

Title: Popcorn Cravings

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Pairing: Maybe?

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Season: Any.

Spoilers: None

Summary: Thoughts about the Colonel.

Warnings: None.

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Notes: 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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"I fold." I announce, finally throwing my cards onto the coffee table and giving up as gracefully as I can. So I hate to lose and can you blame me? A career woman in a world full of male testosterone has got to have an edge after all.

It's pleasant though, sat here, watching the rest of the players having fun. However, I'm not sure who's winning, as they keep on eating the popcorn they're supposed to be betting with. The Colonel seems to have the most, but as he's in charge of microwaving the stuff, that could have something to do with it.

The man's a shark, there's no doubt about that. It's dangerous to underestimate him, whether fighting off the Goa'uld, or playing a friendly game in his living room. His eyes are bright with laughter, as he scopes out the opposition, and they really don't stand a chance. Teal'c's about the only one who's got a prayer, being blessed with a natural poker face, but even that's not going to be enough. He may have the perfect expressionless expression, but the Colonel's a master in the art of subterfuge and

misdirection. Why say nothing, when a single glib expression can confound to a greater effect?

The Colonel's in good form tonight and he's obviously enjoying himself. It's a long time since we've seen him this relaxed and happy, grinning as his winnings increase, even though I'm sure he just stole some of Daniel's stash. He's also a master in the art of slight of hand when needed and it looks like he's honing that skill tonight too.

I've often thought about what else those hands could do. Mind you, so have at least half the female staff on the base. We've seen him at his best and at his worst and he's always worth watching, no matter which end of the spectrum he's at. He's an Alpha male, a 'grade A' personality, second to no one except Hammond of course, but even he only seems to keep him in line because they respect each other so much. If the Colonel didn't appreciate what the stakes were and believe in the decency of the man in charge, he'd be out of the door, retired again, before you could say Rip Van Winkle.

They say power is a turn on, an aphrodisiac, and the Colonel has it in spades. It's something you can sense when he walks into a room. You can almost taste it when he takes charge of a situation.

That's not to say he's perfect, or has never made mistakes, or that **he** thinks he's superhuman. Actually, he'd be the last person to have an ego trip over thoughts along that line. It's just something you can feel and can't help reacting to. No matter how tense the situation, once the Colonel arrives everyone breathes easier, knowing somehow he'll find a way out of the mess. I don't know how he does it, I'm just grateful that it seems to work as often as it does. There's a tremendous loyalty to him amongst base personnel. Many an airman has risked his life to rescue him over the years and that's because they know he'd do anything to rescue them if the positions were reversed. He never sees any situation as impossible. He'll just go with the flow until a solution presents itself and then make sure it works.

His eyes suddenly catch mine across the table and he pauses, slightly confused by finding me studying him and perhaps a little embarrassed. So I lean over the various piles of cards and steal some of his popcorn, smiling as a grin replaces the puzzled expression and he returns to the game.

His hands snatch a beer bottle off the floor and he takes a quick drink, spluttering as Daniel makes an obvious attempt to cheat whilst he's distracted. Apparently cheating is only allowed if you're not caught. Playfully swatting the younger man on the head, he then pushes his wet jumper sleeve back up his arm. This reveals well-toned muscles that I know are reflected elsewhere. His body would put men half his age to shame. It's well defined, not overly developed to any gross degree, but still strong and athletic, full of ability and purpose.

The thought of the strength in that frame is something that's impinged on my awareness more than once. What can I tell you? I'm a woman when all is said and done and I notice these things.

Poor Teal'c's just folded, taken in once too often by a misconception that what you see is what you get with the Colonel. It's taking the Jaffa a long while to understand how easily we humans can deliberately mislead using facial expressions. Especially the Colonel, who wouldn't hesitate for a moment to do whatever's needed to take the enemy down, to find any weakness and utilise it against them. Even here, he plays to win.

I wonder what weakness he'd find in me?

There's just him and Daniel still playing now for the ever-dwindling popcorn supply. Daniel might be leagues ahead in educational qualifications, but the Colonel can run rings around him with conflicting information, confusing him with contradictory mannerisms and refusing to be pigeon-holed into certain behaviour patterns. No matter how hard he studies his friend, Daniel's never going to be able to guess what sort of hand the Colonel has and the Colonel's loving it. Those chocolate brown eyes are burning with humour and they find mine once again for a brief moment as the betting continues.

I could stare forever into those eyes. They show you right down into his soul, on those rare occasions he lets you near enough. It's a soul that's suffered much abuse in the past, but it's a loyal and caring soul, capable of enduring the deepest torments to protect his team. I could feel safe with those eyes looking into mine, silently telling me things that would reduce words to insignificance. The Colonel doesn't say much where his feelings are concerned, but his actions say everything. It's a message that comes across loud and clear.

A huge grin crosses his face when Daniel finally caves. He celebrates by starting a throwing fight, aiming his winnings with deadly accuracy at the losers, who are quick to return the incoming fire from their own dwindling stockpiles. The sound of laughter ensues from all, except Teal'c, although it's hard to ignore the smile on the dark, calm face. I can't help but join in, the feeling of being able to act like a child and let go of responsibility for even a short time affecting us all. We may spend the majority of our days fearing for Earth's future, struggling against overwhelming odds to merely survive each mission, but today is not one of them.

I think the Colonel does this on purpose, seeking a way to help us to break free of the stress of continued fighting. It's just another sign of how much he cares, although I doubt he'd admit that to anyone, including himself.

A piece of popcorn heads my way, thrown with practised ease by everyone's favourite team leader and I catch it mid-way. Holding it within my fingers, I place it to my lips and slowly suck the butter off, before popping it into my mouth and licking my fingers clean. I watch, as he watches me, his head tilted slightly to one side as he studies me. I can't help but wonder what's going on behind those deep eyes. Does he sometimes take time out from all the dangers to wonder about ordinary things, like relationships, and do I figure at all in his dreams, like he sometimes does in mine?

His continued perusal is doing things to me that have never happened before off a bowl of popcorn and if this continues I'll not be held responsible for my actions. I can

hear the sounds of my best friend moving about the kitchen and can't help but call out the request.

“Sam, honey? Can you get us some more popcorn?”

The End