

Title: Easter Wrappings

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Pairing: None.

Rating: 13+

Season: Anywhere after season two.

Spoilers: Slight for Show And Tell.

Summary: Jack gets retrospective over Easter.

Warnings: None.

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Notes: Feedback would be appreciated. However, no flames please. I can burn my own toast without any help, thank you.

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Easter's just another one of those occasions that gets to me. Shouldn't. I don't want to let it, but there it is. Easter. Chocolate eggs with names on them, all done in fancy writing, lining all the shop windows. I don't need it. Stupid looking Easter rabbits fronting all the displays – don't ask me to say bunnies, I refuse to say bunnies. I can't take all that childish talk right now. Charlie used to love all that stuff, but then don't all children? Just one more excuse to separate us parents from our hard earned money, but it worked anyway. Who could have a kid and not enjoy seeing their eyes light up when they get whatever goody it happens to be. Damn. I didn't want to go down this road, but I ignored all the signs. Again.

Perhaps I should buy one each for the team. Something exquisite for Carter, chocoholic as she is, whatever's the dumbest looking one for Danny and the biggest honkin one I can find for Teal'c. Mustn't forget Cassie and Doc either, they're part of the family. Hammond too, for the next time he's over. He'll not touch it himself, of course, but I know the grandkids will enjoy it.

Kids.

There I go again. Kids, kids, kids. Always getting me into trouble. Used to love the trouble we caused Sara, back then. Back when life was so much more complicated and, yet, so much simpler too. Charlie just had this knack of egging me on (no pun intended), until it was too late to turn back. All, or nothing. Pretty much how I was as a kid. Loved chocolate back then too.

For a few short minutes I manage to enjoy wandering round the shop and arrange for my purchases to be delivered home for me. I can't carry anything at the moment and I shouldn't even be out. Daniel's gonna kill me when he gets back, but I've got my phone and pager. He can call if he's worried. The assistant was more than helpful, labelling each one for me and then sorting through my wallet for my cards. She even gave me the cutest wink afterwards. I wouldn't mind, if I wasn't old enough to be her father! Not that I'd want that role. Not that I'm not lying about not wanting to be a father again either. Phew, what a mouthful! Hey, I wonder if little Reetou Charlie would like an egg? Would he even like the taste of chocolate? Too late now, I'm not going back in there. Little Lolita would think her luck's in. I'll pick him something up next time I'm out. That's providing my team don't handcuff me to the bed after today's escapade.

I'm actually surprised no one's called me yet. Don't know whether to be pleased, or disappointed. Probably a bit of both. I know they're all busy at the base and I should be thankful for small mercies. At least it gives me a break for a few hours. Part of me wants to be back there with them though. Being at home on my own doesn't mean the same any more, not since... well not since I'm on my own. Hammond and Doc were both quite specific though. I'm not allowed back for a week, come hell or high water, I have to have a week's down time. The sentries have been notified and all that. I think I'll have gone nuts by then. All this time and nothing to do with it. Can't even manage a jigsaw for chistssakes.

Charlie used to like jigsaws... oh, no, O'Neill, don't start that again. If you'd had enough sense and stopped at home like you were supposed to, you wouldn't be seeing all this kid stuff. So it's your own fault. Probably time to get home anyway. Wouldn't do for the eggs to be left outside the door for the neighbour's dog to get them, would it? I give that dog enough treats as it is. Robo's a good pooch, or just good at that big brown eyed look they all manage to master. Actually, Sara said I was pretty good at it too. Still not sure if that was exactly a compliment, or not, but hey, if it works, don't knock it!

I wave down a taxi and, once we've pulled up at the bottom of the drive, the driver helps himself out of my wallet. Folks are getting good at that! Managing the key in the lock is something else and I'm more than happy to sink into the couch once I've got in. Well, that's once I've made a detour and got a bottle out of the fridge first, of course. Don't tell the Doc, as I'm not supposed to be taking alcohol with the pills she's given me, but what she doesn't know about won't hurt her, right? I'm starting to get the weirdest thoughts about someone having installed a web-cam in this place though, as she's developed a sixth sense about this kind of stuff. Either that or I got Cassie a sniffer dog in disguise. Daft dog can't usually find it's own ball in it's own garden when I'm about. That's the problem with being in the services, you have to be really sneaky to get away with stuff, and I mean **really** sneaky.

At least my team normally run interference for me, although Carter's come pretty close to giving me a right hook for some of the stunts I've pulled. I think it's a case with her of giving me what-for before I get round to doing it to myself. Something akin to mother-love and being cruel to be kind. Carter in mum mode would be fun to watch. I can just see it now. Kiddie standing at parade rest while mum makes the sandwiches by the numbers, calculating how many turns of the dryer before the clothes are ready to wear.

Jeez, how strong are those pills? I'm damn sure I'm getting tipsy on this one bottle. Daniel must be rubbing off on me. Can't be Teal'c. You can't get him drunk until you figure out a way to get Junior sozzled first. Now there's a project for my otherwise unoccupied singular brain cell. I think I'd better get something to eat, before I lose all semblance of control here. Wonder what they've left in the fridge for me?

Oh, lookie here, beef salad sandwiches and a fruit salad. Isn't that sweet? They probably don't trust me with a knife at the moment and I can't say I blame them. These bandages are damned awkward, but I'd manage if I had to. It only takes one finger to call for a takeaway.

I've no sooner finished lunch than the door bell goes and my eggs have appeared. I manage to tip the driver with some change I've left by the door and leave the gifts on the kitchen work-top. I'll find somewhere to put them later, right now I'm more than a bit tired and even the sports channel's not gonna keep me awake. I could crash out on the couch, but as I'm at home all week I may as well use the whole house for the duration. There's something vaguely decadent about going back to bed in the middle of the day and knowing you don't have to get up for anything. No apologies to make.

I'd have a shower, but Doc's gonna kill me for wetting the bandages, so I'd best not. I'm gonna stink to high heaven by the time she lets me change them myself. Perhaps that's part of the plan to keep me house-bound. But there's no way I'm gonna let any of them give me a bed bath. They can put up with eau-de-O'Neill before then. Hey, perhaps it might keep them away too. Now there's a thought. Trouble is, I'd be lonely then, even if I don't want to admit it, so I'll strike that as a plan. Any way, Fraiser did mention about visiting each evening on her way home. A ripe O'Neill is as good a way as any of getting that point across.

Sprawling out on the huge bed I treated myself to, I kick my shoes off and allow myself to drift away whilst still fully clothed. As I said, decadent.

I'm packing our gear up... Screams coming from outside the camp... Tairmai, one of the young women is screaming... Running to see if I can help... Team's at the other end of the camp... Too far to help, no one else but me... Sudden deep hollow in the sandy ground appearing where one of those huge spider creatures has opened it's trap door... Where's Tairmai's baby?... She's screaming and struggling on the ground, reaching in, leaning back down the widening slope as she struggles to escape... NNNOOO!... Damned ugly hairy pinchers reaching through the sand, upwards... These brutes aren't supposed to come so close to camp... Can't fire the gun, baby's in the way... Quick reach in... Incredible pain as pinchers grab and fumble around as my hands grab the child... Baby's safe... Mother's safe... My team's here... Why are they reaching for my arms?... Why does everything feel strange?... Darkness...

“Jack?”

She's screaming on the ground, reaching in as she struggles to escape... NNNOOO!...

“Jack?”

NNNOOO!...

“Jack?”

Huh? One hell of a dream, that one. I can feel the sweat running down my back, not to mention stabbing pains in my hands again.

“Jack? Come on, wakey wakey.”

I can feel hands gently shaking my shoulders and I open my eyes, wondering how long he's been here and how long he's been trying to waken me.

“Daniel?”

He just sniggers at me.

“Who else would just waltz into the bedroom of an ex special ops Colonel?”

“Someone without any sense?” I can’t help but rib him. Many’s the time he’s woken me from a nightmare, only to feel some part of my anatomy remind him of his error. He’s looking at my hands and cocks his head to one side as he astutely points out.

“I feel quite safe at the moment, thank you.”

Perhaps I should mention I don’t need my hands to do the damage? He gives me a lift up, under the shoulder, as I can’t quite put any weight on my hands yet and I follow him down the stairs. Carter and Teal’c are here, preparing the evening meal, and I guess I slept a lot longer than I expected to. Those darned pills again I bet. Carter’s got the sweetest smile on her face and I can see the chocolate eggs have somehow managed to leap out of the bag. Well, Carter and chocolate, what can you expect?

“Thanks, Sir.” She says as she eyes up the Belgium egg I got her, surrounded by a further pound of delicate shell-shaped chocolates around it.

“This is most thoughtful of you, O’Neill. Thank you.” Teal’c’s eyeing the bumper mixture of eggs that I’ve bought him, each with a different mixture of children’s sweets within. Earth traditions can still puzzle him, but it’s never gonna stop him from joining in.

“Um, yeah, Jack. Are you trying to tell me something?” Daniel holds the box of miss-shapes and damaged mini eggs that that the shop was selling and I can’t help myself.

“Just think of it as an archaeological puzzle and try putting them back together again.”

“Very funny.”

“I thought so.”

Somehow the sarcastic tone doesn’t go with the grin on his face and I know I’ve made good choices. The Doc can take hers and Cassie’s back later. Only hope no one asks how I got them in the first place. Would they believe internet shopping?

“So, how were you today, Colonel?” Carter asks as she puts a casserole dish in the oven. No matter how many times I tell her it’s Jack when we’re off duty, she just can’t get into the habit. Not that I’m any better, but I’m the Colonel, I’m allowed to be difficult.

“Just fine. How about you three? What were you up to?”

“We were extremely busy, O’Neill. In fact your absence was most definitely noted.”

“Yeah, well, I’ve had my orders. God knows I had plenty to be getting on with around here.”

They share a look that speaks volumes about how much they believe that. Especially with the evidence of my breaking curfew right in front of them. Nah, I doubt they’d go for the internet thing.

“We had to go back to We’yam.” Daniel explains, as he takes one of his chocolate pieces and pops it into his mouth, earning himself a tap on the wrist from Carter as she removes the box. Even Carter likes to eat a main course before desert.

“And?” I ask as Daniel continues to suck on the chocolate, his mind now elsewhere.

“Oh yeah. We had a request to go back.” Another long pause. Daniel can be so infuriating sometimes, but why aren’t Carter and Teal’c helping out here? I can feel panic building at the thought of Tairmai’s child. He still got a slight nick off that spider-whatever. OK, not as bad as me and all that anaesthetic, solvent stuff that it lathered over my hands, but still, he’s only a baby.

“And?” There’s no disguising the anxiety in my voice now and I see them all flinch as they realise where my thoughts are heading.

“There is no need to be concerned, O’Neill.” Teal’c assures me. “The woman and her infant are both well.”

Thank God for that.

“But it was Tairmai who asked for us, asked for you actually.” Daniel finishes, looking towards Carter, who reaches into her pocket for something.

Holding out a long, slender brown object, I think at first it’s a piece of jewellery, or maybe a thin leather thong. However, as she wanders towards me, I can see it’s a long lock of hair, plaited in a complicated weave from one long end to another. Staring at the object, I struggle to listen to the Major’s explanation.

“It seems that on We’yam, there is a tradition of acknowledging fatherhood by the mothers giving a lock of their hair to the father, which he then wears around his wrist. Tairmai said that as you saved her son’s life, she wants to honour you in the same way. By wearing her token, you will always be welcomed by her family and she hopes you will be able to visit to watch your honorary son grow to manhood.”

I can’t help but tremble slightly as I reach for the featherweight item, holding it awkwardly between clumsy fingers. Daniel’s suddenly by my side, as he quietly adds.

“She’s asked if it’s alright to add Jack to Corran’s name. I didn’t think you’d mind if I gave it to her.”

I can hear the hesitancy in his voice and I know he’s worried about whether they’ve gone too far in the uncertain territory around Charlie. All I can do is nod my head slightly as I wander over to the mantel-piece to lay the precious delicate item down. I’ll need to find somewhere safe to put it afterwards. Certainly can’t have it falling off and burning, but I’ll think of something later, when I can fumble around without an audience. Right now I’m still shaken by the thought of watching another child growing up, knowing I saved his life.

I couldn’t save my Charlie’s life and I’ve had many regrets about having to give little Reetou Charlie up to the Tok’ra. I don’t get to hear much about him any more and he still invades my dreams, the image of him walking away with Jacob. Hammond’s not likely to give me a weekend pass whenever I want to see little Corran, either. Didn’t even know his name until now. However, there’s still another child out there, who’s alive because fate put me nearby at the right time. Just fate. It could have happened to anybody.

“O’Neill, do you feel unwell?” Teal’c’s matter-of-fact, yet still concerned voice interrupts my thoughts and I can feel all three of them behind me, waiting for my response. Guess I zoned out there for a moment.

“Wonder if they’ll let me take him an Easter egg?” I ask as I turn round. Easter’s a time for kids, right?

*****The End*****