Friend, or Foe

By

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Colonel Jack O'Neill raced towards the Stargate as staff weapon blasts flashed past his ears, striking the ground around him, sending the earth it struck into the air, spraying him with sod.

"Go!" he yelled to Daniel Jackson, the only other person he could see still visible on that side of the event horizon. He turned and fired his MP5 at the pursuing Horus guards.

Jackson hesitated; in his mind he couldn't see O'Neill outrunning such an onslaught for long. He turned back to see the blast from the closest Jaffa's weapon strike O'Neill in the leg, sending the colonel careering forward, screaming in pain and surprise.

"Daniel," he vociferated, through gritted teeth. "For crying out loud, go!"

Jackson had already made up his mind and was heading towards his fallen comrade. O'Neill winced in pain, shaking his head as Jackson reached him.

"You should have gone," he told the archaeologist, his voice faltering as the pain bit into his leg.

"Sorry, Jack," Daniel replied, looking up now into the burning gaze of the Horus guard, and then lowering his gaze to see the staff weapon that was precariously close to his face.

"Stupid," he sighed, heavily. "I couldn't just leave you here."

O'Neill felt sick suddenly, the pain from the wound on his left thigh increased, his head felt light, and then there was darkness.

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Daniel was marched towards the waiting Heru'ur, noting with distaste the look of satisfaction on the Goa'ulds face. He checked over his shoulder several times to see that the Jaffa soldiers were indeed carrying O'Neill's unconscious body.

"Human," Heru'ur announced triumphantly. "You will be my slaves."

Jackson observed the Goa'uld, unsure of a reply. Heru'ur gave one last look at Jackson, and then turned his attention to O'Neill, who was still unconscious.

"Both of you will learn to serve your god, Heru'ur," he announced, his head tilted back, his gaze arrogant.

Jackson shook his head, unable to believe that he'd risked himself to go back for O'Neill, and then dismissed the thought.

"So, uh, where to now?" he asked, pushing his glasses against his face.

Heru'ur did not reply. Turning abruptly, engulfed by the transport rings, he disappeared.

Jackson raised his eyebrows. "Guess we're going there," he muttered.

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The 'cell' Jackson now found himself in was almost identical to that of Klo'rel's ship. He wondered where they had taken Jack O'Neill, and if it was a tactic of this Goa'uld to keep them apart. As he considered what options he might have, the door to his cell opened. Jack O'Neill stood in front of him.

"Daniel," he said, walking towards his colleague. "Do you ever do anything right?"

"You're welcome," Jackson responded.

O'Neill was pushed into the cell. The door closed behind him; he threw his arms into the air.

"I'm welcome?" he asked, that all to recognisable grimace of displeasure on his face. "Daniel, for crying out loud, did it ever enter into your mind to just leave?"

Daniel's already feeling a hopeless sense of Déjà vu returned his colleagues anger now; Jack's attitude always had this effect on him, but never was it as obvious to him as it was now. His hand shot up to silence O'Neill. "What, what?" he exclaimed in exasperation. "Was I supposed to leave you, Jack? Save myself?"

O'Neill sighed heavily; he too felt the hopelessness he saw on Jackson's face. "Yeah, alright. You're right, I'm wrong," he apologised.

Daniel, about to launch into another defensive attack, looked suddenly confused. "Excuse me?"

Jack shrugged. "I'm not saying it twice."

The two men exchanged a smile. "You're healed," Daniel observed.

"Yeah," O'Neill agreed. "I'm healed, had a little time in the dead bed chamber. Go figure."

Daniel nodded, understanding that to be O'Neill's terminology for the sarcophagus. "And, um, of course, having had this time, you've figured a way for us to get out?"

O'Neill's grimace was involuntary, a habit when he wasn't exactly sure about something, and here it was. "Well no," he admitted. "Not exactly. Who are we dealing with here, anyway?"

"Heru'ur! He has a plan!" Daniel told him, eyes fixed on his colleague's face, contorting with that familiar, 'you're not gonna like this' that Jackson had made all his own.

"A plan?" O'Neill prompted. "Which is?"

"We're going to be his slaves," Daniel told O'Neill, pouting at the thought.

O'Neill screwed his face up in distaste. "Well, that's a bad plan."

"Hmm." Daniel's eyebrows danced upwards as he uttered it.

"Okay, new plan," O'Neill announced, walking around the archaeologist. "I figure he's gonna try and either give us our own snake, or use something like Nishta on us. Frankly, I'm hoping for the latter."

Jackson moved around to face O'Neill who had stopped at the door, having scanned every inch of their cell. "Well, Nishta won't work on us," Daniel told the man.

O'Neill raised his eyebrows and smiled. "I knew that."

"Right, so we make out that we're influenced, and then take the first chance to escape," Daniel said.

"So," O'Neill began, obviously not listening to Daniel. "We take our first chance and make a run for it."

Daniel looked down at his feet. "Good plan, Jack," he agreed. "Why didn't I think of that?" He moved to stand beside O'Neill now, leaning up against the cell door, his hand going thoughtfully to his face. "Supposing it's the former?" he asked.

O'Neill looked at him. "Daniel, for crying out loud! Would you just try to be a little positive?"

Daniel nodded, his eyebrows shooting up once more. "Okay," he agreed.

General Hammond checked his watch. "Okay, people," he asked of the remaining SG1 members, and the Marines of SG-3 that assembled round the briefing table. "We send the MALP through. If there is no sign of hostiles, SG-3 will lead, and try to get some intelligence on our people."

"It was the Goa'uld, Heru'ur," Teal'c said.

"How can you be so sure?" Major Carter asked.

Teal'c looked directly at Sam Carter now. "Because as I entered the Stargate, I turned and saw the Horus guards that protect only the family of Ra."

"What can you tell us about him, Teal'c?" Hammond asked.

"Only that he is a much-feared system lord, and possesses a formidable army."

"Nothing we can't handle," Major Matt Mitchell piped up.

Teal'c said nothing more. He sat silently and listened to Hammond giving the rest of the briefing.

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"Jack," Daniel Jackson said. "Someone's coming."

O'Neill had positioned himself in the furthest corner of the cell, listening as intently as his colleague. "Yeah, I know," he concurred.

The door opened and two Horus guards, their helmets retracted, stood before Jackson, who had made no attempt to retreat.

"Out!" one of them snapped.

"Think we better do what he says," Daniel told Jack.

"Uh, ya think?" O'Neill's reply was terse. He got to his feet slowly.

The Horus guards led them to the throne room, where Heru'ur sat.

"Come in, O'Neill," the Goa'uld demanded.

O'Neill looked dubiously at Daniel, indicating that they should do as ordered. The two men stood before the Goa'uld system lord, waiting.

"You have challenged us once too often," Heru'ur snapped. "Finally, I will do what Apophis and Hathor could not."

Jack regarded the Goa'uld with a fixed stare of disdain. "And that would be?"

"Silence!" Heru'ur roared.

The Horus guard to O'Neill's right slammed his staff weapon into the back of O'Neill's knees, knocking the colonel to the floor. Daniel sensed that this was a requirement and not a punishment and dropped to his voluntarily. "Don't provoke them, Jack," he warned.

O'Neill groaned. "Damn it."

Another Horus guard appeared, carrying a canopic jar.

O'Neill felt a sense of foreboding suddenly. "Ah, Christ, I think it's snakehead time," he muttered.

Daniel's eyes were fixed on the jar, listening to the familiar sounds that a mature Goa'uld symbiote made; the hiss was unmistakable. "Er, Jack, now what?" he whispered.

Jack's eyes rose heavenwards. "I don't know?"

Heru'ur ignored their exchanges, wrapped up in his own achievement.

He took the first Goa'uld from its jar. "You, O'Neill, will become a host to my son, Menes."

O'Neill flinched. "Daniel," he whispered. "Are you up to taking on a Horus guard?"

Daniel looked around at him quickly. "Jesus, Jack, we're surrounded, we'll get ourselves killed."

"No other option. I'm not having that thing in me," Jack snapped back.

"Okay... whatever."

At that moment, a blast thundered through the ship.

Heru'ur turned quickly in the direction it came from. "Jaffa! Kree!" he ordered, looking back at O'Neill and Jackson.

He put the Goa'uld back in the jar and strode from the room.

"What was that?" Jackson asked.

O'Neill, who was being prodded by the Horus guard's staff weapon, climbed to his feet. He shrugged, as surprised and relieved as Jackson was. They were led back to their cell, both men contemplating escape, neither knowing how they were going to achieve it.

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Jack stood; his six-foot frame almost moulded to the door. "Well, something's up," he muttered.

Daniel, who now paced up and down the length of the cell, looked at his colleague with an air of disdain. Then he stopped. "Maybe the SGC is attempting a rescue?" he shared.

O'Neill shook his head. "Nope. They couldn't get aboard this, and nothing we have would have made that kind of impact on a ship this size."

Then both men realised, with horror, exactly what could attack a Goa'uld Cheops vessel.

They said in unison. "Sokar?"

O'Neill's face contorted into that familiar expression. "Well, that's bad," he suggested.

Daniel nodded slowly. "Martouf did say they were at war," he agreed.

"Great. Just great," O'Neill vociferated, moving towards the centre of the cell. "The devil or the deep blue sea. Sweet!"

Daniel shuddered at the thought. "Sokar isn't exactly going to be very happy to see us."

"Ya think. We blew up his own private hell, might kind of grate on the guy," O'Neill stated, standing directly in front of Daniel now. "Still glad you stayed for the party?" he asked.

The dubious expression on Daniel's face revealed his thoughts before his words. "No, not exactly."

At the sound of footsteps, both men turned to look at the door.

O'Neill positioned himself ready to strike. Daniel gestured two with his right hand.

"I know, I can count," O'Neill protested.

The door opened. A Horus guard stood there, not entering.

O'Neill watched Jackson closely, waiting for a sign that it would be opportune to strike. Daniel's left hand warned firmly against it.

"Both of you, out here," the guard demanded.

"Here we go again," Daniel complained.

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Sam Carter led the team through the Stargate; the MALP had indicated that the immediate area was clear of hostiles. Major Matt Mitchell was close by, Teal'c bringing up the rear. The sounds of the ongoing battle, between two sets of Death Gliders, roared into their ears.

"Cover up," Mitchell ordered, running for the cover of the nearby trees.

Teal'c made no attempt to conceal himself, aware of the battle tactics better than any of his colleagues.

"What's he doing?" Mitchell asked

Sam Carter shook her head. "I don't know, but he knows this better than any of us." She began to make her way towards the Jaffa. "Teal'c?"

"It is the forces of Sokar," Teal'c, laconic to the last, reported.

"Sokar?" Carter exclaimed.

"Jesus, I hope our boys aren't in the middle of that," Mitchell remarked, awestruck by what he saw.

Two Cheops vessels were in direct opposition, Death Gliders weaved between them, battling and attempting counter strikes.

"I think we'd better get the hell out of here," Mitchell informed them. "There's nothing we can do here, except maybe get ourselves captured or killed!"

Sam Carter reluctantly agreed. "Teal'c," she said, "we can't do anything." She made the point to the Jaffa as clearly as she could. "We have to go back."

Teal'c took a deep breath. "I am staying," he said firmly. He was already beginning to walk towards one of the fallen Horus guards, laying his staff weapon on the ground. Carter looked back at Mitchell, before following after him.

"Teal'c, we'll be captured or killed, Colonel O'Neill wouldn't want that to happen," she remonstrated.

"I am not leaving without my friends, Daniel Jackson and O'Neill. I will attempt to board Heru'ur's vessel in the guise of one of his Horus guards," Teal'c assured her. "Please return, Major Carter."

Sam Carter looked anxiously at the Jaffa, but she knew him too well to argue. "Then I'm staying too."

"No, you would not pass for a Horus Guard, Major Carter. You must return, perhaps contact the Tok'ra. They may have a spy within Heru'ur's ranks."

Carter backed away slowly, joining Mitchell at the DHD. "Get us out of here, Sam," Mitchell instructed.

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Jack and Daniel followed the Horus guards through the labyrinth of the vessel.

"Where are we going?" Daniel wondered aloud.

"I don't know," Jack replied sharply.

"It, it wasn't a question actually, I was just wondering," Daniel retorted.

"Yes, it was," O'Neill argued.

"No, it really wasn't," Daniel insisted. "Why would I ask you?"

Jack, beginning to become confused with exactly why he was arguing, shot Daniel a look over his shoulder. "Relax, Daniel, we'll get out of this."

Daniel chuckled to himself, causing another O'Neill look in his direction.

The Horus guard stopped suddenly, opening a door to their right. Inside, the sarcophagus was central to the small room.

"I know where we're going," O'Neill said. "I've been here already."

Daniel shot him a 'that's not very helpful' look.

The guards pushed them inside, retreated and shut the door behind them.

"Er, Jack?" Daniel's tone made O'Neill look at him; his eyes followed Daniel's.

The canopic jar sat on a small pedestal at the far corner of the room.

O'Neill, spooked suddenly by a sound, turned quickly. "Ah, crap!" he exclaimed. "Do you think they're loose in here somewhere?"

Daniel, as wary as his companion, backed closer to the colonel. "Well, if they are, I can't see them."

The two men huddled closer together, their eyes darting one way and the other, looking for the Goa'uld that both thought must be in the room.

"This is a like a scene out of Aliens," O'Neill mentioned.

"What?" Daniel asked surprised.

"You really don't get out much, do you?" O'Neill responded dryly.

"So, is that a helpful reference, Jack?" Daniel enquired.

O'Neill, now more preoccupied with where exactly he should concentrate, didn't reply.

"Er, Jack," Daniel's tone was lower now.

"What?"

"Over there," he said, pointing toward the sarcophagus.

O'Neill's gaze fell upon the Goa'uld.

"How far do you think they can jump?" he asked.

"Well, I don't know," Daniel responded, edging back towards the door.

Jack, feeling the movement, followed.

"Ok-aay," he said, at length. "How do we kill them? Wring their necks?"

"I don't know," Daniel replied honestly. "How do you kill a snake?"

O'Neill considered that for a second. "By wringing its neck," he shared. "If you can get it," he added, as an afterthought.

"So, do we er, wait for it to come to us?" Daniel asked, his gaze fixed heavily on the symbiote.

"Well I'm not moving. There has to be two of those things in here," O'Neill retorted.

"Not necessarily," Daniel said. "Maybe Heru'ur is hoping that one of us gets infested and kills the other one."

"Well, that's not gonna happen," O'Neill commented.

"It's moving," Daniel told him.

"I can see that, get behind me," O'Neill instructed.

"Why?"

"Daniel, for crying out loud! Just do it."

Daniel moved behind O'Neill, keeping his back turned firmly to the wall. He looked up nervously; there nothing above them. "Do you think you get can it?" he asked.

"I don't know, Daniel, shut up and let me concentrate, will you."

Daniel raised his eyes heavenwards. "You know, Jack, even in a crisis you can find a way to annoy me."

"Likewise," O'Neill retorted.

The Goa'uld made its way along the sarcophagus; O'Neill focused his senses on the creature.

"Ah, I hate those things," he grimaced.

Daniel maintained attention to the surrounding area, waiting nervously for the Goa'uld to make its move.

"Er, Jack," he stuttered.

"What, Daniel."

Jackson fiddled with his glasses. "If it does, um, jump..."

"Yeah," O'Neill replied patiently.

"Don't move, will you?"

O'Neill smiled to himself. "Don't worry, Danny boy, I won't let it get ya."

"It's just that, that's a natural reaction, that's all I meant."

"For you, maybe," O'Neill responded. "Hate spiders, do we?" he teased.

"At this point, no," Daniel responded.

The Goa'uld reached the end of the sarcophagus.

O'Neill's muscles tensed, anticipating the assault.

Daniel was hardly breathing, aware that he couldn't move lest he distract O'Neill, equally from the tension he felt within himself.

The Goa'uld made its attack. O'Neill, his reflexes sharpened from years of black ops training, sidestepped. To Daniel's horror he was now directly in front of the Goa'uld. Almost as it struck him, O'Neill's right hand shot out and grasped its neck.

"Jesus, Jack!" exclaimed Daniel, relieved and angry all at once.

O'Neill, having twisted the neck of the creature, held it for a moment, ensuring it was in fact dead. "Relax, Danny," he said, with a huge grin. "The wicked witch is dead."

Daniel grinned back. "You did that on purpose," he noted.

Jack, looking smugly back at him, tilted his head to the side, raising his eyebrows. "Did not," he goaded.

Daniel realising that finally O'Neill was adding levity, more than ignorance, to the proceedings, offered a smile as a token gesture. "How do we get out of here?" he asked then.

O'Neill's heavy sigh offered no response.

Daniel had a sudden brainwave; it dawned on him slowly. "Weren't the transport rings on Klo'rel's ship in the same room as the sarcophagus?" he asked.

Jack looked at him, the recognition of Daniel's statement crossing his furrowed eyebrows.

"Slight problem there," he replied.

"Yeah, I know, no device. Well," Jackson continued, "we'll just have to find one."

Jack gave him his best 'Ya think!' look.

"Hmm," Daniel pondered. "Don't suppose asking for a device would go down too well, so."

O'Neill finally had to say it. "Ya think?"

Daniel looked at him, helplessly. "Ok-ay, Mister Sarcastic has all the answers. How do we get out then?"

Jack shrugged. "I don't know." He moved towards the force field. "We're not in orbit."

"We're not?" Daniel joined him.

"Nope. That's terra firma down there, Danny boy," Jack pointed out the obvious.

"Oh darn," Daniel said, sarcasm leaping in before his companion had the chance. "No windows, can't jump."

O'Neill sighed heavily. "Alright, I'll give up the sarcasm." He paused. "Until we get out of here."

"Okay by me, but probably impossible for you," Daniel concluded.

Jack looked at him sharply. "Hey! I'm not that bad," he snapped.

"We're still here," Daniel pointed out.

Jack made subservient gestures towards his companion. "Okay," he said, with a heavy sigh. "How do we get out of here?"

Daniel, enjoying this brief moment of triumph, chipped in. "A door would be good."

O'Neill resisted the urge, heading in that direction. "I assume all of these doors work from the same kind of device?" he asked.

Daniel took a deep breath. "Well, I don't know, Jack. Do you really think there's a Cheops Inc somewhere out here?"

"Daniel, just… shut up!" Jack protested.

It was Daniel's turn to acquiesce. "Okay, sorry, sorry."

O'Neill located the serpent and attempted to turn it. "Well that doesn't work," he pointed out.

"Try the Horus image." Daniel indicated it to his colleague.

The door opened and O'Neill gingerly checked outside.

A Horus guard approached. "Whoops," he said, ducking back inside. Daniel turned the Falcon's head, closing the door. Almost as he did so, it opened again.

O'Neill, thinking quickly, did the best impression of a Goa'uld he could muster. "Jaffa! Kree!" he ordered.

The Horus guard did not respond; his head tilted sideways, almost quizzically.

"Kree!" O'Neill demanded.

Daniel's expression was a picture. "Er, Jack," he whispered. "You're supposed to follow that either with an order, or an instruction."

"Suggestions?" O'Neill asked.

The Horus guard moved forward, turning and closing the door behind him.

"Your impression is a poor one, O'Neill," said Teal'c's distinctive voice.

"Teal'c!" O'Neill exclaimed. "Goddamn it." He lunged forward, punching the man in the chest, happy to see, or at least hear him. He instantly regretted his choice of greeting. "Ouch!" he exclaimed, as his fist struck the reinforced breastplate.

The Horus head retracted; Teal'c looked at O'Neill. "Are you alright, O'Neill? Daniel Jackson?"

"How did you get in here?" Daniel enquired.

Teal'c looked at him without speaking.

"How do we get out?" O'Neill asked.

Teal'c lifted his hand up.

Daniel smiled gratefully. "The ring device." he said.

"I knew that," O'Neill responded. "Well, okay! Let's get out of here. Nice one, Teal'c."

The rings activated and the three found themselves on the planet once more.

O'Neill looked suitably satisfied. "Sweet," he announced.

"Er, not so sweet," Daniel commented, noting the Death Gliders approaching.

"Oh, for crying out loud, is nothing ever simple?" O'Neill complained, taking off at the sprint, closely followed by Daniel and Teal'c.

The heat blasts from the gliders struck the ground around them.

"Déjà vu," Daniel shouted.

"Déjà vu," O'Neill replied. They reached the DHD.

"Dial us up, Danny, get us out of here," O'Neill shouted.

"One small problem," Daniel told him.

"What now?"

"We don't have a GDO," Daniel told him. "They stripped us of all our stuff. No GDO."

"Yeah, yeah. Splat. Teal'c?"

"I have the device, Daniel Jackson, activate the Stargate."

As the three men emerged from the event horizon, General Hammond and Samantha Carter stood at the bottom of the ramp.

Dr. Fraiser had just entered with her team.

Daniel stopped, taking in the sight. "There's no place like home!" he said.

O'Neill looked at him, a smile sweeping across his face. "Hey!" he exclaimed. "That's my line."

The End.