

NID Special Agent Mark Devlin, shadowed by agents Brendan Weaver and Peter Devon, emerged from the admissions department of the Georgetown University School of Medicine to meet the other eight NID agents waiting for them. It had taken, in Devlin's point of view, an incredible and unnecessary long time for the university employee to peruse their credentials and then reluctantly proved the class schedule for honour student Cassandra Klerk, formerly Frasier.

"Our target should be emerging from the campus's ICC Auditorium shortly heading for an unknown destination as her schedule indicates an hour before her next class." Devlin pointed to two agents of the eight. "I want you two to monitor the public transport centre. The rest will come with me. Once we get to the auditorium we will separate into groups of three. We are to keep in contact at all times. Any questions?"

"No Sir," the agents are responded crisply.

"Good. Remember our target is to be approached with prudence as she is of alien origins and use of the Aschen pacifying rods is authorized if necessary. Move out." Two agents separated from the group, returning to the Aschen transport centre that they had arrived at, and the rest began briskly walking towards the ICC Auditorium.

As they headed towards their targets predicted location Devlin ran over what he knew about their target in their head. Statistics were: red haired, green eyes, five feet six inches and one hundred twenty pounds. Alien of P8X-987 adopted by former SGC CMO Major Doctor Janet Fraiser in 1997. Enrolled in the Georgetown University School of Medicine in 2005. Married Dominic Klerk in 2007. Klerk was employed by The Washington Post who during his questioning of the President during his public press conference had revealed that his wife had accessed the Aschen medical sub-core and located the sterilization statistics.

Making securing Cassandra Klerk a top propriety.

Especially given the fact that Dr Jackson and Dr Fraiser's locations were unknown and examination of communication between Frasier, Jackson, and the Klerk households had revealed a sudden increase in activity almost a month prior to the initiation of the resistance dubbed Operation Quarantine Phase II on Earth.

"Weaver, Devon, you're with me," Devlin spoke up as the doors of the ICC Auditorium were in sight and then divided up the remained six agents. "You three are together, and you three are together and will cover the flanks."

"Yes Sir," the agents affirmed and at his nod split into three smaller groups of three with Devlin taking the lead and heading to the doors as the other two groups began sweeping the grounds around the auditorium building.

Before they had drawn much closer the auditorium doors opened and a significant crowd of students emerged from the building and began dispensing. The NID agents all searched the students for the face of their target from the profile picture they had studied during the debriefing.
"Sir, there are multiple accesses to the auditorium," Weaver spoke up, "should a team check the lecture room while another circles the building?"

"You heard him," Devlin said loudly enough for his earpiece to transmit his words to the other agents. "Kaufmen your group circle the building, Bishop's group you remain out front, and we'll proceed inside."

The mass of students departing the building had thinned allowing Devlin, Weaver, and Devon easier access to the auditorium doors as they entered their eyes still scanning for sight of their target.

As they were nearing the lecture hall where the target's class had been held the double doors opened and a slender redheaded woman emerged slinging a pack over her shoulder and began heading in the opposite direction down the hall.

Devlin had not gotten a full and good look at the woman's face but what he had seen in profile as she had exited and turned away had him suspicious that this was their target. "Devon, check the room," Devlin said lowly. "Weaver with me. Target may be in sight."

Devon entered the room as they passed through and Devlin and Weaver continued down the hall following the redhead woman.

Devlin glanced around and assuring that there was no others around called out as if he was a student trying to attract a friend's attention, "Cassandra."

The sound of her name being called drew Cassie from her thoughts about the lecture she had just attended as she walked through the hallway. Wondering who was calling for her, as she didn't recognize the voice and her friends knew to call her by 'Cassie' she turned around.

And wished she had not.

While men in suits were not unusual on the campus—heck, she was use to seeing young men wearing suits and skateboarding on the paths—men that walked like Uncle Jack and were wired were not.

Her heartbeat rising, Cassie firmed her grip on her shoulder bag and asked, "Can I help you sirs?"

The more attractive man with brown hair and grey eyes man attempted to smile reassuringly as he and his companion drew close. The sound of a door closing down the hall had Cassie's gaze flicking from the two men to see another suited man emerge from the room she had just been in.

Something about the third man's expression had her heartbeat rising faster. At that further rise the Aschen security system flagged the occupants of the hallway and began comparing the biometric data of the individuals against its database.

"Look, if there isn't something I can help you with, I've got someone I'm meeting in the café in ten." Cassie said edgily as she shifted back some more trying to keep distance between her and the suits.

"Mrs Klerk, I am sorry but you have to come with us."

"What for?" Cassie said sharply just as the security system identified her as a registrant confronted with three unregistered individuals carrying unlicensed weaponry. With the weapons registered the system began scanning the campus grounds for other illegal ordinance. Within a short time
eight more unregistered individuals were located.

"I am sorry Mrs Klerk, but we can't tell you that until you come with us."

Cassie shifted back some more as her adrenaline began spiking and looked pointedly at the rounder faced man and took a chance. "Sloppy wiring for NID."

The man with the exposed wiring’s face reacted slightly as his hand rose to touch the poorly hid wire leading to his earpiece. That facial reaction was all Cassie need for confirmation that these were NID—Kinsey's henchmen.

Adrenaline surging Cassie slung her bag off her shoulder and threw it full into the face of the man that had called her name. She did not wait to see if it contacted as she spun around and raced away.

Three things happened simultaneously.

First: more than eight pounds of textbooks in Cassie's bag slamming full into the man's nose breaking it with a spray of blood.

Second: one of the other men yelled for backup to secure the hostile target into his earpiece.

Third: the Aschen security system registered Student Klerk's flight from the unregistered and armed attackers.
Chapter 35

Georgetown University School of Medicine, 37th and O Street NW, Washington, DC
October 13, 2010

Cassie began to dash down the hallway adrenaline rushing through her veins, creating a dangerous hormonal cocktail with her fear of her situation. She had not gotten more than a stride and a half away when an electronic warble joined the sound of the NID agents angrily yelling behind her.

Her heartbeat surged higher with fear that the NID were about to use the taser like Aschen pacifying rod or some other alien tech on her when the electronic warble ended. So did the NID agents yelling. Behind her she heard a single thump as something—like a bag of books—hit the floor.

"Please be calm Student Klerk," the synthesized voice of the campus computer system sounded in the hallway, "your assailants have been relocated to the appropriate law enforcement holding facility and this location secured. Please cease your flight and remain in the hallway for the arrival of security and medical personnel."

The sound of the voice stunned Cassie into drawing upright and stopping her mad dash attempting to escape. Almost not daring to believe she turned around to an empty hallway with her shoulder bag lying on the tiles in the centre of the hall.

Cassie wobbled and reached out to the nearest wall for support. Vaguely registering the computer's voice as it advised her to attempt to calm herself as her mind finally recognized the electronic warble. A warble that she'd only heard demonstrated during orientation at the beginning of each semester signifying the activation of the university's Aschen security system.

"Of course," Cassie whispered to herself, "the security system."

As she realized what had happened Cassie gave a short ironic laugh. She had plotted, and aided the successful plot to overthrow the Aschen government, and yet she had been rescued by the Aschen security system that her school had.

Georgetown University School of Medicine was outside the dead zone currently affecting the stargate terminal and White House, which meant that all other Aschen technology, and systems, in the city were operational. Without any Aschen on Earth anymore, it meant all those systems were operating on automatic and no one on Earth legally knew the codes to control them.

Which is what had gotten the NID caught.

They were so used to President Kinsey abusing his position to get an Aschen to access the Aschen sub-core network to give their agents authorization that they had totally overlooked the necessity of ensuring authorization of their activities now that there were no Aschen on Earth to access those systems.

Straightening from the wall Cassie retraced her steps back to her shoulder bag and as she picked it up the system's synthetic voice, which had been speaking the entire time, registered again. Squaring her shoulders Cassie addressed the university's AI in a shaky voice still, coming down from the adrenaline high, "M-may I call my husband?"
"Mr Klerk shall be notified Student Klerk," the voice responded. "Security and medical personnel have entered the building and will be with you shortly."

"Thank you," Cassie responded politely as she heard the sound of approaching footsteps and shortly the campus police and medics appeared at the end of the hallway swiftly heading towards her. Fisting the material of her shoulder bag Cassie tried to quell her after-shakes as she waited for them to reach her.

... Huddled together in a cubical in the West End's police department near Georgetown University, Detectives Mike Patterson, Jeff Montague, and Amelia Walden discussed their latest case in low voices. Three voices which were surprisingly gleeful for their hushed tones and given their usual case type.

They however were the officers that had been given the investigative case regarding the eleven NID agents that had threatened, and planned kidnapping of, a senior student of Georgetown University, Cassandra Klerk.

It was all the charges that they could bluntly lay against the eleven NID men that had them the most gleeful. For years the shadowy organization had operated in their city, and throughout the country, under the protective aegis of the president and there had been nothing they could do as often the police were on the scene long after the NID had departed.

Now however, the situation was much different.

When the eleven NID agents had appeared, transferred by the Georgetown University security system, they had demanded release but resentfully bowed to police requirements of delivering statements given their method of arrival. In those statements, numerous times, had been stated their mission was to 'arrest' Cassandra Klerk on grounds that were 'classified.'

The NID was an intelligence organization mandated to provide civilian oversight of top secret military operations and had no legal authority to issue arrests let alone actively seize citizens themselves. In fact, their actions under federal law was categorized as kidnapping—which meant most likely by the end of this case they’d be calling in the FBI. Plus they were illegally carrying and concealing restricted weaponry that they were not authorized to possess.

Someone in Kinsey's administrative had messed up, and messed up big, but they were going to milk the situation for all it was worth—especially considering the current social situation.

"So," Mike Patterson spoke up, "we're agreed that after interviewing Mrs Klerk that this kidnapping has to do with her childhood association with the SGC and that it is most likely a retaliatory action taken by the government?"

"Not much else it could be," Jeff Montague spoke up. "Mrs Klerk didn't say much about why the NID were after her but giving her extreme nervousness about the topic when asked by Amelia I would surmise those are good investigative points."

"Think we should arrange for a little bird to tell the media? Maybe stir something up?" Patterson lowered his voice even more. It was bad ethics, but it would ensure, given the circumstances and involvement of the NID, which most people regarded as Kinsey’s own private militia, that this incident was not swept under the governmental rug.

"Nah," Amelia Walden shook her head with a self-satisfied smile. "I think we should just reassure Mrs Klerk again that we are doing everything in our power to prosecute and then encourage her,
upon returning home, to tell the whole story to her husband."

Patterson arched an eyebrow, recognizing that crafty look on Walden's face. "What do you know?"

"Just that," Walden said with a sly shrug, "we send Mrs Klerk home to Mr Klerk."

Montague's eyes suddenly widened. "Klerk. Of course. She is the wife of the Post reporter for the Truth?"

"Bingo," Walden said with soft satisfaction. "We simply do our jobs as we always do and let Mrs Klerk confide in her loving husband."

"Wait," Montague connected more mental dots. "If she's the wife of Dominic Klerk, then this 'arrest' by the NID could be in relation to her husband's activities for the Post as well."

"So you investigate her SGC history," Walden pointed to Patterson, "you check that angle out," this time she pointed to Montague, "and I'll check into how the heck the NID screwed up so delightfully."

"How come you get the fun stuff?" Patterson complained good-naturedly.

"Because I have seniority," Walden retorted playfully. "Besides, I think I know what happened already. They probably have access to a locker with Aschen devices like the tasers but while they can get to them, they don't have the access codes to authorize their use or possession."

"Like us," Montague remarked.

"Like us," Walden agreed, "but all of ours are registered all the time and all we need to get, and are given automatically because of our assignment to cases, is authorization to use. The devices the agents have are all unregistered which means, probably, that they are those ghost weapons that keep giving us in law enforcement so many problems."

"Well then," Patterson leaned back from their little huddle. "Let's get to it."

The other two detectives nodded and three dispersed to their tasks.
Chapter 36

White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC
October 16, 2010

Robert Kinsey and his vice-president Hank Landry were deep in discussion when there was a loud disturbance outside the Oval Office. Both politicians looked towards the door with expressions of annoyance on their faces although Landry's was mixed with curiosity.

There should not be such a disturbance outside the sanctity of the president's office, especially with the increased number of secret service and NID agents on duty given the current social unrest.

The wooden panel flew open and uniformed men whose jackets sported the bright yellow letters F.B.I. began filling the room. Kinsey surged to his feet in outrage.

"What is the meaning of this?" Kinsey demanded imperiously, directing his ire at the man in the lead.

Robert Muller, Director of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, held out his golden badge and meeting the president's gaze squarely said words that had never been spoke together before: "Mr President, you are under arrest."

"What?" Kinsey squawked in disbelief.

Muller continued speaking, enumerating the charges being laid against the president before reciting the Miranda warning as he snapped the handcuffs into place around Kinsey's wrists.

"Call my lawyer Hank," Kinsey snapped at Landry as he was escorted from the Oval Office.

Dominic pointed the TV remote at the television screen and muted the night's replay broadcast of President Kinsey's arrest as well as multiple individuals of the NID organization early that morning. Setting the remote down, Dominic curved his arm around Cassie's shoulders as she curled up against his side on their couch in their Washington home with Boomer on her lap.

"So, how do you feel?" Dominic questioned his wife.

"Relieved," Cassie answered after a moment of thought about the broadcast. "Both for me and Aunt Sam and anyone else that is a part of the resistance or has connections to it. I don't know if Aunt Sam will come out of hiding quite so soon—she has Hope after all—but I expect we'll be seeing more about Alex Colson in the media shortly."

Dominic acknowledged it was an accurate assessment. He wondered what the charismatic billionaire would have to say about his part in public compared to the carefully worded statements released by Colson Industries following the discovery that it was Colson media satellites that were responsible for the worldwide Veritas broadcast on October 11th.

"And how did you come up with the idea to play the angle that Kinsey was after me because of mom's SGC history or your current activities?" Cassie inquired while reflectively petting Boomer.
"I can't take credit for that," Dominic admitted, "one of the detectives on your case gave me the idea when I was at the station to pick you up so I just proposed either possibility and let the public run with it."

Run with it they had. It almost made Kinsey's expression of outrage while being ushered into a FBI vehicle comical considering the hostile tone towards Kinsey and his administration in newspapers, TV news, online discussion forums, social networking sites, and what people were saying on the streets.

It had only been a matter of time until Kinsey was out of power in some way. But, the arrest and demanded resignation of the president, was leaving a hole in the country's power structure. That was as much a topic of the news as the president's arrest was.

"So what do you figure is going to happen now?"

"Well, beyond Kinsey facing trial for the charges laid against him and probably more if they can legally tie him to events of the Alliance—which they will if the 'anonymous' informant Officer Walden reports contacted her keeps feeding them." Dominic was nearly certain that Walden's informant was Carter considering the timeliness and relevancy of the data being passed to the police. "I think Vice-President Landry will become the acting president—at least until elections are held. I don't think he'll stay in power long because of his ties with Kinsey's administration."

"A mess," Cassie summed up. While the resistance brought freedom from Aschen domination, it created quite a turmoil for their government and society and the impact would be felt much longer, and with potentially worse social impact, than Disclosure's ten years ago.

"A mess," Dominic agreed. "One we are going to be deal with for decades to come."

Cassie grunted, "And thanks to the Aschen we're going to live for all those decades."

In that at least the Aschen had been truthful, once the full dose of their anti-aging vaccine was delivered a person's lifespan expectancy was dramatically doubled. And the younger a person was when vaccinated, the greater was the lifespan extension.

Considering the hidden cost, living longer was something that Cassie would gladly do without.

Dominic squeezed the arm around her shoulder comfortably and after picking up the remote again, turned the TV off. The light of the living room dimmed now that the TV was off and the only illumination in the room was the light streaming in from the streetlights and outside lights.

"Have you been thinking about my suggestion?" Cassie spoke softly in the dimness, her voice hesitant as she nervously kneaded Boomer's fur.

"Yes," Dominic answered honestly. "And as much as I want to, Cassie, I don't think it's reasonable. Now that no one can have children, I don't expect orphanages to exist by the end of the year."

"That's true for here," Cassie agreed.

Dominic looked down at her face with puzzlement on his. "You mean you want to try to adopt from some other country? I think it's going to be the same thing Cassie."

Cassie shook her head and made a vague gesture towards the ceiling but was careful not to dislodge her lapful of dog. "I mean, out there."

Dominic stiffened against her side before saying hesitantly. "Cassie, what if…"
"What if it makes people question my background?" Cassie said softly.

"Yes. Cassie, you are already in the centre of so much, I don't want any more troubles for you."

"Which you think there will be if it becomes known that I am an alien refugee like a couple hundred others on this planet," Cassie observed.

"Yes, you told me that before Disclosure the Stargate program modified all the refugee and adoptee files on Earth to make it seem as if they'd been placed off-world and I don't want them to be ostracized." Dominic hesitated before adding, "Or any children adopted."

"But how would it make people question my background?"

"Why else would you ask unless you knew it could be done?" Dominic pointed out.

Cassie did not agree with her husband but would not continue the argument because she knew it would upset him. He was even more sensitive about her safety right now because of the NID actions a few days ago. But, that did not mean she could start dropping hints, anonymously of course, in various online discussions regarding Earth's population re-population problem—like the recommended financial incentives and tax breaks for those that were fertile to have children—and see what came of it.
Chapter 37

Diplomatic Encampment, Alaris
Day One of the Confederation Deliberative Assembly

Daniel wandered about the tent city on Alaris with fascinated eyes in the free early morning hours before the Phase IV deliberative assembly would commence at noon. The camp was an eclectic profusion of Earth canvas-frame military tents, Jaffa yurts, and a multitude of temporary pavilions set up by different ethnic groups—yet defined so that no nation's camp area intruded into another's and everyone had access to all communal water and cooking stations.

The structures set up were a profusion of colour and materials—an eclectic collage that was echoed in the sky above with the multitude of spaceships in orbit above the planet. North of camp was the unloading and docking grounds for smaller ships like Goa'uld teltacs and alkeshes, Earth battleships, a multitude of others that he didn't recognize the ethnic origins of, and Aschen freighters. The Aschen-style spaceships had individual planetary emblems painted where the Aschen crest, of a stylized firebird, use to be. A good indication that those ships had been vessels claimed during Phase II operations on those planets.

Resistance personnel managing camp order and security were recognizable by white bands of cloth secured around their upper arms that displayed a peridot coloured symbol on top of native ethnical clothing. The emblem had puzzled him for some time before he had seen it on the side of a resistance ship large enough to distinguish that it was five Asgârd letters intricately arranged: ēðel, hægl, nyd, eh, and lagu.

Those five letters spelt Ohnel—the phonetic spelling of O'Neill in Asgârd.

A man he had yet to see hide or hair of since his arrival some days ago and been actively hunting ever since. Even while paying his respects to all the alien representatives and ambassadors he knew before the deliberative assembly commenced. Inquiring after Jack in the different camps usually resulted in three answers: Jack had departed the camp shortly before he arrived, was believed to be on board his command ship the Asgârd vessel Íðavöllr, or visiting the construction site for the hall.

His only hope now was to accost the man at the now complete hall before the deliberative assembly began. Although how he was going to serve as aid to Weir and simultaneously keep Jack on the diplomatic track Daniel had yet to figure out, but he was certain he would manage.

Hearing a chime from his wristwatch Daniel glanced at the device and registered the time. Wishing that time did not pass so quickly he stopped absorbing and studying his surroundings and headed back his tent to prepare for the afternoon.

Daniel, smartly dressed in an Earth suit accompanied an equally smartly dressed Weir in a woman's trouser suit to the domed hall as all the representatives began assembling. As the line of people slowly entered the building Daniel caught sight of a uniformed Jack approaching. While the attire was the same colour and cut of his Air Force dress uniform with visor, the uniform Jack now wore was stripped of all rank insignia and awards and decorations of honour; making Jack's chest curiously bare of ornaments in Daniel's eyes who was accustomed to seeing him with his military awards.
Daniel squeezed Weir's arm to get her attention and spoke lowly when the woman tilted her head up towards his.

"I just saw Jack," Daniel gestured in the man's direction so that Earth's UN representative could see him as well. "I'll be right back."

Weir nodded her head in understanding and indicated she would remain in line. She knew that her aid had attempted to meet up with his old friend since their arrival on Alaris with no success.

As Daniel moved towards Jack he was a little surprised that Jack wasn't surrounded by military but by what appeared to be more diplomats. Although considering the sheer number of resistance soldiers on Alaris compared to the second largest security group—Earth's AF forces—perhaps it was not so surprising security around Commander O'Neill was relatively relaxed in appearance. Appearances could be deceiving afterwards, as two of the diplomats he now recognized as Tok'ra by their garments, and who knew the true power of the Íðavöllr in orbit.

"Jack!" Daniel cried out when close enough to get Jack's attention. It worked as Jack turned his head towards Daniel and actually stopped walking so that Daniel could close the distance between them.

"Hello Daniel," Jack greeted as soon as the archaeologist reached him.

"I've been trying to get a hold of you for ages Jack," Daniel scolded, "and I know you are busy but could you at least have taken the time to reply to one of my emails."

Jack flicked a silvered eyebrow upwards and remained silent.

Daniel sighed at the deliberate rebuttal, acknowledging in his own mind that yes, perhaps he had sent Jack a little too many emails but that did not mean Jack could not have responded to at least one.

"Is there anything else Daniel?" Jack finally asked after enduring Daniel's chastising look for longer then he cared to deal with. "We really should get going as we're scheduled to start in fifteen."

"Okay," Daniel agreed, knowing that now was not the time to question or chastise Jack—nor the place. Questioning and chastising was always much better done in private when dealing with Jack. "Where are you sitting so I can join you?"

Jack appeared to be taking lessons from Teal'c as his eyebrow rose even higher. "Did I miss something? Daniel, aren't you here as an aid?"

Daniel blinked behind the lenses of his glasses and said cautiously, "Yes. But what does that have to do with anything?"

"It means Daniel, I will sit in my seat with my aid and you will sit with…" Jack looked to his aid Sally.

"UN representative Dr Elizabeth Weir," Sally supplied obligingly.

"…and you two will sit where our seating system sits you." Jack concluded as he looked back at Daniel.

"You mean I won't be with you?" Daniel was befuddled.
"No Daniel," Jack shook his head. "You won't be."

"But, Jack! What about…" Daniel looked uncomfortable as he looked at the faces behind the resistance commander.

"What about what?" Jack asked with exasperation.

Daniel looked increasingly uncomfortable before finally confessing, "Jack, you're not the most diplomatic person—"

"So you want to sit with me so I watch my mouth?" Jack said acerbically before spearing his old friend with a glacial look. "Daniel, I've managed fine without you for the past ten years. I think I can do the same for this."

Daniel was so floored by that sharp response that he just blinked owlishly after Jack and his group as they moved on past him, angling off to take one of the side doors into the hall. For a few moments Daniel stood there before shaking off his stupor by stuffing it into the back of his mind to deal with later. He had a deliberative assembly to attend. Turning around he hurried back to Weir's side just as the woman reached the entrance door. Entering the hall, there was no need for their eyes to adjust once inside the building because the transparent material of the structure's top allowed the noon day sun to illuminate the interior.

The building was shaped and laid out like an ancient amphitheatre with emblems of each nation embossed on the section of tables and chairs they were expected to sit upon. At the front of the hall raised slightly above and behind the unadorned speaker's podium was another section of two tables. Of the emblems there he recognized only four: the resistance's symbol, the Nox fenri, the Tok'ra poplar tree, and surprisingly, the stylized firebird of the Aschen. Turning his attention to where the representatives would sit as he looked at the emblems, he could not see any pattern to the seating arrangement as allied, federated, and treaty nations were freely mingled.

"There," Weir murmured to him as she pointed high and near the back to the picture of an Earth world map cradled by two olive branches. They made their way up the isle closest to their chairs to take their seats, set up their electronic devices for taking notes, and settled in to wait.

Fifteen minutes later after the last of the representatives had taken their seats, resistance Commander Jack O'Neill stepped up to the podium and began the deliberative assembly.
Chapter 38

Diplomatic Encampment, Alaris
Day Five of the Confederation Deliberative Assembly

Late the night after the fifth day of the deliberation assembly had concluded Daniel cradled a cup of hot coffee in his hands to fight off the evening chill as he walked north towards the moored spaceships. Considering the sheer number and diversity of delegates present he thought the assembly sessions were going well and was amazed at the self-restraint and patience Jack was demonstrating each day with all the political shenanigans.

Nodding his head at a sentry wearing the resistance armband Daniel thought back to the first session and what had transpired that day. One of the first things explained had been the seemingly random seating arrangement. Representatives had been seated according to the population number they represented, from lowest seated in the front and most numerous at the back which is why Weir and himself were near the back—the UN technically was meant to represent Earth and if the planet's nations actually had been unified it would have only been Weir and himself present on Alaris.

The two tables behind the podium had been the most surprising and symbolic to him. The higher table served as the seats for Jack and Sally, the Tok'ra Per'sus and Pales, the Nox Lya and Anteaus, and Aschen Jullis and Clarr. As resistance commander that had broken Aschen domination over them Jack had become the unofficial mediator, the Tok'ra and Nox were neutral observers often providing a voice of balance, and the Aschen were present to personally know and observe the assembly's negations and decisions that would affect them.

The larger table below them was empty, each chair present embossed with a single symbol that bore silent witness to the worlds that had no people to speak for them.

It did puzzle Daniel that the Asgärd did not have a seat at the high table but he was hoping to speak with an Asgärd himself tonight as he had arranged to meet with Janet on board Iðavöllr instead of their usual get together in his tent since his arrival on Alaris. He was also hoping to get some answers about how and why Jack had such Asgärd support—tablets, communication stones, spaceships, etc—as it was not something that could simply be explained away with Jack and Sam living amongst the Ida race for some time.

Daniel reached his destination, a square of barren patch of earth that was designated as the Iðavöllr transport area even though he knew that the Asgärd transport beam could be utilized anywhere on the planet. Daniel checked his watch to see he was right on time just as whiteness enveloped him.

The white light and spots dancing before his eyes faded and Daniel found himself in an architecturally distinct Asgärd chamber with a brown skinned woman beside the terminal in the room.

"Kveðja," the woman greeted in Asgärd.

Daniel's blue eyes widened behind his glasses as he looked at the woman with increased interest; she was not a resistance soldier but an Asgärd inhabiting a human form replicator. "Hello, I am Dr Daniel Jackson."
"I am aware Dr Jackson," the woman responded in English, "I am Skuld. Dr Fraiser apologizes for not being present at your arrival. Follow me and I shall escort you to her quarters."

Eagerly Daniel fell into step beside the Asgård and hoped their journey took a bit of time so that he could ask some questions and maybe have some answered. "I hope you don't mind if I ask you some questions."

"I believe Supreme Commander Thor has said that is what you do," Skuld responded urbanely. "Ask and I shall endeavour to answer."

That response practically had Daniel vibrating with excitement and his mind race through all the questions he could ask and those that he wanted to ask. To his chagrin, he uncouthly blurted his first question out: "Why are you black?"

"Pardon?" Skuld questioned as they turned down another hallway.

"I am sorry," Daniel responded flustered, "I have seen Thor in his replicator form and wonder why you chose your skin colour to be so dark?"

"I did not choose it," Skuld responded as she looked at him. "It was First's selection."

"You are the one who volunteered to first inhabitant a replicator?" Daniel asked in surprise, now recognizing the Asgård's name and remembering what Jack and Sam had told him about the Asgård coming to inhabit replicator bodies.

"Correct. This form was modeled after the automaton humanoid that we found in the Nilor sector that allowed their evolution. It is most fortunate that Commander O'Neill developed his strategy for us as the replicator's evolution was proving most difficult to combat."

Daniel's eyes widening behind his glasses. Not wanting to think about what a statement meant in terms of the replicator advancement if one of the Four Great Races had been unable to hold them at bay any longer. "Is that why you are here?"

Skuld looked at Daniel and her silence prompted the archaeologist to detail his question.

"Is that why the Asgård are supporting Jack's resistance?"

"Indeed we are not."

Blinking stupidly at that respond Daniel stuttered out, "B-but, you are! You're here, we're using your technology like the tablets and communication stones, and Jack is using this ship!"

"As is his right," Skuld responded calmly as she looked away from Daniel once again.

"His right?" Daniel questioned. "What is his right?"

"Access to all our resources is the right of every citizen although most do not earn the amount of credits—which O'Neill earned while battling the replicators—to use the amount of resources that O'Neill is currently utilizing. Even if he did not have enough, it would still be the right and honour of myself and my sisters to aid O'Neill with Ælveg.""}

Daniel blinked rapidly as his brain struggled to compute two of the terms used by Skuld: 'right' and 'citizen.' Voice slight strangled by the implications he asked, "Is Jack an Asgård citizen?"

Skuld cast a glance back at him as they turned another corner. "The O'Neills are."
Daniel was floored by that revelation and intended to demand answers from Jack and Sam via his Asgård tablet just as soon as he could get back to it. For Jack though, it might be a better idea to try harder at cornering the man on Alaris during break periods as he still had not gotten a response from a single email even after their brief meet up the first day of the assembly. Face to face also meant he would be able to interrogate more answers out of Jack and he was sorry that he had let his duties as aid to Weir and fascination with the assembly interfere so far with his intentions of having a serious talk with Jack.

"We have arrived Dr Jackson," Skuld's voice interrupted his thoughts as they finally stopped in front of a door identical to the multitude they had already passed.

Daniel opened his mouth to see if he could get one more question asked when the door hissed open to reveal Janet in the doorway.

"Come on in Daniel, I am sorry I wasn't in the transport room to greet you but I got delayed conferencing with Dr Chan of the World Health Organization." Janet smiled as she turned to Skuld, "Thank you for escorting him here Skuld."

The Asgård regally inclined her head and strode off before Daniel could voice his own thanks. When he looked back at Janet, she was studying him with a curious look.

"You look a little stunned Daniel," Janet remarked as she ushered him into her quarters. The two friends settled into the seating area and soon were deep into discussion about Daniel's latest discovery about the O'Neill's citizenship status, how Phase IV was progressing, Cassie's attempted kidnapping, Robert Kinsey's arrest, and many other matters.
Chapter 39

Perimeter of the Diplomatic Encampment, Alaris
Day Seven of the Confederation Deliberative Assembly

As evening settled onto the encampment Jack sat on a rocky outcrop near the perimeter of the tent city and with eye on his sons, who were currently engaged in a rousing game of soccer with off-duty resistance soldiers, let his thoughts dwell on the events of the day’s assembly.

His thoughts were interrupted by a click sound from the communication stone that rested in the same spot over his left pectoral that his radio had when enlisted. "O'Neill."

"Sir, the Earth US Ambassador is approaching your position from five-o'clock. Do you wish us to redirect him?" a voice from an on-duty sentry inquired.

Jack blew out a breath noisily but did not twist around in his seat to look behind him to locate the approaching ambassador himself. He would probably have to deal with the man sooner or later and maybe it would be better to do it now before it was the man's turn to stand at the speaker's podium. "Negative. Allow him to approach."

"Yes Sir," the sentry responded and a second click sounded, signalling that the transmission had concluded.

The US Ambassador's arrival was announced long before he drew close enough to speak by the crunching of his feet as he walked and what sounded like a mumbled curse when, from the noise, he misstep while navigating the rocky formation of the outcrop.

Joseph Faxon stopped approaching when he was about a metre away from his target, on the rocks below the ledge Jack was seated upon. By remaining standing, the ambassador's eyes were level with the resistance commander's and the two men steadily regarded each other.

It was Faxon who spoke first, "O'Neill."

"Faxon," Jack returned evenly and fell into silence again. An unvoiced sign that if anything was to be spoken between them Joseph would have to be the one to start the conversation.

Even with all his service as a diplomat, Joseph could not quite mask his irritation at having to concede to Jack's tactics. Jack assumed it was the man's personal animosity towards him that had the usual polished diplomatic façade cracking.

Because the animosity between them was personal. Very personal.

Joseph turned slightly away to look towards the rowdy soccer match before speaking again. "I find it surprising that you would have brought your children to a combat zone."

Jack was unperturbed by the dig and had the perfect retort of his own. "Worrisome isn't it, that I would consider them safer with me than on Earth."

"And yet you are not so worried about your wife's safety—who is still on Earth," Joseph bit back.

"My wife has always amply demonstrated her ability to ensure her own safety," Jack responded. There was no need to go into the details of Sam's security measures or her access to Earth.
resistance members and Maybourne's soldiers.

Joseph's mouth drew into a tight line as he turned his eyes from the soccer players back to Jack. "Why have you done this O'Neill?"

"Done what?" Jack inquired.

"Done this," Joseph waved a hand about to encompass their surroundings. "Why have you conquered the Confederation and are now playing at being a diplomat?"

"I've done neither."

"Don't tell me you don't have something else planned O'Neill. I know you. I know you resented me when I was negotiating with the Aschen. You hate anyone nosing into your territory and taking power from you," Joseph's voice growing louder with anger.

"You only think you know me Faxon," Jack was unperturbed by the man's verbal attack and tone as now he turned his eyes to the soccer players and sought out the forms of his two sons.

"No, O'Neill, it is you who fail to evaluate yourself clearly. This army you built up and conquering all Confederation planets and others proves my view to be true."

Jack resisted the urge to roll his eyes skyward at Joseph's dogged insistence that he was some sort of villain. "Look, Faxon, if you don't have something constructive to say about the assembly or anything else it's getting late and Josh and Matt's bedtime is coming up."

Joseph looked further upset at the mention of the names of Jack's sons. In his anger that had begun to grow upon learning that Sam was not a missing person as he had believed, like most of Earth, he was unable to keep himself from saying, "They could have been mine. That's why you've ignored all the attempts at arranging meetings between us until now. You can't stand the thought that they and Sam were mine until you tricked and stole her away."

Jack snorted dismissively as he continued watching his sons play, wondering at the ambassador's self-delusion. The clearly disbelieving sound from Jack urged Joseph to further rage about his point.

"It's only because you were her CO and abused your power by ordering her to go with you that she went. And then you abused her into a relationship with you! I know Sam and I know she would have never have left me!"

"I didn't think you were dumb enough to believe Kinsey's brainwashing lie. And if you really know Sam as you claim you do, you would know that no one could keep Sam by force."

Joseph ground his teeth when he was unable to come up with a quick enough retort. After a moment, he could not keep himself from saying it again as he gestured to the two boys playing with resistance soldiers: "They would have been mine."

"They never would have been yours," Jack said flatly, as he looked from the players and challengingly locked gazes with Joseph.

"Of course they would have been," Joseph nearly sneered. "I remember how you two fought about your stupid paranoia over the Aschen and it was me that she was dating and about to marry."

"No, Faxon, they never would have been yours," Jack repeated softly, "because just like the rest of SG-1, to demonstrate faith in the Aschen's anti-ageing vaccine, Sam would have been
vaccinated. And that would have sterilized her."

Joseph looked away.

"What I really don't get Faxon is why you agreed to let an alien race," Jack paused as he searched for the correct way to phrase what he was attempting to say. Finally he just settled on the words he remembered Mollem saying ten years ago, "Curtail Earth's population growth and never even inquired how they were going to do it. Just blithely accepted whatever their methods would be and however they implemented it without thinking about whom would be affected."

"We did not know," Joseph said stiffly.

"Don't lie to me Faxon," Jack said sharply. "Kinsey's signature isn't the only one on the section of the Alliance treaty detailing the sterilization of Earth's people. And if you claim you don't know about or understand the clause then I'm going to assume you are very, very stupid."

"They said it would only be thirty-percent," Joseph muttered defensively. "And they were right; Earth's population growth was unstable."

"Unstable? Most developed countries on Earth—which were the first ones to get the vaccine—were already below population replacement rate. And they you guys went and reduced that to zero possibility of children." Jack snorted derisively as he raised an arm and waved it towards the soccer players, the prearranged signal for his sons that game time was up for the evening. "I just hope you do a better job this time representing the US than you did with the Aschen. Americans don't deserve to suffer the consequences of another one of your screw-ups."

Joseph struggled to hold his tongue as the two O'Neill sons came bounding up the rocky outcropping. After saying exuberant hellos in passing to him, they clambered up to the ledge where their father was to excitedly speak to him about their game exploits.

Joseph watched the three O'Neills interact for a few minutes until his heart could not take it anymore. Turning around he began to carefully navigate his way off the outcrop and back to his tent. While he still believed what he had told O'Neill there were some things that the man had said that were true and it was time that he acknowledged a few points to himself.

Most of his anger at the man came from learning the fact that Sam had been with O'Neill since her disappearance ten years ago. Like the rest of Earth, he had believed her a missing person, and her disappearance when he had been on the verge of proposing to her had emotionally devastated him. To learn just weeks ago that she had run off, married, and had a family with a man he had not even only marginally viewed as a rival for her attention had turned that old devastation into fury.

No man liked being confronted with the success of a rival, and even less when one had thought that rival already defeated.
Chapter 40

Mess Tent, Earth Pavilion, Diplomatic Encampment, Alaris
Day Nine of the Confederation Deliberative Assembly

Daniel and Janet were engrossed in a conversation over their lunch in Earth's mess tent while the representatives broke for the mid-day meal, discussing a common topic of conversation between them—Jack. Particularly how watching Jack mediating the assembly since day one had demonstrated how much he had changed since he had served as SG-1’s leader.

A shadow fell over Janet and Daniel looked up in irritation at the intrusion on a private conversation. His irritated look turned into one of surprise when he saw who was standing behind Janet in AF BDU, holding a lunch tray, and otherwise trying to inconspicuously look like any other Earth soldier.

"Mind if I join you docs?" Jack questioned.

Janet craned her neck around to look at her commander and gestured with her left had to the open seat beside her. "Not at all Sir."

"Thank you," Jack replied obligingly as he took the offered seat on the bench and, ignoring Daniel's surprised look, dug into the food on his tray with enthusiasm. The reason for his enthusiasm was obvious as beside a cup of coffee, his 'meal' consisted of nothing but a whole pie.

"Sir, that better not be all you're eating for lunch," Janet said disapprovingly in a clearly doctoral voice.

Jack shook his head and after swallowing a piece of pie answered, "Nah, I already ate on board the ship. But no one makes apple pie like Palmer does."

Daniel was so wrapped up in his surprise at Jack's appearance and asking to join them, that it took him a moment to place the name and information. He now remembered there used to be a Palmer in the SGC kitchens—Jack had raved about Palmer and apple pie before—and he could only surmise that the man was still cooking for the AF and was on Alaris none the less.

"So, what were you two talking about?" Jack questioned.

"You, actually," Daniel responded honestly.

Jack made a face. "Why me? I'm boring. Couldn't you talk about something interesting?"

Daniel muffled a snort of laughter in his mug and Janet controlled her own impulse to roll her eyes at the tent roof. That was just such a Jack thing to say. But the spurt of amusement faded for Daniel as he thought about how he still thought Jack was the Jack of ten years ago when many, many things had shown him that Jack was no longer the same.

Watching Jack mediate the assembly had driven that point home clearly to him. It had also shown just how ham-handed his attempt to get himself in the position of Jack's diplomat—which he'd filled for years on SG-1—on the first day of the assembly had been. He had not thought about how those ten years had changed them, changed Jack really. Who had been involved first with the Asgārd's war with the replicators, and then his own war with the Confederation. Constantly
fighting and negotiating with alien races had Jack developing his own diplomatic skills that he had not needed to utilize when he had had Daniel to act as diplomat.

Daniel however had not really changed which had led to his terribly false assumption that they had slipped back into their old roles of interaction. Totally ignoring the full consequences of past actions and emotions. Something he would have to apologize to Jack for.

But that was not the only apology he realized he owed Jack.

"Jack, I don't know if you know that Janet and I have been meeting up to talk about everything that has happened and been happening."

"I know," Jack stated bluntly.

"You know?" Daniel looked owlishly from behind his glasses at Jack. "How do you know?"

"Daniel, I command Iðavöllr," Jack said bluntly, "no one gets on or off my ship without my express permission."

"Oh," Daniel said softly looking at Janet and receiving confirmation from the redhead that what Jack just said was true. Janet's visits to Alaris and his one trip on board the Asgärd vessel had not been as incognito as he had thought. "If you know I visited Janet on board Iðavöllr a few days ago, why didn't you drop in to say hello?"

"Other business," was the only answer Jack offered.

Daniel looked like he was going to be mulish on the point, before letting it pass. Questioning Jack on that point was something he would have done while on SG-1, and while it had not always been an acceptable thing to do those years ago, it was definitely not acceptable now.

Setting his coffee mug down Daniel cast a fidgety look around the mess tent, which by now was nearly empty of people and girdled himself to say his apology. It was not exactly the right time or place for what he was going to say, but if he did not say it he did not know if there ever would be and putting it off only made things more difficult.

"Jack," Daniel said seriously and waited until the man looked up from his pie at his face. "I owe you an apology."

Jack's fork paused in the act of cutting another bite of pie. "For what exactly?"

Daniel's answering smile was merciless and directed at himself. "For a lot of things, but mostly, for not believing you when you did what was your job and warned us about the Aschen."

Jack set his fork down and kept Daniel's steady gaze. "Then, can you tell me why you blew not just what I had to say, but me, off?"

Daniel marshalled his thoughts and attempted to explain to himself first why he—they—had been so vicious in attacking Jack and the warnings he had given. If he could do that, then maybe he could explain it to Jack.

"All that we can say in our defence I think," Janet spoke up, "is that we were desperate for the war with the Goa'uld to end. So when the first opportunity presented itself to us, we took it at face value. And could not bear it when someone asked the very questions we should have been asking ourselves."

Both men looked at the medical doctor whose brown gaze only met Jack's eyes. "Questions like,
if they were so advanced, why were they willing to share technology when similar advanced societies had not been? What were the benefits to them or their society?"

Those were only two of the many questions that Jack had outlined in his warning report and been callously dismissed by his colleagues who should have known better. Had in fact benefited from, often with their lives, by those very questions he had asked countless times before.

"So Sir, you have my apology as well," Janet said formally. "My apology and my thanks for not allowing our dismissal of your warnings to prevent you from pursuing the course of action you took to show us the truth."

Sombrely Jack inclined his head signalling his acceptance of her apology.

The only formal apology he had gotten to date had been from Sam. She had given it years ago some months into their initial investigation of the Aschen that had revealed the first facet of the Aschen’s sinister agenda for the Confederation. He knew that Sam had struggled to get him to not just accept her apology, but really forgive and move beyond in the first years of their marriage. Jack had not expected to get any other apologies from his former close circle of friends. Daniel, Teal’c, and Janet had been as adamant in their defence of the Aschen as he had been in attacking them.

Daniel cleared his throat and Jack and Janet looked back at archaeologist. "Janet is right Jack but there is one aspect that I want to add. For myself I dismissed most of what you said as military paranoia and being unwilling to concede that we had found an answer that didn't involve weapons. I didn't stop to think that it wasn't paranoia but the very training that had served us ever since we'd stepped through the stargate."

Jack tilted his head marginally in acceptance.

"We believed so strongly because we needed to," Daniel said passionately, "because what we were doing was bigger than ourselves. Was bigger than our friendship. What I failed to keep in mind was that I was not the only one wanting an end to the Goa’uld war. The end of the war meant far more to you than it meant to me. For me it meant an end to the threat of my wife's killers. To you, it meant you could have the future you so desperately wanted and fought for with Sam. For that failure, you have my apologies and like Janet, my thanks. I am sorry we failed you as friends and I thank you for continuing to fight."

Jack and Daniel held gazes for a moment longer before Jack simply stood and vacated the table. As Daniel watched Jack walk away, he knew that apology had just been the first volley in a long and possibly winless campaign for Jack's forgiveness.

Janet reached for Jack's abandoned tray to stack it and the dishes with her own. "I am relieved that he accepted my apology so easily."

Daniel sighed as Janet's words drove home to him some more truths. "But you and Jack always had a different relationship, a very professional one compared to mine and his."

Abydos and then serving together on the flagship team had bounded the two men together in a very strong and close friendship. A friendship he had shredded by turning so hatefully on Jack and to his shame; had been close to kicking the man to the curb when Jack had simply pulled away from everyone for Minnesota.

"So, do you feel he accepted yours?" Janet asked softly.

Tiredly Daniel gave another mournful sigh as he looked into Janet's brown eyes. "I am sure that
he has accepted my apology but he has not forgiven. And with Jack, that road to forgiveness is going to be long and unforgiving in itself."
Chapter 41

Chapter 41

Perimeter of the Diplomatic Encampment, Alaris
Day Eleven of the Confederation Deliberative Assembly

Daniel cautiously navigated the rocky outcrop overlooking the beaten down area that served as a soccer field to off duty security personnel. His goal was the slight figure of Janet sitting perched on a particularly high rock outcrop, with her legs drawn up to her chest and head bowed. He did not know why she was here and as he drew closer, the sound of sniffling and raspy breaths from her form alarmed him even more.

Closing the distance between them, Daniel carefully seated himself beside her. When she did not react to his presence, he dared wrap an arm around her shoulders and tilt her towards him. Janet gave a ragged sigh as she slumped against him but otherwise did not acknowledge his presence. From that sigh, Daniel figured that either her crying jag had already ended or she was suppressing it now that he was there.

Daniel remained quiet for many more minutes, offering comfort with his presence and silence. Finally, Janet lifted her head, revealing tear streaked cheeks, and looked towards the soccer field while keeping her legs tucked to her body and arms still wrapped around her knees.

"I just finished talking with Cassie..." Janet's voice choked for a moment. "I just finished telling her that she and Dominic can't have children together."

Daniel's breath caught in the back of his throat as a wave of horror and sympathy washed over him. When he had regained control of his emotions, he dared to ask, "Why?"

"For Cassie," Janet's voice almost broke but she steadied herself again, "the Aschen's anti-aging vaccine damaged her ovaries beyond repair. It is possible for her to undergo artificial insemination with one of her own extracted eggs as most are still good and her uterus is perfectly healthy. But the child couldn't be fathered by Dominic because of what the vaccine did to him—to the world."

"What did it do to everyone else that it didn't do to Cassie?" Daniel was obviously confused.

"The vaccine reacted differently to Cassie because of the naquadah in her blood. In the reports from WHO, the resistance files, even tests on Dominic and me, show that the vaccine is actually engineered to prevent full maturation of gametes. And because the eggs and sperm aren't fully mature, fertilization can't take place and that's why there is nothing anyone—even the Asgärd—can do."

"So, there is nothing to be done?" Daniel asked helplessly.

"Nothing," Janet affirmed bitterly as she lifted a hand and wiped at the remains of the tears that had tracked down her face. "The sterilization, along with the longevity, is irreversible."

"What? Why?"

"Reversing the vaccine's longevity components wouldn't just turn back on the natural aging process, but accelerate it," Janet answered as she shifted upright so she no longer leaned on Daniel. "People can either live for hundreds of years childless, or live for less than a decade and die childless."
Daniel gave the petite redhead's shoulder a squeeze with the arm still wrapped around her. He could not think of any words to comfort her in her bitterness.

The tread of boots on the rocks behind them drew Daniel's attention and he looked behind him. To his surprise, it was Jack nimbly making his way over the outcropping. The grey haired man up on reaching them, gave Daniel a curt nod of greeting, and then squatted on the other side of Janet.

Janet turned her head from fixedly looking at the soccer field to look Jack in the eye.

"I just got off the comm with Cassie," Jack said, his face incredibly gently. The face of a parent connecting with another parent.

Janet turned her face back to looking at the soccer field, unable to bare another parent's sympathy yet.

"Do you know how Sam and I got off Earth ten years ago?" Jack asked unexpectedly. Both doctors looked and blinked at him, thrown by the sudden change of topic and the man's conversational tone. "Well, just after my retirement and just after finishing up the sale of my house in the Springs I went to see her again. We yelled at each other like we always did then but I managed to convince her to come with me so we left on Ozzy."

"Ozzy?" Daniel asked, still off balance. "Who's Ozzy?"

"What," Jack corrected. "Ozzy is a goa'uld ship that is twice the size of a teltac that used to belong to Osiris—but saying 'Osiris' ship' has too many s's in it so I just called it Ozzy."

"How did you get off-world—when did you get off-world—to get your hands on a goa'uld ship?" Daniel looked incredulous. "And how did you know it was Osiris' ship?"

"I didn't go off-world. Ozzy was buried in Egypt and I know it was Osiris' because the snake was the one that bragged to me about it when I caught her outside that tomb in Egypt where you two and Sam found that Rayner guy all busted up."

"And you never reported it?" Janet demanded incredulous.

"Oh, I reported it." Jack waved a hand dismissively as he obligingly explained. "No one believed Osiris was telling the truth after the geeks did a sweep of the tomb and area with their doohickeys and only found that computer bank thing. But the snake had been a little too damn particular about what it said for my liking so after doing some hunting around, I found Ozzy. The geeks however had already reported that there was nothing there and I figured, with Kinsey breathing down our necks," Jack shrugged carelessly as he let the statement hang.

Both still stared at him incredulously. He had found a Goa'uld ship on Earth and not reported it? Even with the man's extreme sense of paranoia, they would have thought… apparently his paranoia was greater than they thought possible!

"So anyway," Jack continued in the same careless tone of voice, "I found Ozzy and during those two weeks you Daniel were placating the Egyptian government, I figured out the ship, got it to Minnesota, and hid it in the pond." Here Jack looked a little irate. "Had to raise the darn deck, the ship displaced so much water."

Daniel and Janet's expressions had gone from incredulous to out right stunned. How in the world had he managed to figure out the ship, pilot it to his cabin, conceal it, and still be in Egypt to fly back with them to the States? And not raise any eyebrows about an extra flight into Egypt? But, come to think of it, Jack and Teal'c had departed after they had already left and if Teal'c had never
said anything about being the only passenger and Jack had been at Peterson to be picked up with Teal'c by the SGC driver… Jack's possible manoeuvrings gave them a headache.

"As I was saying, once I convinced Sam to come with me, it was a simple matter to drive to the cabin, get Ozzy, convince Sam that I was not snaked, and then we were off to Ida to ask the Asgard for help. I didn't have any proof then about what the Aschen were doing so of course the Asgard Council refused to interfere in our primitive politics as Earth was joining the Confederation of their own free will." Jack gave an irate snort at the memory before moving on.

"We got caught up in their war while on Othala with Sam saving their butts with her dumb ideas and somehow, my dumber idea ended up being the end of the war." Jack dismissed his contribution to the war with a flick of his fingers. "Knowing that they were safe and now had eternity to work on their genetic problem, we returned to the Milky Way and started touring the galaxy. First year we didn't learn much but by the second when Sam set up her company, Stjarna Industries, we were catching bad rumours. By the third is when we started gaining recruits in people and planets in regions of space outside Aschen Confederation territory, reach, and influence. We knocked around space until 2007 when we returned to Earth to establish Earth's underground movement."

Daniel and Janet exchanged looks. Only Jack O'Neill would describe forming a resistance with one thousand one hundred ninety-two planets contributing in various ways—full alliance, armament supplies, resource contribution, political support, and more—as 'knocking around space.'

"That's also when we got serious about recruiting the nine allied planets of the Confederation as we already had quite a few of the federated planets, Volia, Abydos, Simarka, Juna, Madrona for example, and treaty worlds, Hadante, Velona, and the like."

Daniel was awed about the amount of information that Jack had just freely told them but had no idea why Jack had just told them unless it was to get Janet's mind off what she had to tell her daughter.

Jack gave a chuckling snort as he looked with amusement at the archaeologist's expression. "Yes, Daniel, telling you all this has a point." Jack's face turned sombre as he looked Janet in the eye again. "The point is Janet, that it took Sam and me ten years to gain this. You have only had weeks of knowing and studying the problem. And as much as you hate the anti-aging vaccine for what it's done to Cassie and the people of Earth, the Aschen have also given you something invaluable, time."

Janet opened her mouth to protest and Jack held up a hand commandingly.

"I know you know your medical stuff, and I know what you learned is true—there is no reversal for those vaccinate. But that is now. The situation may be different in the decades to come. I know it is a faint hope Janet, but it is still hope." Jack reached out and rested a hand on one of her knees. "And even if you can't create a cure, if nobody can create a cure, you can make sure it never happens again."
Chapter 42

Living Room, O'Neill Farmhouse, Blaine County, MT
October 30, 2010

Fourteen days had passed since Operation Quarantine had swept through the Confederation and turned Earth's worldview upside down once again. The Aschen had not been a benevolent saviour but manipulative and malicious planetary conquers that had succeeded with their first step in conquering Earth because of one man's greed for power.

The man in question, the now former President of the United States of America, Robert Kinsey was under arrest, forced to resign from his position, and as his entire administration was being thoroughly investigated not only by the American people, but by all Earth nations.

With Kinsey out of office and his vice-president Hank Landry serving as active president until the upcoming election in November, the people of Earth and the media were focused on two things: those upcoming elections and watching the massive deliberative assembly of the dubbed 'United Worlds' on Alaris.

All forty-three planets of the Confederation and numerous other alien races and planets with various treaties and governmental alliances with the Aschen Confederation nations were in agreement that the Aschen must be punished for their actions. How, and what kind of punishment, was proving to be the sticking point of the Phase IV talks.

While Sam kept an eye on the American election campaigns, her main attention was intently on listening and watching the Alaris televised assembly sessions. Following Operation Quarantine Phase II on Earth, she had worked securing various high profile resistance members like Colson in safe houses, on coordinating with Maybourne to transport the representatives to Alaris. The Prometheus-class crews had also transported the vígamaðrs used in shutting down the AF spaceship yards back to the Íðavöllr and thus Asgárd hands, as well as returning the Nox invisibility devices that had been used to conceal the vígamaðr hangers on Earth.

A little over two weeks ago, an AF battleship doing a supply run to Earth had transported Josh and Matt home. Jack had considered the danger now posed by Kinsey to their family by the former president and his ilk to be negligent with the man's arrest, arrests of most of the NID agents, and arrests of numerous other supporters. Being returned home, leaving Íðavöllr, and their perspective in the thick of the battle and amongst the aliens on Alaris had understandably disappointed their two boys. But after watching a few of the 'boring talkies' in Matt's words, they were quite happy their father had returned them home a week after the Phase IV deliberative assembly had begun.

Hearing heavy footsteps from the kitchen Sam looked up from her spot on the couch inquiring at the man that entered the living room with two glasses of lemonade.

"The boys?" Sam asked curiously, knowing that Josh and Matt had been in the kitchen with him.

"Have taken off outside playing Resistance and Aschen," the brown haired man drawled in his Texan accent. "How goes the assembly?"

"Another airing of grievances," Sam confessed, not without sympathy for the representative of the planet in question but the assembly sessions had been going on for fourteen days, surly by now
they would start addressing the reason for their assembly. Turning her head forward her eyes focused on her daughter on the blanket spread out on the rug and trying to eat a socked foot, and not the screen of the Asgärd visual display unit brought in from the bunker.

The brown haired man smiled fondly at the sight, remembering with nostalgia his own wife and children and the joy especially of his grandchildren. Sitting himself beside Sam, he passed one of the glasses of lemonade to her. "Anything new on the news?"

Sam shook her head as she accepted the glass. "No, feel free to turn it on if you want though."

Accepting the permission, he reached out and turned on the television that sat beside the Asgärd VDU. As he caught a re-run of Kinsey's original press conference he frowned faintly in response to particular a reporter's remark about 'the late General George Hammond' when questioning the former president.

The frown turned into a sigh as he gestured with the remote to the television. "That's the problem with these young reporters, they are so eager for news they don't verify things."

Sam turned an amused look on her couch companion and said dryly, "Sir, you are dead."

"I am not," George Hammond, aka Jorge Harmon, protested.

"Okay," Sam conceded, "you are not, but technically, yes, you are. The Aschen did kill you after all."

Hammond looked distasteful at the reminder of that. Six years ago, he had learned about the thirty percent sterilization clause and had asked the questions of the wrong person that had ended up with Aschen taking steps to remove him. It was lucky for him that even after a heart stopped beating the brain lived for another six minutes or so, so when Jack along with Thor had attempted to rescue him at least his brain had been saveable.

The beam that transported his body on board had snatched his daughter Susan at the same time—who had just entered his home—and she had demanded that Thor do what he could to save her father. Thor had complied and uploaded his mind into a cloned body. It had been Jack however, that had suggested that 'General George Hammond' remain dead and managed to convince Susan of the course of action that had resulted in his clone body only being matured to twenty years of age.

Susan had beamed down with his original body and shortly afterwards informed the world of his death. Not long after the funeral service, Susan and her family had been selected as qualified applicants for the off-world pioneer lottery, and the family had moved off Earth. A selection that had been arranged by the resistance so once off-world, his daughter's family had quickly been whisked to one of the resistance's haven settlements and the young 'Jorge Harmon' had taken up residence on Earth as a flight instructor for a private airfield in the state of Washington.

Relieved that his daughter and family were safe, Hammond had thrown himself into his second life and aiding the resistance movement on Earth. Essentially all the vígamaðr pilots that had been used to deliver dead zones to AF spaceship yards had been approached and recruited by himself—although those pilots were unaware that it had been his selection that had chosen them. Even on operation day, he had continued his incognito status and flown as Pierce-3, keeping to his carefully crafted script of a young man with military associations but no service and allowed a retired colonel to command the Pierce attack team.

"Still," Hammond sighed as he muted the television and turned back to the Asgärd VDU just as it panned past the bored looking face of Jack. He was not surprised to see the retired colonel and
resistance commander was also taking apart another pen.

Before Jack’s aid Sally could scold him again however the Tok’ra seated beside him leaned over and whispered in Jack’s ear. Jack’s hands froze in the middle of their destruction and he suddenly looked on the verge of laughing.

Laughter was something he never thought he would see a Tok’ra invoke in Jack, however taking a closer look at the very young looking Tok’ra had him smiling faintly. Even with the passing of years, he could still see the younger face of the Reetou boy in the assured young Tok’ra sitting at Jack’s elbow.

As the scene continued to pan by, Sally smoothly rescued the mangled pen and handed Jack a new one before they were out of sight as the VDU panned through the rows of representatives of the hastily converged United Worlds at the Phase IV deliberative assembly.

Hammond caught the byplay with the Tok’ra and looking at Sam inquiringly asked, "What do you think he said to make Jack nearly laugh?"

"Don't know," Sam lifted a shoulder in a shrugging motion, "it could have been either Charlie or Pales that made the remark and considering Pales’ biting humour is so like Jack’s, it's a toss up."

"I still never thought I would see the day when Jack would laugh with a Tok'ra," George admitted.

"Neither did I," Sam confessed, "but because of Charlie I think, Pales is as unique in his thoughts as Selmak was. Pales once told me that the other Tok’ra are bound by their host’s experiences as much as they are by their own genetic memories. He and Selmak are the only ones that have ever inhabited hosts that truly know what it is to be free. And that leads to a world of difference between themselves and the other Tok’ra that I think, somehow, Jack is able to sense. A difference that the other Tok’ra themselves fail to grasp."
Chapter 43

Commander's Quarters, Íðavöllr, Alaris Orbit
Day Twenty-five of the Confederation Deliberative Assembly

Jack sat grumpily in the chair behind the commander's desk of the Asgärd command battleship. Feet propped on the surface of the desk, hand played with the rim of the glass holding the Asgärd mead he was drinking as his eyes watched a re-run of the day's assembly on one of the room's display monitors.

This assembly was getting ridiculous in how long it was taking things to happen. Most of the time was taken up with representatives saying their grievousness, each one basically saying the same thing, and the squabbling between the different nations about who deserved more compensation for hardships endured.

He was beyond tired of the political squabbling. As the screen focused on the face of Joseph Faxon, he also took a moment to growl in his head at the fact that Kinsey's arrest on Earth had come too late for a different representative to be selected for the position Faxon held for this deliberative assembly. He did not even want to think about his confrontation with the man that had reinforced his knowledge that Faxon's resented his very existence for marrying Sam while he despised the man for playing such a prominent role in sterilizing Earth.

Not quite as prominent a role as Kinsey but Jack considered himself an equal opportunity hater and felt no need to just hate one person involved in the Alliance mess.

When the screen froze on the face of Faxon Jack looked over disgruntled at his drinking companion. The young Tok'ra returned the glare with a congenially look of his own, unfazed by Jack's dark look because of his long association over the many years building the resistance.

"Such a foreboding expression," Charlie said lightly. "Do you not approve of Ambassador Faxon?"

Jack's look grew darker as he reached for the mead bottle to refill his glass. "Of course I don't. And you know it."

"Ah, ah," Charlie replied flippantly, knowing full well that he was needling Jack about personal matters not professional ones. "I thought he spoke very well and carefully for one who represents the nation that essentially brought the Aschen into galactic power."

Jack's glowering look intensified as he returned the mead bottle to his desk and took a hearty swig of the beverage from his refilled glass. Both host and symbiote sitting across from him were well aware of his antagonism towards Faxon but they both insisted about needling him about it for reasons unfathomable to him.

"Easy on the mead," Charlie chided, "it is too fine a vintage to waste on anger."

Jack pointedly took another large swallow at that, invoking a chuckle from the Tok'ra. Setting the glass down Jack reached out and turned off the display screen, plunging the room into darkness alleviated only by the millions of stars seen from the windows that illuminated the area of space Íðavöllr occupied.
Charlie sighed in the darkened room and relented his needling. "O'Neill, why are you here?"

"What do you mean?" Jack grumbled.

"I mean, why are you still here?" Charlie said.

Jack used the starlight to peer at the Tok'ra questioningly. Still not really understanding what Charlie was saying with his question.

"You've done what you've set out to do. Freed the Confederation from the Aschen and have done so admirably. And you yourself have said you would not become the new leader of the Confederation by make the decision for the nations for Phase IV. And that is all that remains, for the nations to making their political decision." Charlie said quietly. "So... why are you still here?"

There was a pause in Jack's morose mood as he considered Charlie's words, well most likely Charlie and Pales' words. The Tok'ra had a very valid point. What was he still doing here, when he could be at home, as he wanted to be, instead of involving himself in something he said he would not but had become some sort of referee for?

"You think I should just go home?" Jack questioned.

"I think you should do what feels right," Charlie said carefully. "But it does seem obvious to me that you feel you are making no contributions here and very frustrated by the role that the representatives are placing you in as their unelected mediator."

"What would happen if I did just leave?"

Host and symbiote considered the question thoughtfully for some moments before speaking. "I think it would be safe to say that there would be some upset from the representatives," Jack snorted at that as 'some upset' was probably putting it mildly, "but it could also be a wakeup call for them. Showing that they have become bogged down in the very politics that you cautioned them against when the summit was established."

After some more companionable silence between them after the Tok'ra had given their answer, Jack sighed audibly as he set his mead glass down and removed his feet from the desk.

"Alright."

"Alright?" Charlie repeated questioningly.

"Alright, after tomorrow, if they have not made major steps in deciding Phase IV policy, or miracle of miracles finishes the policy," that caused Charlie to snort in disbelief which Jack ignored, "tomorrow night Íðavöllr sets course for Earth."

"Well then," Charlie inclined his head as he stood, setting his own nearly empty glass of mead beside Jack's and the bottle on the desk. "I shall retire to our alkesh and see you tomorrow at the summit table. Sleep well O'Neill."

Jack waved a hand negligently at the Tok'ra in farewell as Charlie departed his quarters for the room of the battleship that had been designated for ring transport traffic.

Rising to his feet, Jack reached for the hem of his shirt and began pulling it over his head as he approached his bed. Tossing the garment in the laundry chute to the side of his bed, he tugged his belt from its loops but left his pants on as he sat down on the edge of his mattress to remove his socks. The belt went on a side table while the socks joined his shirt down the chute.
At home, he would have slept nude, spooning with his equally clothes free wife, but had taken to wearing clothes again while sleeping as he commanded this operation, although wearing less than he would have when on SG-1. There was a difference after all at being hauled out of a tent into a firefight and being yanked by a transport beam to sit in the commander's chair. He could handle the latter being shirtless, he would have hated for it to have ever happen with the former situation.

Before stretching out on his mattress Jack hit a button to dim the windows and the starlight filling the room faded, nearly plunging the room into total darkness. Pulling the light sheet over his body, more for familiarity than any necessary for warmth in the precision temperature controlled room that automatically adjusted to his body's temperature needs, Jack spent a few restless moments getting comfortable.

It was not that the bed was uncomfortable, but these past twenty-six days were the longest unplanned absence from Sam since their emigration to Othala. They had been absent from each other at times when the boys were younger while doing what needed to be done to form the resistance, but that had been planned so the separation had been easier to deal with in a way. Even though he had been home for the ten days after Hope's birth, he still found himself waking in the night expecting to hear her cries.

Charlie probably was right, it was best if he returned home.
Chapter 44

Chapter 44

Community Hall, Turner, Blaine County, MT
November 11, 2010

Matthew O'Neill, disappointed to be dressed in a suit with an actual tie, sat beside his mother and siblings in Turner's community hall that was hosting the town's Veteran's Day ceremonies. It had been a month since his father had taken him and Josh on board Idavöllr and then after the space fight, returned them to their mother, and as far as the youngest O'Neill son was concerned, his boring Earth life.

Well he was sort of glad his parents were no longer having so many secret meetings, not only was his father not here but his baby sister was getting most of his mother's attention. Some days, if Matt had not known it would make Dad very mad when he got home and heard about his behaviour, he felt like throwing tantrums like Hope did.

Cocking his head to the side Matt actually took a look at Hope who was cradled against their mother's shoulder, but Hope actually seemed to like the minister's incessant talking which proved to him, that girls, even baby girls had no sense. Why could not she cry now like she did at home and maybe get them out of here?

When his mom, who had been watching the ceremonies solemnly, unexpectedly looked towards him Matt afflicted the most woefully miserable expression he could. Seeming to be more amused by his face than sympathetic, his mother leaned towards him both to speak in a low tone.

"I'll be right back. Hope's diaper needs to be changed."

"Can I come?" Matt asked hopefully, not that he wanted to help with the diaper, but going with them would get him out of his seat.

"No Matt, you stay here," Sam said with a half smile, suspecting what her son was attempting to do. He was not a son of Jack O'Neill for nothing. "Remember, you and Josh have to lay the wreath for the gallery because Dad and Sally aren't here to do it."

Moving quietly, Sam rose from her seat that she had deliberately selected because it was next to the isle. She picked up Hope's diaper bag and made her way to the washrooms near the entrance of the hall.

She was unaware that a man, who was part of a group in winter fatigues that had just entered the darkened entrance of the hall, caught sight of her as she had disappeared into the bathroom and began to head towards her destination in a leisurely manner. He waved a hand at his companions in a silent order for them to continue into the hall without him, to which they obeyed.

Catching the bathroom door just as it had almost swung shut, the man slipped into the room behind Sam and Hope.

The women's room did not have a child's changing station but that was not a hindrance to Sam with her experience with some of the very odd places she had changed her sons in their infancy off-world as she set a changing cloth out on the floor and efficiently replaced Hope's soiled diaper with a fresh one.
Wrapping up the soiled diaper and tucking it into the diaper bag it was only once she had zipped the bag shut and was no longer as focused on her daughter that Sam became aware of another presence in the room.

Expecting another woman had the sudden urge to use the washroom Sam began to stand and turn towards the other person with an apologetic half smile and to apologise for electing to change Hope in the middle of the washroom floor instead of off to the side of the room.

Catching sight of the man in fatigues leaning back against the door and watching them wiped the smile right off her face. For a disbelieving heartbeat, she stared at the intruder before launching herself at him with an ecstatic cry that was his name.

"Jack!"

Jack did not even grunt as his body thumped forcefully against the door he had been leaning against as he caught his wife’s body against his. Far too involved in returning her welcome home kiss to be worried about a little thing like being winded.

When the need to breathe finally broke the kiss, Jack turned his attention to kissing and nipping Sam's neck as she eagerly offered the expanse of skin to him.

"Oh God, I missed you," Sam murmured breathlessly, shuddering helplessly against her husband as his skilled mouth found the sensitive spot behind her ear. Collecting some of her thoughts, she managed to gather enough breath to ask, "Why didn't you tell me you were coming home?"

Jack finally lifted his mouth from tasting her neck long enough to give her some answers in gravelly voice that fanned Sam's desire. "Thought I'd surprise you. Got tired of the politics and decided they can make the decision without me there."

Jack's mouth had started to descend to Sam's neck again when Hope reminded her parents of her presence by squalling suddenly for attention.

Sam jerked in surprise at the sound and hastily gathered her passion scattered wits together and scooped up Hope from the floor. Happy to have been picked up Hope gurgled up at her mother as Sam turned back to Jack.

Sam could tell from the darkness of his eyes and flush on his cheeks that her husband's body was still very much caught up in the moment that Hope had just interrupted. She did not need to look in the bathroom mirror to know that she herself was probably still exhibiting those signs as well, well aware of the heat still in her cheeks and the desire that still throbbed in her body.

But as Jack looked at his daughter who had grown so much since his departure Jack's expression turned to one of wonder.

"She's gotten so big," Jack marvelled as he reached out to accept their daughter from Sam. Hope scrunched up her face momentarily at the new face that filled her vision but otherwise was perfectly content to be cradled against her father's chest as he ran his other hand over her.

Sam gave a soft smile at his words, content to stand to the side and let daughter and father reacquaint themselves. She would show Jack later, after they had gotten home, the photo album and video log that she had made to document Hope's development when it became apparent that the United Worlds Assembly was going to take much longer than they had planned or expected.

As Jack finished running his hand over his daughter's body, exploring her changed size and features, he looked up and caught the soft expression on his wife's face as she watched them. His hand lifted from rubbing through Hope's hair and reached out to catching Sam on the back of the
Taking a step towards his wife to close the distance between them, the kiss that Jack initiated was a tender expression of utter love and devotion. The hand on the back of Sam's neck slid down her back to her waist to cinch her to him with their daughter between. Sam's arms came up to wrap around her husband and she leaned her head against Jack's shoulder.

For a long, blissful and needed minute, the three of them just basked in the presence of the other. Eventually however, Hope protested against her slightly squished position and her parents let go of each other. Jack settled his daughter into a more comfortable position in his arms and she contentedly settled in.

"We should tell the boys you're here," Sam spoke as she reached down and picked up the diaper bag and blanket Hope had been laying on. "They've missed you a great deal."

Jack shook his head after he checked his watch. "We'll wait until after the ceremony, otherwise they'll be too excited."

Sam nodded in acceptance, knowing very well that Josh and Matt's excitement would lead to the total disruption of the service, especially considering essentially everyone in town was asking after Jack. The three joined the group that Jack had walked into the hall with, in a back row for the rest of the ceremony.
Chapter 45

Many, many hours after Turner's Veterans Day ceremony and the absolute social circus that had developed when it had been realized that the town's hero and crew had returned, the now exhausted O'Neill family walked through their front door close to midnight.

The boys, while thrilled that their dad was home, barely put up a murmur of protest as their mom hustled them straight from their winter clothes into their beds they were so tired from all the excitement of the day. Listening to the sounds of Josh and Matt getting ready for bed through the open door of the nursery, Jack tucked his sleeping daughter into her crib.

Then, hand resting on the mattress beside her sleeping form, he just stood beside the crib and watched Hope.

As the newly reunited father, he had had priority on Hope during the afternoon and evening's excitement, but that did not mean he had not had to give her up for brief periods to others of his crew, like Sally, or Sam for feedings during that time. Those moments of separation, except for when Sam had taken her as he had accompanied them to a quiet area for some time together, meant Jack had not quite gotten his fill yet of Hope and how she had changed even with the regular video calls.

Some time after the noise of the boys banging about in the bathroom and their rooms had quieted down Jack looked up from watching Hope having sensed that Sam was watching him from the doorway. Seeing his wife leaning against the doorframe, her arms wrapped around herself and almost seeming to hesitate to intrude between daughter and father, Jack held out his free hand to her.

Light-footed Sam crossed the distance between them and lacing her fingers with those of his offered hand. She leaned against his side as they both turned to watching their sleeping daughter. Long, contented minutes later, Sam began to speak.

"You still haven't said why you've returned, especially as nothing was said about your departure in the last Conference broadcast."

Jack's lips turned up into a wry smile. "I don't think they know Iðavöllr is gone. I left immediately after the last session and with the time difference, even with the broadcast being made in real time, means it's not quite morning for Alaris yet."

"So, why?"

"Because I was serving no purpose there," Jack shifted his head to look at Sam as she leaned against his side. "We'd never planned for me to be there either. Phase IV was to be performed by the people of the Confederation. As leader of the military force that had subdued the Aschen but not an independent nation there was no need for me to be there."

Well, that was not quite true, as the military leader probably quite a lot of people thought he should be there, but he had done what he had set out to do. He did not feel the need to be there himself as he had years ago with political things as a member of SGC to exert some control over
potential damaging situations. With the United Worlds Assembly all he needed to do was check in on the situation a few times. His mission after all had been to free the Confederation and then retire to his pottery and most importantly, his family.

Mission accomplished, ergo, he got to go home.

While yes, he like Sam had a vested interest in the outcome of Phase IV, he was rather detached from the situation and if the entire thing fell through, as long as it did not result in Aschen freedom and war between the nations, he was fully prepared to wash his hands of the situation.

He was a military man, interested only in commanding to defend and ensure freedom, not leading a nation, let alone an entire Confederation—which at the assembly seemed to be the way the wind was blowing.

Sam accepted his explanation for the time being and lifting her weight from his side, tugged on their clasped hands, and urged him from the nursery to their room. Tiredly, eyes and hands caressing, they helped each other shed their clothing. The earlier sharp desire felt in the afternoon was banked by the tiredness although the light touches stirred the coals.

But those light touches were all they indulged in with the tiredness of the day and expectation of Hope awaking within a few hours weighing down on them. Clothing shed they slipped beneath the covers of their bed together and curled against each other. Relaxing, soothed by the feel of skin and limbs against each other once again, the tension of their separation slowly eased from them as they slipped into sleep.

. . .

Sam awakened the next morning, still weighted down by sleepiness, and simply luxuriated in the feel and warmth of her husband spooning against her back and legs. Jack's breath washed rhythmically over the back of her neck and the missed comforting weight of his arm draped over her side was back. The other limb she knew was probably tucked underneath his head under the pillow.

Quite a change from his sleeping habits almost a decade ago, sprawled in the centre of the bed, face buried in the pillows with his butt in the air. Hers as well, before she used to sleep flat on her back and she now slept on her side spooned around Jack's arm.

The winter light coming in from their east facing window was dim, meaning that as it was the beginning of November it was sometime before oh-seven-hundred hours which was about when the sun was now rising. She could not tell the exact time because the alarm clock was on the other side of the bed on Jack's side, which they were both facing away from.

The arm curved around her torso gave her an affectionate squeeze. Alerting her to the fact that her husband was awake as well.

"Morning," Sam murmured.

"Good morning," Jack rumbled back as she felt him twist against her back slightly to check the display of the alarm clock. "So, how hard do you think the boys are going to fight going to school this morning?"

"A lot," Sam predicted, knowing that while it was not a fight about going to school, it was about having to go to school and not stay home with their father as they wanted. Something they had already expressed yesterday. "But today's Friday and then it'll be the weekend and considering they've already missed school with our trip out East and with you, I would like for them to
"All right," Jack agreed as he began to roll away from her and turned off the alarm clock as they were up so they did not need the alarm to sound. "School for them today it will be. And yourself?"

"What?" Sam sat up in bed and looked curiously at him.

"What are your plans for the day?"

Sam lifted a shoulder in a shrug. "Not much different from most of my days now that the Confederation is free."

As Jack began pulling clothes from his drawers for the day he looked over at Sam as she sat in the centre of their bed. "Think you could make time for your husband?"

Sam smiled amusedly at the teasing tone of his voice and replied in tone. "I don't know. I'll have to check my schedule. But I'm sure I could pencil you in for a moment or two."

"A moment or two?" Jack assumed an expression of outrage.

Sam giggled at his false expression as she rose from the bed and stalked seductively to him. The winter morning light illuminated her pale skin with a golden glow as her long hair whispered softly against her back. "Well, with the right incentive maybe I could find an hour…"

Jack's expression of false outrage shifted to a roguish one as he reached out and after placing his hands on either side of her hips, deliberately drew them up her sides, sensitizing the skin.

"An hour?" he said as his hands stroked down and then up again on the same path, watching Sam's blue eyes grow unfocused and her breath unsteady. "I think wife," he leaned forward to rumble seductively against the sensitive spot under her right ear, "you'll give me more than that."

Sam shivered at the brush of lips and air and found herself nodding her agreement. She did not intend to deny him anyways. That would just be depriving herself of the pleasure of reacquainting herself with her husband after three months of celibacy, because of the last stage of her pregnancy and later because of their separation.

"But for now," Jack regretfully lifted his hands from Sam's body and took a step back just as there was a noise from the baby monitor in their room, "the children call."

Hope's murmur heard through the monitor had Sam's mind already switching tracks as she too stepped away from Jack and began dressing for the day. It was just as she was settling in the chair in the nursery to nurse Hope that she remembered what she had scheduled for the coming weekend.

A visit from Dominic and Cassie with the intention of beginning to prepare for the 'reveal all' interviews they had given to Dominic in exchange for not breaking news of the resistance's existence before the resistance operation had occurred.

Well that probably was not what Jack was expecting to do, but maybe it would be best just to get the interviews done and over with. Get the last of Kinsey's accusations finally and fully laid to rest in the eyes of the public.
Dominic, in his private home office, worked at editing the preliminary interviews that he had had with the O'Neills over the weekend. Interviews meant to document their lives from their meeting with the Aschen to now.

Most of what he had done had been to get the O'Neills—who were intensely private people—used to his questioning and being under the camera lenses so a lot of the footage shot over the weekend wouldn't be used. Watching it again helped him analyze their reactions better so that when he really interviewed them, he hopefully would be able to predict how they would react and how to counteract if need be to get what he wanted to show, and not just what the O'Neills wanted to share.

So the final result would be a mixture of prepared questions and unprepared ones that he thought to ask that resulted from whatever answer they gave.

Smiling slightly at the current scene he was viewing, Dominic hit the fast forward button, knowing that none of it—as entertaining and illuminating on the O'Neill family dynamics as it was—would appear as the O'Neills' had forbade any footage of their children appearing on TV. But, Dominic hit the resume button just as Jack had hustled dogs and children from the room, this would.

A tender expression on her face Sam watched her husband and children depart. No longer as hyperaware of the cameras set up in the farmhouse's living room as she had been in the beginning.

The sound of Dominic clearing his throat had her blinking, almost as if she had forgotten that he was there but calmly she turned her attention back to him. The quiet look still shadowing her face, giving her the first natural and open expression since Dominic had began interviewing her.

"Mrs O'Neill," Dominic picked up the topic thread from before the dogs interruption, "We were speaking of the events that led up to your disappearance, would you please continue?"

Sam nodded in agreement and picked up the conversation. "As some may recall or look up from the news then, before I departed Earth I had attended many public functions, most relating to Disclosure and the Alliance, in the company of Ambassador Joseph Faxon."

"There were some rumours at the time that an engagement was imminent between you and the Ambassador was there not?"

"There was," Sam said calmly and declined to speak further.

Dominic frowned slightly, looking puzzled. "Forgive me then Mrs O'Neill, but as you yourself was at that time a major spokesperson for the Alliance and had a close personal relationship with the Aschen Ambassador, how is it then that with the schism within SG-I with yourself, Dr Jackson, and Mer Teal'c, against Mr O'Neill—when'd that change? Changed enough that you quite literally disappeared off Earth without a word to anyone?"
Blue eyes shifted to the side as Sam seemed to not look away, but look back in her memories to that time eight years ago. Back to the events that had led up to the day when she had made her fateful decision to join with the freshly retired colonel.

"Back then," Sam began to speak quietly, "it wasn't just a schism within SG-1, but SGC against Jack. To understand how great a rendering of our relationship with each other, you have to understand that we lived by his moral code—all of us. When we, his team and SGC stood against him, the words we said... vicious doesn't even begin to describe our fighting."

The regret on Sam's face as she paused was heart rendering. She did not need to say much more about the fighting that had gone on, some caught on tape years ago and titillated viewers around the world when broadcast.

"The night I left, shortly after Jack's retirement had been finalized and another fight between us personally, he came to my house. I was getting dressed to attend a function with Joe and once again... we started fighting. It was like it had gotten to the point where all we could do when seeing each other was argue."

Sam fell silent.

After a moment Dominic promoted, "So, you were arguing."

"And, as usually when you argue, you say mean things, but this time, as he turned to leave—for the final time I knew, and not just from the Springs but me—he turned back to me." Sam shifted her eyes to look directly at Dominic. "He turned back to me and held out his hand and said 'Prove me wrong Carter.'"

Dominic leaned forward eagerly, sensing that this was a pivotal moment.

"'Come with me. Prove me wrong.'" Sam repeated what Jack had said all those years ago as anger and what had almost been hatred for the other burned through them. "'Prove me wrong and I will never speak against the Aschen again.' I don't know why, considering I was so angry at that time... but, something about how he asked and how I knew that was the end for us... for some insane reason I don't understand to this day, I agreed."

Sam's eyes turned surprisingly bitter at what she had to say next. "So, I went with him. And I proved him right."

Dominic hit the pause button. That was what he was looking for, the honest emotion and the moments that had led to the O'Neills fighting a war for Earth's freedom even though Earth had not known it had been conquered.

The real moment had perhaps been more complicated than what she had just said, and even with what their marriage indicated, and Dominic suspected that it was only really Jackson and Teal'c that would be able to understand and maybe convey how deeply the schism between the team had carved its emotional wounds into the O'Neills.

And just how significant Sam following Jack from Earth on 'Come with me. Prove me wrong.' had been.

He would also dig deeper into how the removal of her mission person's record from the National Crime Information Center database had been overlooked by the media and public upon her return to Earth in 2007 considering the fame that surrounded her and her disappearance.

Feeling another presence, Dominic turned his attention from his computer screen to see his wife with Boomer at her heels standing in the doorway to his office.
"Think you can join me for lunch?" Cassie invited.

Dominic nodded as he rose from his seat. He had already reviewed most the material anyway and he was just now getting into the process of editing it and getting copies of the few pieces that he wanted to use.

Together they walked into the kitchen and after each fixed themselves a taco, seated themselves at their four-person dining table. After a few minutes of companionable eating, when Dominic was up to fix himself a second taco Cassie inquired about his progress.

"Good, good," Dominic responded as he seated himself across from her again, Boomer contentedly at their feet underneath the table. "Even being totally unexpected by O'Neill's presence, and thus unprepared for what questions to ask him, the time I had with him went well."

While there had been an uproar on Friday from the United Worlds Assembly about the sudden absence of O'Neill and his warship over Alaris, he'd had no idea that ships could travel that fast and that O'Neill had already returned to Earth.

"When will the real interviews happen?" Cassie asked.

"First weekend in December," Dominic answered. "You're welcome to come with me if you want, but I will be taking a camera and sound guy from the Post as well so quarters might be a bit tight."

Cassie inclined her head in response and as she rose from her seat at the table to begin clear away the food, thought that she would return to the O'Neill farmhouse with Dominic. There had been something that Sam had said she had wanted to tell her, but did not have all the calculations figured out yet.
O'Neill Farmhouse, Blaine County, MT
December 4, 2010

Cassie emerged from their electric rental with Boomer on a leash and headed through the snow for the farmhouse's wraparound veranda. Barking dogs from within the house greeted the warmly dressed Hanka refugee, her husband, and his cameraman and soundman. Shortly after knocking on the door, the wooden panel was opened by Josh releasing a rush of warmth onto them.

"Hi Cassie, hi Dominic!" Josh enthusiastically greeted the two people he knew as he held their two dogs back from swamping the four people and their canine.

"Hi Joshua," both Klerks returned the greeting and Cassie reached down to unsnap Boomer's leash. The older Shiba Inu seemed resigned to the energetic antics of the young mutts as Josh let go of their collars and they proceeded to do their best to entice Boomer to play.

"Dad is waiting for you," Josh waved them into the entranceway. "Matt!" Josh called into the house. "Come get Dominic will you? I'm supposed to take Cassie to Mom."

Matt appeared before them and eyed the equipment Dominic and his two companions were carrying with interest. "Are you going to be in the living room again?"

Dominic nodded yes and then followed the younger boy as he led them into the house and pointed out the direction of the bathroom and kitchen to his cameraman and soundman on their way to the living room.

"Come on," Josh said to Cassie as he donned his winter gear and slipped into his winter boots, "we can take the dogs with us and I'll watch Boomer while you're with Mom."

Cassie nodded her assent and followed Josh out of the entranceway, back down the porch's front steps, and across the yard to the mounded earth heaped over the root cellar. Snow crunched under foot but the morning was warm enough that their breaths did not release white puffs into the air. Leaving the three dogs outside the two humans entered the buried structure and headed for the east wall.

On one of the concrete slabs, after stripping of his mitt, Josh pressed his hand against the rough surface and waited until the spot grew warm. Once it warmed to his touch and still keeping his hand flat, he tapped his fingertips in a pattern and soundlessly a concrete slab further down seem to dissolve away, revealing a well-lit staircase descending into darkness.

Josh waved at the staircase, "Head on down. Mom's waiting for you."

A little wide-eyed at being so unceremoniously shown to the rumoured O'Neill secret base Cassie descended the steps. After descending the spiralling staircase of forty-eight steps, she emerged into a well-lit and warmly heated rectangular-shaped room stocked with various terminals and other alien looking things.

There was a quiet hum in the air from so many different electronics interspersed with infant giggling. The source of that happy sound was easy to locate as Hope squirmed underneath her mother's tickling fingers.
Sam looked up with a welcoming smile and took a moment to wave Cassie over to join them before tickling her daughter for a few more giggles. Cassie crossed the space between them, fascinated as she had been last week during their visit to see the woman she had bonded with so tightly thirteen years ago during her rescue from Hanka freely show an aspect of her personality that Major Carter had rarely let out—Mother Sam.

"Hi Cassie," Sam greeted as she turned most of her attention to the redhead woman after Hope had become content with a toy. "Thank you for coming."

"Getting to see this," Cassie took a seat and waved her hand about to encompass her surroundings, "makes it worth it. Do you know how much the conspiracy nuts would pay to know this does exists?"

Sam chuckled in her chest and looked amused. The only thing that saved their home from being as frequently watched spot for aliens and other military conspiracy nuts like Area 51 was the simple fact that so far no one had dared to test what security measures might be in place. If she could create the dead zones, or so called Aschen tech killers, many were leering of finding out what else she could cook up. They did not realize though, that it was not her devices they had to worry about, but the devices that Jack had her create and implement.

He after all had far too much experience and training in the art of paranoia.

"So," Cassie began to inquire as she shrugged of her winter jacked and placed it onto the back of her chair, "what do you want to talk to me about?"

"An SGC mission in 1998," Sam replied as she reached out and pressed a few keys, activating a holographic projector in the center of the circular table terminal they sat at. Displayed was the entry screen for the Stargate Program Archive and Cassie wondered what about the online archive—the official AF documents relating to the program and its areas—had to do with what Sam wanted to talk about.

"Which mission?"

"Mission File 24398," Sam responded as she gestured to the console in front of Cassie.

Cassie looked quizzically at Sam before typing 'Mission File 24398' into the search box and pressed enter. Within seconds the mission report appeared in the holographic display.

Cassie, after another look at Sam, settled into read the mission report about the assignment of SG-1 to P2X-555 for reconnaissance but the actually mission to the planet had been done by SG-5. Her brow slightly furrowed with a puzzled frown as she looked questioningly at Sam once again.

"What is the issue?"

"What does it say about SG-1?"

"That SG-1 departed for P2X-555 and..." Cassie trailed off as she really read what she had overlooked the first time. SG-1 had not just been pulled and SG-5 resigned for some reason but SG-1 had entered the established wormhole to P2X-555 and not arrived. Re-reading she caught reference at the bottom to a cross note with file 30185 and a time stamp for SG-1's return days later. She clicked on the cross note and a new window popped up prompting for a name and access code.

Cassie looked questioningly at Sam, "I how that even though Kinsey wanted to disclose all the mission reports whole cloth onto the archive but that some—like the report for my rescue and
implied fostering off-world—were modified. But I do not ever remember there being, or hearing
about, files that required security clearance."

"As much as Kinsey would have liked to have everything released—and succeeded for all files of
SG-1," Sam frowned every time she thought about it because it had not just been mission report,
but things like psych evaluations released, "he was only able to have that done for inactive and
complete missions and projects like research colonies. Ongoing missions are still classified."

"It's been twelve years, how could this mission be ongoing?" Cassie asked incredulously as she
waved a hand at the holographic screen.

Patiently Sam smiled at Cassie and suggested, "Why don't you enter your name and SSN."

Cassie blinked at the suggestion but something in Sam's blue eyes had her turning to the keyboard
and after a moment's hesitation entered her given name and adopted surname, Cassandra Fraiser,
and her nine-digit social security number. She turned to look warily at Sam when both entries
were accepted and as File 30185 loaded cautiously asked, "Sam, why did it accept my name and
SSN?"

"Because Cassie, you are the one that will write the conclusion of this mission report."
As the back of the tan coloured jacket disappeared into the wormhole, Cassandra Klerk breathed a sigh heavy with memories. What she had just done had been hard, but easier then she had thought it would be, to see those four again for it was as she said—she hardly recognized them for they were young and not the aged faces that she cherished in her memories.

Cassie thought fleetingly of their 1960s clothing, having a feeling that fashion was about to make a revival, as she turned her head to the left as the wormhole disconnected and gave a firm nod.

Dim surroundings lit only by the wormhole's luminance and guiding lights along the ramp were overwhelmed by the winter sunlight pouring through the multiple skylights. Dust and sheet covered equipment and walls vanishing to reveal the spacious and pristine interior of the J. R. Reed Space Terminal.

The interactive holographic environment shut down to reveal more than just starkly different surroundings. It also revealed the crowd of affluent people and media that had watched and waiting with eager anticipation for this chance to see the famous SG-1 in the prime of their lives.

A handsome sandy haired man with hazel eyes stepped forward from the rest of the crowd alone and upon reaching her side spoke, "Thank you for allowing us to witness this momentous event."

Cassie smiled widely at the young man as she reached out and gave his hand an affectionate squeeze, "You are welcome, for you of all people deserve to see them."

He looked back towards the massive naquadah ring that now sat so quietly, a look of awe still in his eyes at what he and his family had just had the privilege to see.

"Mr O'Neill?" a voice spoke from behind the man and as he and Cassie turned to the voice they looked at the aid that stood a respectful distance away. "Mr President, the public is waiting."

"Yes, yes," the United Worlds president turned back to Cassie and returned the affectionate hand squeeze that she had given him before tucking it onto his forearm to support her as they turned and began moving slowly, at her pace, towards the group of people with the aid now at their back. "Thank you again. What will you do now?"

"I believe I have a mission report to finish," Cassie remarked with amusement as she looked at the remote dialling device on her hand and thought of the years that Sam had spent tailor engineering the device for her with the assistance of Asgärd scientists to fulfill the self-fulfilling prophecy that was this mission.

UW President O'Neill chuckled, "You will be joining us at the embassy later won't you? Faith and Charity are looking forward to spending time with their Grandma Cassie."

"And you Ryan? Are you looking forward to spending time with your Grandma Cassie?" Cassie teased the young man.

Ryan O'Neill gave the older woman a serious look. "You know I am Grandma. I can't imagine
what seeing them is like, how difficult it was, especially…”

Cassie's amusement and smile faded as she grew more sombre. There was no need for Ryan to clarify how hard it had been to see them again decades after their death and the tragic circumstances that surrounded the deaths of the two galactic heroes of the Confederation.

She used the hand resting on his forearm to give him a pat. As they reached the crowd, she smiled at Ryan's daughters Faith and Charity who stood vibrating with excitement beside their mother.

The UW president's family smiled at the two hundred ninety-nine year old woman—who appeared to be in her sixties thanks to the Aschen anti-aging vaccine she had received as a young woman—that had been a fixture in their family's line stretching back ten generations to their iconic ancestors. While at first she had been called 'Aunt Cassie' as the generations had passed, carrying on the family tradition of choosing to not use life extension drugs and age naturally, she had become 'Grandma Cassie' because of her age and slowly aging appearance.

As they moved into the respectfully waiting crowd, Ryan leaned down and brushed a kiss against Cassie's aged cheek before reaching for his wife's hand. Then he departed the terminal with his family and most of the other people privileged enough to be present.

Cassie turned back to look at the small group that remained; the supervising terminal officials, the interactive holographic environment operators who had worked on dismantling the devices even as she and Ryan had spoken, and her husband.

Dominic offered his arm to his wife and they linked them together. Slowly they began following the terminal official that would escort them to a side door and transport pad outside the terminal to avoid the massive crush of public and media that was waiting outside the terminal's main entrance for the UW president and other nation presidents and representatives for the press conference about the event that had just happened.

"That was quite something,” Dominic mustered as they slowly covered the distance to their destination.

Cassie looked curiously at her husband before realization struck, "Ah yes, you never saw them when they were that young did you?"

Dominic shook his head. "I have seen pictures of them, but never them in person or in such outlandish clothing. And as you said, even knowing who would appear it was hard recognizing Daniel with hair."

"Yes, their features have quite changed in the years but their eyes, ah their eyes were very much the same." She knew that was how Sam had recognized her, by her eyes. But thinking of eyes brought her mind back to the sorrowful time she had last seen Jack's dark eyes… eyes that had not been the rich, lively eyes of the forty-five year old active colonel that had just entered the stargate but the bleak, dead eyes of the eighty-seven year old retired resistance commander.

Cassie's mind thought back to that tragic day in 2039 when a natural disaster of a mudslide, a failed vehicle safety shield, and bones made fragile simply from age, had instantly taken the life of the most brilliant woman on Earth. Samantha O'Neill. How Earth had mourned her loss for her lifelong contribution to science, her commanding of Operation Quarantine Phase II for Earth in 2010, and her genuine warmth and engaging personality—indeed, the Confederation had mourned her.

But even as the Confederation and galaxy mourned there had been some solace that Jack O'Neill had survived with minor injuries and was expected to make a full recovery. She too had taken
solace in that until that night in the hospital room when Jack had awakened for the first and only time since the accident.

Awakened to learn that his wife of thirty-nine years was dead.

Even with his hospital room filled with family—children, grandchildren, and his first great-grandchildren—and close friends like Daniel and Teal'c—his eyes had died. Somehow, just somehow, she had known leaving that room that night that she would get a call later telling her that Jack had gone to sleep and never woken up.

His death just hours after announcing he would make a full recovery had baffled the doctors and other specialist attending him. Even her mother, who had been advising and had seen him survive so much worse physical injury, had been baffled. The only ones who seemed to understand then, had been herself, Teal'c, and Daniel who had seen such death in Jack's eyes before.

Together Sam and Jack had been buried with all the honour and ceremony the Confederation could give them and the galaxy had noted, and mourned, their loss. But none more so than their family by blood and by choice.

Decades had passed and age had slowly claimed the last members of SG-1: Teal'c had died in 2096 and Daniel in 2190. Other members of SGC had been claimed as well, Louis Ferretti, the infamous hero-pilot Jorge Harmon, the clone of George Hammond in 2049, Walter Harriman, Bill Lee, Sylvester Siler, Tracy Westerholm, and so many more.

Her mother had died in 2205 and she and Dominic had lived on because of their youth when inoculated by the Aschen's anti-aging and sterilization drug. Lived on though all those deaths and the growth of the O'Neill family until ten generations later, the great-great-great-great-great-great-grandson of Jack and Samantha O'Neill—Ryan Jack O'Neill led a greater Confederation than the one they had freed in 2010. One that encompassed the original forty-three confederation planets, then the one thousand one hundred ninety-two planets of the resistance, and finally hundred more worlds and nations as humans spread and grew to populate the galaxy.

And she, she had fulfilled the task that she had been waiting for her whole life since Sam had revealed it to her two hundred seventy-four years ago in the secret bunker on the O'Neill farm.

But ah, what a journey it had been.

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