

Title: A Warrior Like No Other

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Pairing: None.

Rating: 13+

Season: Five.

Spoilers: The Warrior. Slight for Children Of The Gods.

Summary: Teal'c has to face the consequences of his actions.

Warnings: None.

Status: Complete September 2002.

Notes: It's always a challenge doing a POV from Teal'c and I hope this one comes across as intelligent as the big man is. As always, feedback is appreciated and will be replied to. However, no flames please. I can burn my own toast without any help, thank you.

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Bra'tac helps me to my feet and encourages the now confused and leaderless Jaffa to follow me, as is my right to demand. I have proven my case and shown them all how misled they have been by K'tano.

How misled \*I\* was by K'tano.

How did that happen? How did I allow that to happen?

Before I have time to understand my conflicting thoughts on the matter, we are under attack and everyone is running towards the stargate. I struggle with Bra'tac's assistance, as SG-1 encourage everyone through the wormhole to safety. It does not escape my attention that it is the Tau'ri who once again have come to aid these people. Once again they have proven that what appears to be an inferior race is, in fact, the more successful.

I watch the retreating backs of my former Tau'ri team-mates and realise, with certainty, that I may have irrevocably damaged the single most important endeavour against the Goa'uld that there has ever been. SG-1. How could I have been so blind?

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I have now meditated for several hours in my quarters at the SGC. I think O'Neill has not mentioned that I deserted my place amongst his team, or else I would surely have had these quarters withdrawn by now. These past few hours have given me time to reconsider my actions of the past few days and I am disappointed with my poor judgement and even poorer betrayal of the man who rescued me from slavery.

Why has he not come to speak with me? Why have MajorCarter and DanielJackson also not come to enquire over me? Because my own foolishness has led me to turn my back on them, not the other way round. Never has O'Neill abandoned me like I abandoned them. It is my error and only I can make the first move for reconciliation. Their ways and the Jaffa ways are different, of that K'tano was correct, but there can be no doubt as to the hurt they are likely to be feeling. I acted as a child, caught up with dreams that were not as yet attainable.

My place is not with the rebel Jaffa. Bra'tac will be a far better leader for these people than I can ever be. They need to be taught much yet, before they can become as effective as the Tau'ri already are. I know my strengths and I am an able warrior, but I also know my weaknesses and my former leader has just demonstrably shown me one which I will never forget.

The Tau'ri.

O'Neill.

How K'tano subtly mocked them, whilst choosing his words carefully to camouflage any obvious intent. From the very start, he kept them away from any meaningful input and how well I now know the reason why. K'tano understood the threat from these seemingly inferior humans and provoked a wedge between us. K'tano was no fool. He almost succeeded in his plans to have me killed in a suicide mission and to keep the Tau'ri away, therefore preventing any chance for the intuitive O'Neill to recognise him for what he was.

<<< "Don't do it." >>>

I should have listened.

O'Neill did not need to know that K'tano was a Goa'uld. He did not need to know the name of his adversary. O'Neill took a few moments of this creature's time and knew his enemy's face. I am ashamed that I did not.

<<< "Trust in me, O'Neill." >>>

It was not O'Neill who needed to trust. It was I.

There is a knock on the door to my quarters and I open it to see Bra'tac. He looks unsettled and I can understand why. We have both had our confidences shaken today and I think he is as perturbed at being so easily misled as I am.

He does not ask over my injuries, as they were not severe and we both know my Prim'ta is able to heal them.

"General Hammond says he is making arrangements for the rebel Jaffa to go to their Alpha site, until a new location can be found for them. Will you be accompanying us, or retaking your place amongst the Tau'ri?"

It should have been a difficult question, but it is not. Only how I shall proceed, having made my decision, is difficult. The look on my face must have told him all he needed to know, as Bra'tac nods his head in acceptance.

"I understand Teal'c. Your future lies along a different path, but it is an honourable one. You must beg forgiveness of O'Neill, as I too will do before I leave. O'Neill is a wise man and will listen to your words. We have done him a great disservice and he is owed no less than our apology."

I grasp my mentor's hand, relishing the strong bond that still exists between us and we share several minutes of silent meditation together. Shortly before he leaves to rejoin the Jaffa, Bra'tac tells me of O'Neill's threat to K'tano. It saddens me. It shames me that even after I had deserted his team, O'Neill would still value my life so strongly.

<<< *"I'm holding you personally responsible for whatever happens to Teal'c."* >>>

It is so typical of my former commander and I believe he would have acted out his promise without hesitation. He values life so very greatly and will seldom relinquish responsibility, once he has acquired it.

My few hours rest have renewed my strength enough for me to face what might now be a far weightier battle. Yet again O'Neill has taught me that not all encounters are won by physical strength alone. Knowledge and understanding of your foe can win the battle before you have even set foot upon the field. I am about to enter an arena where my soul will be judged, not my fighting prowess. I am unsure if I am still worthy of the contest.

I walk slowly through the maze of corridors, looking for my former team-mates, aware of the distinction in my mind. That I had decided to leave SG-1 in favour of K'tano can be in no doubt. What is in doubt is why I would so willingly choose to ignore all the glorious victories the Tau'ri have accomplished, in favour of the comparatively untried rebel Jaffa. Am I so eager to believe in my people's rights, that I have completely overlooked their current capabilities? Why did I let myself become so enamoured, so quickly, and not question more? I have been blind.

My people deserve to be free. The need to see them free burns in my blood, as acid burns through metal. However, their rights do not yet give them the abilities that the Tau'ri already have. Those abilities have to be learned and honed and it will not happen overnight, despite my desperation for it. My enthusiasm blinded me to the truth of what I rejected for what I gained.

<<< *"Our time will come old friend, but not this day."* >>>

How can I apologise for the insult I gave my former friend? Is he still my friend? Are MajorCarter and DanielJackson still my friends? It is I, who have behaved as though I am not theirs. Although severing my allegiance was primarily with O'Neill, they are a team. \*We\* were a team and now I have wounded them all with my ill-planned actions.

They were at the Dial Home Device, even as I returned from my failed mission. Only \*I\* was allowed to leave. The rest of my men were gone. My former team were also almost gone and I ignored them. I was nearly too late. So much was happening around me and I saw so little.

My symbiote is already healing the minor wounds of my body, but I am unable to keep a fast pace in my search. It is unlikely that they will have left the base, especially with so many Jaffa to be watched over. O'Neill is too dedicated to his cause. However, my strength is failing, as I have not

yet meditated long enough. Too much has happened for me to attain the peace that Kel'no'reem requires.

I finally locate my friends in O'Neill's office. They too seem unusually subdued. They are standing with their backs to the door, quietly discussing some matter before they become aware of my presence.

O'Neill is in the middle, with MajorCarter and DanielJackson on either side, as though offering support. There is a stiffness about their stance, as though each is concerned with a difficult matter.

MajorCarter turns around to face me. Her youthful face is full of uncertainty, yet there is also a trace of hope in her eyes. She has always earned my admiration for her courage and intelligence and now she earns it once more for the first signs of forgiveness. DanielJackson is quick to follow her lead. He also turns my way, with hesitancy, as his eyes flick first towards his friend and then back to me. DanielJackson and O'Neill have much history together and often seem closer than blood brothers, so it is understandable that he is concerned over what might be a painful reunion. However, his words lift my soul.

“Are you OK, Teal'c?”

“My symbiote already endeavours to heal my wounds.”

The words are poorly chosen to reflect my gratitude for his concern, but he nods his head with understanding. I do not know why I was so quick to abandon the care and friendship of these remarkable people and I have no idea what to say to the man who is still shielded by his younger comrades.

“ColonelO'Neill.”

I see a slight shudder run down the length of his back and I understand something of the turmoil that must surely be going through his mind. The stiffness leaves his pose, but he does not as yet turn around to acknowledge me.

“ColonelO'Neill, I request permission to speak to you.”

Now, of all times, I must acknowledge his position within the Tau'ri hierarchy and my subservience to it, if I am to be allowed to retake my place. Usually I address people by their full names, or titles, as a sign that I acknowledge their place in the world around me. It also reflects my awareness of their relationships to me, either with respect and affection, or with disdain. With O'Neill, I had immediately felt a kinship that went beyond merely working at his side. With this man, I felt no need to remind myself of his military achievements. Upon our very first meeting, he had seen through me, as surely as if I had been made of glass. We were warrior brothers, bonded, destined to fight side by side as if we had trained under the same master.

Why did I not comprehend that he would see just as assuredly through K'tano?

I, of all people, should have known this.

One request from this man and I had left everything of my former life behind me and followed him to an unknown destination. He had affected me with the force of his personality in much the same way that K'tano did. However, the Goa'uld wanted to enslave me again, whereas O'Neill wanted to set me free. He had offered me a place at his own hearth, a warrior who had been his bitter enemy

and whom he knew nothing about, apart from what his own instincts told him. Instincts that have proven well founded again this day.

I had always considered him too close to my own path in life, to separate him as I did the rest with unnecessary titles. To me, he was simply O'Neill, my friend and mentor in the strange world I found myself.

Now I have to acknowledge to him that I respect who and what he is. He has earned his rank and it was my error when I ignored his experience. The blame is solely mine.

Slowly he turns around and I can see the sadness in his eyes. Eyes that can hold both the mischief of a child and the hardness of naquadah. Eyes that in their comparative youth have endured much more than I have ever encountered. He gazes at me across the few feet of floor and the gulf could yet still be as an unsurpassable chasm. What can I say to undo the harm that I have caused? How can I cross the divide, before it is forever closed off to me?

Yet I know that he is a good man. He will listen, if the words are from my heart.

"I apologise for my behaviour, Colonel O'Neill, and ask for your forgiveness. I can find no words sufficient to express my regrets for being so easily swayed from your friendship, from your trust and your support. I was a fool for believing in K'tano. Worse, I was a fool for believing that he and his Jaffa were more worthy of my allegiance than yourselves."

O'Neill looks weary, although of what I am uncertain. Weary of having his trust rejected in such a public manner, or merely the tiredness that results from too many battles lost? I do not know, but he is listening to me and I feel encouraged to continue. All is not yet lost.

"I can state no more than that, but I ask that you believe me when I say that it is the truth. Never again will I be so blind, nor turn my back on everything you have so willingly shared with me. That I could behave in so dishonourable a manner has shamed me and I request your forgiveness."

His fingers play with a pen that he has probably picked up off his desk without realising. I have often noticed how his hands toy with any item within reach, when he is deep in thought. I hope it means that I have not yet fully lost this man's respect.

"I will truly understand if you feel unable to allow me to return to my previous position within your organisation. However, I pledge my allegiance to you again now, with a new awareness of my failings on this mission. I ask you to accept my word that I will not fail you again."

He is studying my face as intently as Daniel Jackson would study a rare artefact, whilst both younger people stand quietly at his side. I can feel their support of my statement, yet the power over my future lies with the warrior in their midst. They know this decision is up to him and I am sure that not even General Hammond will accept me back without O'Neill's blessing. O'Neill exudes a power feared by the Goa'uld and I am only just beginning to appreciate the extent that it reaches. I nearly rejected that power over the untried abilities of a few ill-equipped Jaffa. I did reject it. If I ever believed in a true God, a true majestic being of the universe, I pray that he now grants me my wish.

"I request re-admittance to your team Colonel O'Neill. I will prove that your trust in me is never misplaced again."

I have said what I have come to say and, as the weight of it leaves my soul, so do my legs lose their strength to hold me up any longer. I do not collapse, but I manage a graceless slide onto my knees and sit back upon my haunches. I continue to gaze up into the face of my friend, my leader if he will accept me back, and I am quickly surrounded by my former team as they crouch down beside me.

O'Neill reaches across and places a hand upon my shoulder.

“Your word?”

It is a simple question, but covers a possible lifetime of serving alongside him.

“Gladly given.”

“Cause you gotta know, I won't keep putting up with all this crap of you going off on some Jaffa thing. I need to know that we're always going to be there for each other. We're too small a unit to keep upping and losing you. You're important to our success.”

I did not miss that he omitted to say I was important to \*him\*, but I am sure I hear the unspoken words. I merely nod, as a small smile starts to grace his face. He does not often smile whilst on missions. He is far too concerned over our safety, too single minded in his approach to using his skills to see us safely home again. The Goa'uld think of no-one but themselves. The renegade Jaffa are still learning their own ways. This man thinks nothing of himself, but everything of protecting his team. He is worthy of my allegiance and I am determined that I will not fail him again.

“Good. Then can we get up now, as this is playing havoc with my knees? Are you good to go?”

“I am good to go, Colonel O'Neill.” I assure him, as I attempt to raise myself once more.

“Let's get you back to your quarters.” Daniel Jackson says as he takes my arm.

He and Major Carter assist me and I know that I will need several hours of Kel'no'reem yet to fully heal myself. O'Neill takes point, even within the base, to ensure that we are not delayed. It means I am no longer able to read his face, to know that I truly am forgiven.

“Just one more thing then, Teal'c.”

I hesitate slightly in our progress, concerned about what other restriction, or guarantee he will require of me. Whatever it is, I will gladly comply for the chance to redeem myself in his eyes. It is the least I can do.

“Will you stop it with the Colonel bit? Somehow it just sounds too much of a mouthful when you say it.”

\*\*\*The End\*\*\*