Research

By

Jaclyn

Research I

Colonel Maybourne smiled at Lt. Mikey Nichols across the vast oak desk that served as his base of operations on level 18 at Area 51.

"Are you sure you can achieve it?" Maybourne questioned. "Because if there's any doubt whatsoever, then I'm not even going to consider it."

"Sir, on the last recon we found the temple, there were over 300 hundred larval Goa'uld in there, it'll work."

Maybourne's features were stern. "I'm not losing another team to the Goa'uld. If we can execute your plan, and study how to reverse the effects, or even control the thing, that would be worth a lot, but, remember, Lieutenant, if this goes wrong, it's your head."

"Yes, sir, it won't be a problem I've done this kind of thing before. Like I said, the technology is there, we'll just make sure the right host is, no slip ups." Nichols saluted. "Parker has volunteered."

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Jack O'Neill swilled down the beer, emptied the can, and crushed it almost simultaneously. Daniel Jackson, perched not too far away, smiled, amused by this action and attempted the same with his can. He beamed broadly with satisfaction as the same result was achieved.

"Careful, Daniel," Jack warned, mischievously. "I wouldn't want to see you strain anything."

Daniel regarded him with disdain. "Anything you can do," he responded, a serious concern crossing his almost angelic looking face. "And why did I agree to come?" he asked, looking out across the near deserted lake.

"Because," O'Neill reminded him, "I asked you to. I figure we need some down time. Humour me."

He peeled the ring from another can, reached down into the cool bag and grabbed a second can, tossing it to Jackson.

"Right," Daniel agreed, looking down dolefully at his fishing rod. "I don't even like fishing," he commented.

"Hey!" O'Neill exclaimed. "Everybody likes fishing. Come on, give it a try! You can think of the, um, the historical thing?" Jack's eyes frosted over right about then, as he tried to think of a way to avoid a Daniel diatribe on the ancestry of the sport.

Daniel merely looked back at him; one eyebrow raised. He slowly shook his head.

Teal'c, who was stretched out behind the pair, sat up abruptly. "Colonel O'Neill, it would appear that you have something toying with your line."

"Whoa!" O'Neill was surprised. He grabbed his fishing rod and struck the line, jerking the rod back quickly. With nothing on the end biting, O'Neill, off balance, fell backwards from his perch. The line, minus its bait, was snagged in the trees behind him.

Teal'c smiled at Daniel Jackson, whose cleverly masked smile was duly returned.

O'Neill, surveying the possibility of unhooking his catch, frowned. "Teal'c." He took his hunting knife from its sheath, and cut the line. "I just don't get your sense of humour," O'Neill continued.

Daniel, still beaming broadly said. "But, Jack, you've got to love its simplicity!"

"Whatever."

O'Neill's mobile phone interrupted their brief exchange. "Yeah, O'Neill," the colonel answered. He listened intently. "For crying out loud! How the hell did that happen? No, just tell them to have the plane standing by at the airport."

O'Neill's expression flashed fury so apparently, that Daniel Jackson and Teal'c now stood beside him, waiting for the news.

O'Neill looked down at his feet, a heavy sigh. "It's Carter," he said.

"Jack, she's okay, isn't she?" Daniel asked. His face was contorted with the same angst as his colleague.

"No, Daniel, not exactly. She's been infested by a snake, and Maybourne's people have her."

Teal'c's massive frame seemed to become even bigger. "Then we must get her back. The Tok'ra have the technology to remove the Goa'uld," he said.

"Yes." It was Jackson who answered. "That's right. But, er, they don't want that to happen, do they, Jack?"

O'Neill didn't need to respond. The look that he wore on his face was reply enough. Teal'c's own expression grew fiercer. "Colonel O'Neill, we must get her back."

"Yeah, Teal'c, I know. Let's get moving, we've got a plane to catch."

<div align="center">*********************</div>

The Goa'uld surveyed his captors through the bars of the cage he now found himself in.

Maybourne and a few of his colleagues watched, waiting for the creature to respond to their questions.

"I will destroy your world," Thoth roared. "You cannot keep me here. The system lords will launch an attack on your planet such as you have never seen before."

"I don't think so, we have a treaty with the system lords," Maybourne replied, smugly.

The door to the holding cells opened and Major Davis appeared, looking upset and concerned. "Colonel Maybourne, sir, General Hammond would like to speak to you," he informed his CO. His eyes were fixed on the woman he knew to be Major Carter, whose eyes were glowing at him.

Maybourne turned and left the room.

Davis moved closer to the cage. "Sam, I'm sorry, if I'd known what was going on, I swear I would have done something."

Thoth regarded the man and allowed Carter to speak. "You could get me out is what you could do for me," she said, in her own voice.

"I, I can't."

"Davis, if you don't get me out, this thing is going to have complete control over me. You want to explain that to Colonel O'Neill?"

Davis, now a little too close to the Goa'uld he perceived as Carter, shrugged. "I wish I could," he said. "I'm sorry."

Carter's eyes glowed. "Listen to me, human," Thoth said. "I am of the Tok'ra. If you do not release me, the ties you have will be severed." Davis turned away, exiting the room.

Thoth stared in fury at the remaining guards. "I grow tired of this," he muttered.

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O'Neill led his colleagues through the SGC at a pace that Daniel found hard to keep up with. The three forgot the protocol of knocking on Hammond's door before entering.

"Sir, are we gonna allow that..." O'Neill began.

"Colonel!" Hammond interrupted. "I didn't ask you to come in here, now wait outside."

Jack O'Neill caught himself before replying, turned and disappeared as ordered; the door slammed loudly behind him.

Daniel Jackson, however, remained, Teal'c at his side. "General Hammond, I'm not in the Air Force, and right now I'm not concerned about your procedures. Where are they holding Sam?"

"Sit down Doctor Jackson, Teal'c," Hammond responded. "Ask Colonel O'Neill to come in." Teal'c opened the door; Jack O'Neill was nowhere to be seen.

"It appears that Colonel O'Neill is no longer outside, General Hammond," Teal'c told him.

Hammond frowned. He lifted the phone. "Tell Colonel O'Neill to report to my office. Well, find him!"

Daniel looked at Teal'c, waiting.

"Doctor Jackson, I appreciate your concern, and I'm doing all I can to secure Major Carter's release. However, Colonel Maybourne does have autonomy to study anything brought back that could prove to be useful."

Daniel waved his finger at the General. "Okay, firstly, no Goa'uld is going to cooperate and tell us anything. Secondly, this is Sam we're talking about, and thirdly, well that's it," Jackson snapped.

"I agree with Daniel Jackson, General Hammond," Teal'c commented.

Hammond took a deep breath. "I assure you both that I am doing all that is in my power to do. You'll just have to trust me on that, and," he continued, "if you see Colonel O'Neill, I expect you to tell him that any attempts made on his part, without authorisation, to free Major Carter, might result in a court martial!"

Daniel followed Teal'c down the stairs. "Where would Jack go?" he asked.

"I believe he would go to the armoury to secure weapons, if we are to free Major Carter," Teal'c responded.

Daniel smiled. "Yes, he would." His pace quickened.

Jack O'Neill was adept at camera dodging; he changed his clothing in the locker room, donned another cap, and entered the armoury. He was putting equipment in his harnessing when the two appeared.

"Um, Jack, General Hammond wants to see you. He thinks you're going to attempt an incursion into Area 51 to free Sam," Daniel said.

Jack raised an eyebrow. "And, he would be right," he confirmed.

"Well, he said that you'd face a court martial if you did that, and besides, Jack, they're not going to let you off the base with all that... stuff," he said, gesturing towards the three Zat guns, and assorted small arms that O'Neill had assembled.

Jack stood bolt upright. "No, you're right, Daniel, I could never get off this base with..." He lifted the harnessing. "...this stuff. But..."

Daniel raised any eyebrow. "But I could, if I put it in one of my rucksacks."

O'Neill beamed. "Yep."

"Are you sure, Daniel Jackson?" Teal'c enquired. "Would they not attempt to search you under the circumstances?"

"They've never done it before," Jackson said.

"Hey, Danny boy, there's always a first time. But, I'm going to see Hammond and convince him that I'm gonna let him handle this. Wait about half an hour, then try it, okay?"

Daniel nodded. "Well, he can't exactly court martial me can he?" he stated.

"Nor I," Teal'c added.

"So, do you have a plan?" Daniel asked.

"Yep," Jack replied, beginning to exit.

"Care to share?" Jackson enquired, turning and following O'Neill.

"Nope!" His stride lengthening, O'Neill left the pair.

Daniel looked at Teal'c. "I hate it when he does that."

Teal'c looked back at the man, raising his left eyebrow.

"Never mind," Jackson said, heading towards his quarters.

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Jack O'Neill smiled at General Hammond as he was requested to enter. "Sir?" he asked.

"You having a problem, Colonel O'Neill?" Hammond demanded.

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Sit down, Jack," he instructed.

O'Neill did as he was told.

"The situation is this. Major Carter has been infested with a Goa'uld and is currently at Area 51, sub level 16, in the high security holding cells. At the present time, I am speaking with General Lewis about securing her release. Needless to say, as soon as this is achieved, we can contact the Tok'ra and get Major Carter back."

"Yes, sir," O'Neill responded. "Is that all?"

"Yes, it is." There was a momentary pause. "Jack, I believe you were on leave, I suggest that's the best place for you until the matter is resolved."

"Yes, sir," O'Neill concurred.

"So, we understand each other, Colonel O'Neill, do we?" Hammond's lips twitched into a smile.

"We do, sir, thank you, sir."

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Daniel collected a few artefacts from his lab and headed out of the facility with Teal'c at his side. As he approached the security checkpoints, his stomach twisted anxiously. He began to talk to his companion.

"So, you see, Teal'c, in ancient mythology, nothing is as apparent as it seems."

They cleared the first checkpoint.

"I do not understand, Daniel Jackson." Teal'c, sensing the aim of Jackson's ramblings, joined in. "In fact, was it not the Goa'uld who created this mythology?"

Jackson's eyebrows shot up, forgetting the purpose of his own comments, suddenly intrigued by what Teal'c said.

"You know, that's possible, some of it could be Goa'uld, but the basis of their nature is to steal and adopt as their own. So?"

"We are clear, Daniel Jackson," Teal'c said, in his own defence.

"Ah, right. Wonder if Jack has managed it." As he spoke, his face broke into a smile.

O'Neill was sitting on the bonnet of Jackson's car, wearing his trademark dark glasses and cap. "You took your time," he said.

"How, how did you get out so quickly?" Daniel asked.

"Hey! I'm on leave," Jack protested. "Let's get back to some fishing."

As he climbed into the passenger seat of Jackson's car, he added. "For a rat."

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Thoth waited, knelt doubled over in his cell, until the guard came closer.

"Are you alright, Major?" the guard enquired.

Thoth did not respond. "You'd better get the colonel," the guard told his companion.

Once the only other guard had left, Thoth raised Carter up, and stood.

"I am dying," Carter's voice told the marine.

"Ma'am?"

"It's killing me as punishment."

The marine moved closer, staring at the glowing eyes of the creature. Easily mesmerised, he opened the cage.

The marine's lifeless body sank to the floor.

Thoth had the weapon. It was crude, but it would stop the humans entering.

As Maybourne appeared, he opened fire, narrowly missing.

Maybourne made it out of the room, slamming his hand on the security alert panic button. "We'll need two teams down here. Tranquillisers only. I want this creature alive."

End of Part One

RESEARCH II

Jack O'Neill had concealed his fatigues under the clothes he wore. He ordered Jackson to stop the car when they drew closer to Area 51. He would need to be recognised instantly if he stood any chance of admission to the base.

"Jack, you do have a plan, don't you?" Daniel Jackson asked.

"Of course, I have a plan," O'Neill responded. "What, did you think I was just going to march in there without a plan? Of course, I have a plan."

"Good. Uh, what is it then?" Daniel asked, taking his glasses off for a moment and peering at O'Neill.

"Patience, Daniel," O'Neill said, getting back into the car. "Let's go."

The car stopped at the checkpoint; the guard offered the colonel a salute.

"We're here to see Colonel Maybourne," O'Neill informed the sentry.

"I'll check, sir."

"That won't be necessary," O'Neill snapped, brandishing his clearance badge.

"Yes, sir, and your companions?"

"S3 clearance, gimme two visitors' passes. That's Doctor Jackson and… just give me the passes, Airman," O'Neill barked.

Daniel drove the car through the complex, stopping at Jack's instigation. "Plan?" he asked.

"I don't exactly have one," O'Neill said. A contorted, confused expression swept across his face.

"No plan?" Daniel stated. "Oh, great. Oh, boy."

"Follow me, campers," O'Neill said, concealing a Zat gun under his jacket and pulling his cap on.

Jackson's eyebrows danced upwards. "No plan," he reiterated to Teal'c.

"So it would seem," the Jaffa confirmed.

Daniel knew the flashing red lights indicated a problem. His stride quickened. "Something's up," he observed.

O'Neill stopped at the elevator and scrutinised Jackson for a moment. "Ya think!"

The elevator took them to level 16, where two guards pointed their weapons at the three as they alighted.

"Hey!" O'Neill exclaimed, waving his pass. "Colonel Maybourne?"

One of them waved the muzzle of his gun in the direction of the holding cells. "What's happening?" Daniel enquired.

"The thing has a weapon."

O'Neill raised his eyebrows. "A weapon, great."

He looked at Teal'c. "Zat blast!" Teal'c nodded slowly.

Daniel followed the two men. "No plan," he said to himself.

Maybourne was surprised to see O'Neill arrive at his side.

"See you're doing you're usual great job, Harry," he goaded, looking disgustedly at the NID man.

"How did you get in here?" Maybourne demanded.

O'Neill waved his clearance in front of the errant colonel.

"So, how'd this happen?" O'Neill asked.

"I don't know, I was talking to General Hammond at the time," Maybourne snapped back.

O'Neill shook his head. "Now isn't that special."

"Colonel Maybourne?" It was Daniel who spoke. "Who exactly is in Major Carter?"

Maybourne looked at O'Neill, who looked away from him. "It's a Goa'uld, said his name was Fof or something," Maybourne told the Doctor.

"Thoth?" Jackson exclaimed. "Oh boy."

"Daniel?" O'Neill asked.

"Um, Jack, Thoth was an ancient Egyptian God who possessed and taught all knowledge. The master of words, lord of the wise. He was worshipped throughout ancient Egyptian culture, especially at Hermopolis. He was the inventor of language, numbers, and astrology."

"Daniel," Jack O'Neill said, in a concerned tone. "Just what are you saying?"

Daniel looked at his confused colleague. "Right." Jackson's right hand now rested on his brow. "If he *is* Thoth, he might be able to influence the minds of others."

"Sweet," O'Neill said. "So, we have 'God' in there, creator of all knowledge, who just happens to have mind-bending skills. Daniel, are you sure?"

Jackson shook his head. "No, I'm just telling you about Thoth, and the mythology of ancient Egypt, Jack."

"Okay, I got that part. Teal'c, do it."

Teal'c moved past the two men near the door to the holding cells and opened the door quickly. He raised his hand and sent the Zat blast directly at Major Carter, who fell instantly.

"Teal'c?" O'Neill asked.

"It is done," Teal'c confirmed.

O'Neill, followed by Daniel and Maybourne, entered the room.

"Thank you, Colonel O'Neill, we'll take over from here," Maybourne instructed.

"Maybourne, do you want me to have Teal'c shoot you with that thing?" O'Neill asked menacingly. The guards raised their weapons, pointing them in the Jaffa's direction.

"For crying out loud, Maybourne. Your people can't handle this. That's Carter, not some project. And, by the way, how did that thing get in her in the first place?"

"You're out of your jurisdiction here," Maybourne responded.

Major Davis appearance at that moment was timely. "Colonel O'Neill, sir, General Hammond would like to speak to you."

"Sweet," O'Neill noted. "We're not done here, Maybourne," he warned.

Daniel looked across at Sam Carter's unconscious body, then back to Maybourne.

"You have no idea what you're dealing with here," he stated, a look of spite crossing his face. "If the Goa'uld *is* Thoth, and it relates to anything from Ancient Egypt, your people are in serious trouble."

Maybourne straightened his uniform. "Well, you'll just have to let me worry about that, Doctor Jackson. Now I believe I asked you to leave."

Teal'c's eyes slid across to the guard, who still had his weapon aimed in the direction of the Jaffa, then back at Jackson.

Outside the room, Davis stopped O'Neill. "Sir, General Hammond isn't on the telephone." O'Neill looked confused for a second. "What?"

"Sir, I think there's something you should know, just not here," Davis said, leading the Colonel away.

End of Part Two

<u>Research III</u>

"Look, I don't care about any of this, sir," O'Neill protested. "It was a set up." He paced up and down General Hammond's office.

"Davis told me he'd seen something in Maybourne's office. SG3 has someone from Maybourne's unit working on the inside. And hey! That wouldn't be the first time, would it?"

"I have no proof of that, Colonel O'Neill," Hammond responded.

"Now I did ask you to stand down, Colonel," he continued. "Which is exactly what I expect you to do."

Daniel Jackson felt as passionately as his colleague. "General, I don't think you're seeing the big picture," he stated. "The Goa'uld we're dealing with here is different to anything we've ever seen before."

"Yes, Doctor Jackson, I am aware of that, which is why I've contacted the Tok'ra."

O'Neill looked at his superior officer, a look of surprise crossing his brow.

"You did?" he asked.

"Yes. I've briefed the President after seeing the video from the holding cells. He wants the thoughts of the Tok'ra before he'll make a decision."

"May I see it?" Daniel asked.

Hammond nodded, pushed his chair back, and led the three men into the briefing area, where he played back the video.

"Great, a snakehead with mind control. Sweet," O'Neill commented.

Daniel Jackson looked even more concerned now than he had before. He sighed heavily. "I, er, I hope that they're taking better precautions this time," he said.

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Jack O'Neill listened intently to what Martouf and Jacob Carter had to say.

"Thoth is the most devious Goa'uld that has ever been. He isn't deemed to be a system lord as such, but yet he is counsel to Cronos," Martouf explained. "Which makes this a very dangerous situation."

"How did he get into Carter in the first place?" O'Neill asked. "He must have had a host."

"Yes, that is correct. But your SG team killed his host, which is why he transferred into Samantha Carter," Martouf replied. "From what our spies inside tell us, Thoth was making a visit to a Goa'uld larva site. It is not heavily protected, because the Goa'uld believed it unknown. Obviously one of your teams must have found it."

"Ya think!" O'Neill vociferated. "So how do we get this Goa'uld out of Carter?"

"Forgive me, Colonel O'Neill, in order to do that we must first have Samantha Carter. Are you able to get your people to release her?" Martouf asked.

O'Neill looked at General Hammond. "I'll make a call."

Daniel Jackson sighed heavily. "If Colonel Maybourne's got someone's ear."

"Yeah, well, we've got the President's ear," O'Neill responded. "That high enough for you, Daniel?"

"It hasn't worked before, Jack," Daniel replied. "If Maybourne's convinced his superiors that it could help in the fight against the Goa'uld, who knows what way they'll swing."

O'Neill's face screwed up. "Well, now that would be unacceptable." He slammed his hands down in frustration. "Does anyone else here think this sucks?"

Teal'c raised a considered eyebrow. "Colonel O'Neill, perhaps we should consider another option."

"Well, I'm open to suggestions, Teal'c?"

Daniel Jackson pushed his chair back, his finger pressed against his forehead in deep thought.

"I think we should contact anyone that can help us get in there, and get her out, Jack. Maybe the Tollan would help, walking through walls could be useful," Daniel began. "Personally, I have this feeling that the President is going to be unavailable on this one."

O'Neill scrutinised his colleague. "Yeah," he said finally. "So do I."

Hammond entered the room at that moment. "Gentlemen, I've got to take a little trip to Washington, I will be gone for exactly 48 hours. Colonel..."

O'Neill regarded the General; a glint of satisfaction entered into his eyes.

"Yes, sir, understood."

He looked at Daniel who shared his enthusiasm, for what was quite obviously to the two men, a means of getting the help they needed.

"I'll go and see the Tollan," Daniel said, once the group were alone.

"Okay, Daniel," O'Neill agreed, a smug, almost competitive look crossing his eyes. "I'll get a hold of the Asgard." He beamed quite openly now.

Daniel smiled back. "Well, okay." he replied. "I guess if you can actually get... hold of them."

"Good," O'Neill snapped.

"Good," Daniel Jackson replied.

Martouf and Teal'c exchanged bemused expressions.

"Jacob Carter," Teal'c asked. "Please explain?"

"Those boys, they like a challenge," Jacob confirmed, smiling.

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Daniel waited for Narim in a small, yet spacious room in the city of Tollan on Tollana.

"I am sorry I kept you waiting, Daniel, it is good to see you," Narim declared as he entered.

"Ah, that's okay. Look I don't have much time here, I'm hoping you will help," Daniel said, in his rather hurried fashion. "Sam Carter has been infested with a Goa'uld; she's being held by that other part of our Government that I told you about in the past."

He paused, only for a second.

"You see, the thing is, we can't wait for them to decide whether or not they're going to turn her back over to us. So, Narim, and I hope you trust us on this, we're going to need your technology to get in there. Now, before you say no…"

"We will help, Daniel," Narim replied.

Jackson looked surprised. "You, you will? No argument, no needing to speak to the council?"

Narim smiled. "The Curia," he corrected. "I will accompany you. Once you have fully briefed us on the situation, I will then seek the blessing of the Curia."

Daniel smiled his most infectious smile. "Great, but we have to leave right away," he said, sensing victory.

Narim led the way to the Stargate.

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Above earth, Thor's new Asgard ship went undetected.

"O'Neill, it is good to see you once again," Thor greeted.

"Thor, you're looking good buddy," O'Neill replied. "We, er." He paused. "Problem, we have a problem. Samantha Carter. You remember her, blonde… about so high... loves your technology?" O'Neill gestured as he spoke.

"Yes, Major Carter."

"Well, she's been taken as a host by a Goa'uld. I was hoping we could count on your help to free her," O'Neill explained.

Thor considered the proposition. "O'Neill, on which planet is she held?"

O'Neill sighed. "The one below us," he pointed out. "By the same guys responsible for stealing your technology."

"I see," Thor concluded. "And do you know her exact location?"

"Yeah. Area 51, you might know it, some of your, er, race visited there a while back."

"We have visited many places, O'Neill, I will need coordinates. But before I can help you, I will have to have the permission of the Asgard High Council."

"Yeah, I get that," O'Neill commented. "But can you be quick about it? We're kind of in a situation here."

Thor nodded. O'Neill found himself, once again, in the briefing room at the SGC. Narim and Daniel were already seated at the table.

"Jack," Daniel asked. "Any luck?"

O'Neill looked slightly ruffled by the presence of the Tollan. "Some," he replied. "You?"

Daniel's face contorted, trying not to look too smug. "Narim has agreed to help."

"Sweet," O'Neill declared. "We'll just wait and see what my buddy Thor has to say."

Teal'c looked as bemused as he had before. Jacob Carter, deep in conversation with Martouf, looked across at O'Neill.

"We might only have one small problem," he said.

"Oh, come on, the Asgard, the Tollan, *and* the Tok'ra, it'll be a cakewalk," O'Neill stated.

"Not if Thoth has gained control of Area 51 and found himself a new host," Jacob warned.

O'Neill looked at Daniel. "Oh, for crying out loud!" he vociferated. "Surely the combined technology is enough to find him, it, the snake. Wherever it goes?"

"I'm afraid not," Jacob responded. "If that were the case, we would have contacted the Asgard about Seth."

"Well then, we should go now!" Daniel insisted. "It's obviously too risky too wait…" He paused, looking directly at O'Neill. "For Thor."

O'Neill looked at the man. "Daniel, we wait. If Thor's gonna do this, he has the technology to beam us right in there and out again." He sat now. "If not, then I guess Narim will take us on a walk through some pretty thick walls!"

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Samantha Carter awoke in a darkened room, disorientated by her blackout experience. She stumbled towards the door, banging loudly on it.

"Hello? Colonel O'Neill? Daniel?"

No reply came. She sat back down, still shaky from whatever experience she had had.

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"Jack," Daniel said. "Can I talk to you in private?"

O'Neill frowned, expecting Jackson to corner him with his achievement. He followed Daniel down to the control room

"Look, if he has changed hosts, we're running out of time here," Daniel insisted.

"I know that. If he has, at least we'll have something less to worry about," Jack confirmed.

"Well, don't you think we should get going then? Thor could be hours."

"Look, Danny boy. I think my buddy Thor knows the stakes. If he does help, it'll be a damn sight quicker than driving halfway across the country!"

Daniel, frustrated, pushed his glasses back against the bridge of his nose. "When, Jack? You heard the Tok'ra! This is one of the most devious Goa'uld they've ever encountered. Doesn't that tell you anything?"

"Yes, Daniel, it tells me to wait."

Daniel's frustration was beginning to become evident as he strode up and down the control room. "Jack, we need to go now."

"No," O'Neill replied. "We need to wait."

"See, this is just like you. You think I've got the upper hand, and you don't like it."

O'Neill looked surprised. "What?"

"You, you can't let anyone…"

The brilliant flash of light stopped both men in their tracks. Sam Carter stood between them.

O'Neill looked puzzled for a second.

Daniel stood, his mouth dropping open.

"Sam," he exclaimed. Samantha Carter was just as shocked as her colleagues.

"Sir?" she asked, confusion sweeping across her face.

"Carter," O'Neill responded. "Welcome back!" A lopsided smile crossed his face.

Jack sighed heavily. "Okay, now all we have to do is find the snakehead," he stated.

 End of Part three

Research - The Conclusion.

Daniel shook his head. "I think Jacob is right, the Goa'uld would have moved to another host, possibly..." His attention turned to Major Carter. "And I don't mean this to sound condescending..." He flicked his eyes over to Jack. "Someone of a higher rank."

"Carter?" O'Neill asked. "Are you sure you can't remember anything?"

"No, sir," Sam Carter paused, thinking as hard as she could, trying to make a connection with the events of the past two days. "It's all a blank, sir, I'm sorry."

Jack O'Neill raised his hand. "It's alright, Carter. So, what you're saying." His words were directed towards Jacob Carter now. "Is that this Goa'uld could have taken control of Area 51?"

"Yes, Colonel," Jacob replied.

"How could he have switched hosts so easily?" Daniel Jackson asked, and hesitating slightly, added, "And, why would he want to?"

"Oh, please!" O'Neill remarked. "This is Maybourne we're talking about. He probably offered the thing a new home to get us out of his hair."

"You are not serious?" It was Martouf who spoke.

"Rarely," O'Neill said. "Alright, let's assume this 'thing' has a new host. If it's not Maybourne, then it's someone Maybourne..." The bright light that surrounded O'Neill at that point was recognised as being Asgard.

"I mean," O'Neill finished, looking directly at Thor now. "Thor," he acknowledged. "Thanks for the help."

"O'Neill, I have done all that it is my power to do." Thor responded.

O'Neill moved closer to the Asgard commander. "And we appreciate it, problem is, we've lost the Goa'uld."

"Our technology was unable to detect the Goa'uld at the site you described, I will therefore be returning back to our home galaxy. I am sorry, O'Neill, but there is nothing further that I can offer you," Thor stated.

O'Neill nodded, accepting Thor's words. "Yeah, I know, we appreciate the help."

"You are welcome, O'Neill. The system lords already seek the one they call Thoth," Thor explained. "It would be wise to allow him to go back through your Stargate."

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Colonel Maybourne surveyed the new host. "Okay, you offered a trade, let's hear what you have to say," he demanded.

"The Tau'ri have this treaty with the system lords, and it will be honoured, provided that I am allowed to travel back through the Stargate. I offer you nothing else, but your lives," Thoth said.

"Well that's not good enough, I want information," Maybourne insisted.

The Goa'uld stood, unhindered by the bars, now free to move around Maybourne's office. "Your people are foolish to believe that you could ever demand or obtain the strength of the Goa'uld. You are nothing."

Maybourne suddenly felt himself slipping into a deep state of trance. The Goa'uld's words seemed distant. He lifted the telephone. "Get me Colonel O'Neill," he ordered.

Thoth sat down in the chair opposite Maybourne, a faint smile appearing on his lips.

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Sam Carter had gone into conversation with her father.

 Daniel stood at the huge glass window that looked down at the Stargate.

"Will my assistance now be necessary?" Narim asked, startling Daniel who was deep in thought.

"Oh, Narim," Daniel acknowledged the man. "I'm sorry. Er, well, it could still help, that is if it's still available?" Daniel confirmed.

"And Colonel O'Neill?" Narim asked.

Daniel looked uncomfortable. "Well, that happens, Thor just zaps him up to the ship for a, um, chat every so often. It's nothing to worry about."

At that point O'Neill reappeared. "Well," he said. "Thor's heading back home, says there's nothing else he can do."

"Actually, Colonel, I too must return. As Samantha Carter is now back where she belongs, I feel any further assistance from the Tollans is not required," Narim stated.

"Well, if you must, don't suppose you want to leave any of your toys?" O'Neill quipped, immediately raising his hand to indicate the levity in his comment.

Daniel moved in front of Narim. "But, Jack, Narim could still help us, I mean if we've got a situation at Area 51," he said.

O'Neill was about to answer. "Colonel O'Neill." An Airman had appeared in the room. "Colonel Maybourne on the telephone for you, sir."

"For me?" O'Neill looked shocked. "Well, isn't that special."

Daniel followed Jack to the telephone.

"Maybourne, got yourself a little situation there?" O'Neill snapped.

"Colonel O'Neill, I am Thoth," the Goa'uld announced. "I must be permitted to return through the Stargate."

"Maybourne? You're sounding a little different these days. And if we don't let you?" O'Neill remarked. "What then?"

Daniel looked perplexed, trying to indicate to O'Neill to convey what he was hearing.

"Then," Thoth said. "I shall be left with no other alternative than to destroy your world."

O'Neill stared at Daniel, anger sweeping over his face. "Now, see I don't respond well to threats."

"Jack," Daniel interrupted.

O'Neill placed his hand over the mouthpiece of the phone. "What?"

"What does it want?" Daniel asked.

"To go back through the Stargate, which," he added, "isn't gonna happen. Maybourne knows too much about our set-up here."

"Jack." It was Maybourne's voice now. "The Goa'uld is in possession of Airman Reid."

"Maybourne, just bring the damn thing here," O'Neill said, putting the phone down the instant the words had left his lips.

"Now what?" Daniel asked.

O'Neill returned to the briefing room, the eager attention of Teal'c, the Tok'ra and Carter now focused on him.

"What are its demands?" Selmak asked.

"It wants to go back through the Stargate," O'Neill replied glibly. "Seems Maybourne made a pact with it."

"Well, sir," Sam Carter said. "We can't let that happen, if it's taken a human host."

"Relax, Carter, we get it here, Selmak and Marty can get it out," O'Neill responded, looking at the two Tok'ra visitors. "Right?"

Selmak nodded. "We will need to take the Goa'uld to a safe planet," he agreed.

"Okie dokie, then we wait for it to arrive and carry out the plan," O'Neill commented.

 O'Neill took Teal'c to one side. "Teal'c, when that 'thing' gets here, I want you to Zat it on sight, okay?"

"I understand, O'Neill," the Jaffa responded. "And if there are more in the party, should I neutralize all of them?"

"Well, giving old Maybourne a blast couldn't hurt!" O'Neill said mischievously. "Yeah, why not, better to be safe."

O'Neill now addressed everyone in the room. "Okay, Carter, I want this place locked up tight, security in every corridor, elevator and access point."

Daniel still seemed, and looked, uncomfortable with the idea.

"Jack, can I talk to you?" he asked.

O'Neill gestured for Daniel to come forward. "What?"

"Look, we know this Goa'uld is different from anything we've encountered. I'm just not sure what we're letting ourselves in for here?"

"Daniel, I know. But we can't exactly leave it out there, can we?"

"I know," Daniel agreed. "But shouldn't we at least do something?"

O'Neill looked perplexed. "Do what exactly? I've already got Teal'c standing by with a Zat. You didn't think I was just gonna let it walk right out of here, did you?"

"No, I know you better than that. But, with all the knowledge this Goa'uld has."

O'Neill looked at Daniel. "Look, all I know is it's not leaving here without at least knowing that the host can be retrieved. If you think of anything useful, let me know."

O'Neill strode off, mumbling something illegible to himself.

"Off world activation," the speakers sounded.

Daniel, like his companions, made his way quickly to the control room. "Nobody's due back," he announced on his arrival.

"I know that," O'Neill spat. "IDC, Sergeant?"

"No, sir."

"Well, lock it up."

"GDO Signal incoming," Sergeant Davis announced. "It's Bra'tac's signal, sir."

"Open the Iris. Defence teams, stand by," O'Neill barked.

Bra'tac appeared from the event horizon. "Human!"

Teal'c was the first to greet his mentor. "Tek Ma'Tay, Bra'tac, it is good to see you."

"You too, old friend," Bra'tac replied. "Hassock," he spat at O'Neill.

"Getting to be a real party, now all we need is the Nox," O'Neill commented to Daniel, who stood close enough to hear his remark. "Bra'tac, what brings you to our little corner of the galaxy?" O'Neill enquired.

"Apophis knows you have Thoth. He is planning to mount an assault from space," Bra'tac told the colonel.

"Well, the system lords won't let that happen. It would be in violation of the treaty," Daniel responded.

Bra'tac nodded. "But Apophis is not within the system lords' coalition, and he believes his army is too strong for them."

"Well, that's a switch, he's just crazy enough to try that," O'Neill replied. "Sweet."

"Okay, well the Asgard won't let that happen either," Daniel said. "Jack, has Thor left orbit?"

Jack O'Neill shrugged. "Probably."

"Do you still have the device he gave you?"

O'Neill nodded. "I'll give it a shot. Man, did this get out of hand."

"Colonel O'Neill," Sergeant Davis interrupted. "Deep space radar indicates six unidentified objects entering our solar system."

O'Neill's face was suddenly deathly pale. "Oh, for crying out loud." As the words left his lips, he was transported from the control area by a beam.

"That was not Asgard technology," Martouf observed.

"No," Daniel concurred. "It was different. Well this just keeps getting better," he added. "Jack's piling up the air miles!" His hands thrown into the air, he turned and exited the control room.

Major Carter looked concerned. "Do the Goa'uld have that technology?" she asked Martouf.

"None that we have encountered, Samantha, but anything is possible," the Tok'ra responded.

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Jack O'Neill realised, as he hit the floor of the ship, that this was not Thor's doing. He looked about slowly, recognising the tell-tale Goa'uld designs.

"O'Neill."

Jack looked up. "You know," he said to himself. "One of these days, I'm going to be doing something that you guys are gonna regret beaming me up!"

His eyes met the Goa'ulds. "Cronos?"

"You have Thoth?" Cronos asked.

"Well, no. Not right now."

"He is coming to the Stargate, yes?" Cronos asked.

O'Neill was taken by his tone; there appeared to be nothing overtly hostile about it.

"Yeah," he answered slowly. "Cronos, exactly what is it you want? I mean, apart from this Froth."

"You humans put yourself in danger, and expect that the treaty will be honoured?"

"Well hang on a minute. This Froth just leapt into one of our people. We didn't do that," O'Neill protested.

Cronos looked thoughtfully at the colonel. "You know that Apophis plans to invade your world."

"Yeah," O'Neill said, beginning to stand. "About that, you're gonna try and prevent it right?"

Cronos nodded. "In order to maintain the treaty, yes." Cronos handed Jack a small long-range communication device. "Take this, and contact me when Thoth is within your Stargate facility."

"Must be an important guy," O'Neill sighed to himself. "About getting back down?"

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Colonel Maybourne led the way through the facility, closely followed by Teal'c.

Thoth made himself known to Daniel Jackson the moment the doctor was in range.

"Inform the Shol'vah that I will be unaffected by the Zat'n'ktel. I know already of your plan," he instructed Jackson. "I wish to speak to you, and only you."

Daniel's eyebrows shot up in surprise. He thought, though did not say, at least somebody does. "Okay, what exactly is it that you want to speak to me about?" Daniel asked, once, with resistance, Teal'c had left the room.

"I have seen you before, many times," Thoth told Daniel, who looked surprised.

"Where?" It was an immediate reaction.

"Chulak, Abydos, you hold the knowledge do you not?"

"I'm an archaeologist, yes." Daniel sounded a little more confident than he felt.

"Then you must know this. My knowledge is of all, should I fail to return to the Goa'uld system lords they will disavow the treaty and destroy your world. You must convince those that would keep me of this, I am a seeker of all, nothing more." Thoth spoke slowly and quietly and even with the distinctive tone of the Goa'uld, the host's accent was still audible.

"Okay, I can't promise anything," Jackson answered, his eyebrows knitting together in familiar pose. "But I promise you, I will try."

Daniel felt strangely kindred towards this Goa'uld, sensing its intentions were not hostile.

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Jack O'Neill returned to the briefing room with a thud. "Damn. Haven't quite perfected that," he complained, looking up at Carter. "Ever get the feeling of being really wanted?" he joked.

"Sir?" Carter asked, concerned.

"Well, that was Cronos. He's here to stop Apophis and collect Froth," O'Neill announced. "Gave me this, it's one of those… things, to aid in communications, sweet guy."

"It's Thoth, and you have to let him go," Daniel, who had just arrived, stated.

"Are you kidding me?" O'Neill said, his hand shooting up to prevent Daniel's protests. "Ahh, Daniel. Let me finish."

Daniel's eyes went up to the heavens. "Go ahead," he replied.

"Is Thoth here?" O'Neill asked him.

Maybourne had just arrived. "Colonel O'Neill, that Goa'uld has one of my airmen as a host."

"Yeah, we'll get to that, Maybourne, in just a minute," O'Neill snapped.

"You cannot let him go," Martouf claimed. "We must take him."

"Well I'm sorry, Marty, but that just isn't gonna happen. Old Cronos is not a happy camper up there, and he has six Goa'uld motherships waiting for us to make a wrong move. So I gave him my word that Thoth was going back, and he gave me his, that the host would be returned."

"I thought you'd never trust a Goa'uld," Daniel said, surprised and relieved all at once.

"Yeah, I know, Daniel, but we don't really have much choice. Cronos is up there, and we all know what that means, and by the way, he didn't have to promise me anything," O'Neill pointed out.

"You can't," Maybourne argued.

"O'Neill, you cannot trust the word of this Goa'uld," Teal'c stated.

O'Neill sighed heavily. "Well, Teal'c, we really don't have much choice now, do we?"

Daniel regarded Jack closely. "No. We really don't," he agreed.

O'Neill nodded. "Great, I'm just gonna make a call and we can end this right now, and let Cronos deal with Apophis."

Selmak nodded. "It's a wise decision, Colonel," he ceded.

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Thoth was safely transported aboard Cronos ship.

The host was returned some hours later unharmed, much to O'Neill's satisfaction and relief.

The Tok'ra, along with Samantha Carter, had returned to one of the planets they used as a staging platform, whilst Teal'c and Bra'tac had finally decided upon visiting Teal'c's family in the Land of Light.

O'Neill waited in General Hammond's office with Daniel; there was a long period of silence between the two.

"Er, Daniel, what exactly made you think we should let the snakehead go back?" he enquired.

Daniel looked across at his colleague. "He spoke to me. He seemed different, Jack, very different. I just sensed that it was right, I guess."

"Oh," O'Neill responded. "Good. See that's what I like about you, you make no sense, but you seem to know things!"

Daniel looked intrigued then, if not a little put out by the comment.

"And what made you trust Cronos?"

O'Neill shrugged. "We kind of have an understanding. Guess he knows how tight I am with Thor, you know."

"Yes," Daniel agreed. "I know. So, Jack, um, since I did go fishing in an attempt, to, er, get a little downtime..." Daniel began.

O'Neill looked suddenly guarded. "Yeah?"

"I was kind of wondering..."

"Yeah?"

"I'm going to be attending a lecture on the study of anthropology and ancient science, and I thought, that since we'd shared the fishing thing, that you might want to try something a little more challenging?"

"Daniel," O'Neill said, in his deadpan voice. "I would rather spend three nights on Netu. But, hey! Thanks for asking."

Daniel smiled at him. "Good, I'm glad you said that," he replied.

O'Neill looked at him. "I'm glad you're glad," he said, confused suddenly by the enjoyment that seemed to be spreading across Jackson's features.

"Okay then, good." Daniel said. "Um, I think I'm gonna just go and see if General Hammond wants me." Daniel Jackson stood.

O'Neill looked thoroughly perplexed.

"Daniel," he yelled after Jackson. "For crying out loud!"

 The End.

Feedback to Jaclyn