

Art of the Ascended

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For the fish-like-bikes ficathon. It is supposed to contain the kinks of "modification of character's appearance", "sex in public" and "sharing". I've also dared to try and be a bit stylish with the prose.

Featured fandoms: Stargate: SG1

Featured pairings: Sam/Janet

A.S.S Story codes: ff

Story rating: R

The stepped pyramid is not large, but still reaches up above the roof of the steaming alien jungle. It is a ruin, of course, that has been there for aeons, as far as they can tell untouched by any sentient hand until SG-1 arrived. Then it was touched by human hands, by the hands of Jack O'Neill and Teal'c and Daniel Jackson and Samantha Carter. Samantha Carter also touched the abstract-looking crystal sculpture at the pyramid's apex.

That's why they've called for Janet Fraiser.

She has not yet touched the pyramid, or the sculpture. Well, they're quite sure now that it's not a sculpture. It's a machine of some kind. A machine that has taken Sam into itself. A crystal shell covers her body, all but her face and hands. She is unconscious, as far as they can tell. They didn't see how it happened. Sam touched the crystal, there was a flash, and there she was. Standing ram-rod straight, with her arms reaching for the sky, face turned upwards.

Naked.

"What do you want me to do?" Janet asks.

She's looking up at Sam, transfixed. The view of Sam's nude form is no news to her, far from it, but the setting certainly is.

"Is she alive in there?" Jack says.

The question sends a wave of chill through Janet. For some reason, until then, it had not occurred to her that this might be a serious situation. That this might be dangerous. That her beloved might never get out of her pretty crystal prison.

"I'll check," she says.

With Teal'c's help she lugs her several cases full of medical gear up the side of the pyramid to the top where Sam is. She reaches out, careful not to touch the crystal, and feels for breath.

It is there. Sam is alive.

Somewhat relieved, Janet starts attaching electrodes to Sam's skin. Not that many, because there is not that much she can get at. But she puts a row of them on her forehead, some lower on the face, some on the hands. The electrodes attaches to leads, the leads attach to machines in the cases, the machines show her green-glowing lines of squiggles.

"She's sleeping," Janet says.

"Dreaming?" Daniel asks.

Janet shakes her head.

"Deep sleep. Dreamless. Pulse and respiration are very low. It looks kind of like suspended animation. Do we have any idea what all this is supposed to be?"

Daniel shakes his head.

"It's definitely Ancient," he says. "There's an inscription, but it's pretty worn. All I can make out is something about love and union."

Janet shakes her head.

"Well, there is not much more I can do at the moment. I'll monitor her condition while you guys figure out how to deal with the thing."

And then she waits.

They bring in more equipment from Earth. They bring in troops to secure the site, scientists to examine the machine, technicians to help the scientists, support staff to provide food and shelter, administrative officers to oversee it all and a Pentagon VIP who happened to be passing by to gawk. Soon, there is an entire base constructed around the Ancient pyramid.

Sam's naked body in its crystal cocoon waits above it all, golden rays of the sun making it glimmer and sparkle.

"The crystal is nanomachinery," Dr. Lee tells Janet. "It looks kind of like diamond, but it's really a solid lattice of carbon-based little robots. Which means, I

guess, that it is diamond, after all. In a way."

"What does it do?" Janet asks.

"It keeps her alive, for one," Dr. Lee says. "It gives off some of the same kind of energy as an Ancient healing device. The pyramid seems to be a geothermal energy station, so I guess she'll be all right up there at least until the planet cools down."

"That's a while," Janet says.

"Few billion years, give or take," Dr. Lee says.

"So no hurry, then."

But there is. *Janet* cannot wait a few billion years for her beloved. Plus, it's Cassie's birthday in a couple of months. She's kept close track of Sam's physical status, so she knows that Lee is right. Sam's in good shape up there. Better than good, actually. The crystal machine is cleaning out fortyish years' worth of accumulated pollutants and toxins. When she gets out of there, Sam will be in better shape than she's been in for over a decade.

Janet just hopes she'll be there to enjoy it.

"Any luck with the inscriptions?" she asks Daniel.

"Not much," Daniel says. "Something transformation something something union with something watching, or possibly admiring, something something love something blessing."

"Kind of vague," Janet says.

"Yeah," Daniel agrees.

Jack is sitting on a crate next to the blackboard where Daniel is working. He is taking apart, cleaning and reassembling his P90. Over and over again. It can't get any cleaner, but he still stays and cleans.

Looking at him, Janet suddenly knows what the inscription is saying.

And she knows what she has to do.

Janet prepares. She packs a bag with clothes for herself, clothes for Sam, a field medic kit, a light lunch, some water and a chocolate bar for luck. She leaves the bag on the pyramid step just below the top, and nods to the soldiers on watch.

"Take a break, guys," she says to them. "I'm going to do a bunch of tests, so I'll be here for a while."

Gratefully, they leave, and Janet is alone with her Sam. Briskly, efficiently, gently, she detaches all the leads and tubes and lines running from the few bare patches of Sam's skin to the ever-growing mound of medical machines. She turns the machines off. She looks up.

The sun is setting. Its large cream-yellow disk is right behind Sam. The crystal carapace leads the light around her to Janet's eyes. To Janet, it looks like a shining aura, too bright to look at.

She closes her eyes to radiance and reaches out. She puts her hand on the diamond-machine-shell right over Sam's heart.

It is warm. Not much, only a little. Ninety-eight point six, her doctor's mind tells her. She knows that temperature without a thermometer. The warmth moves up over her hand. She opens her eyes, and sees crystal growing to enfold her. As it moves onto her uniform sleeve, it dissolves the material, leaving her skin as bare as Sam's. In seconds, it has covered her arm as high as her elbow.

There is a non-sound like a whisper she can't quite hear. There is a feeling like someone is watching her. Images of herself and Sam flash through her mind. They meet for the first time, politely greeting each other in the SGC conference room. They kiss for the first time, both of them equally stunned by what they've just done. Later that night, they try to be silent while passion burns behind SGC infirmary privacy screens. An open bottle of expensive wine slowly goes bad when

their third anniversary is interrupted by yet another crisis. Cassie comes home early from a party and walks in on them in the bedroom. Sam unconscious in the infirmary while she watches the monitors, waits and prays to whatever divinities may listen.

The carapace covers her chest. She can no longer move her arms or neck. It's growing faster and faster. For a moment she wonders where it gets the raw material. Then she sees. It's coming from the carapace around Sam.

It's bringing them together.

The crystal grows to cover her face. The impression of being watched transforms into a sense of approval. Things go fuzzy and dark.

Light returns. Janet is falling. Adrenaline floods her bloodstream. She stretches out her wings, desperately trying to stop the fall.

Shock and surprise kills the fear. *Wings?*

She looks around. She's in a large, empty crystal sphere. Floating. Weightless, not falling. And she has wings. Large, white, feathery wings out of a Doré illustration. Wings that work. She can *feel* them. With powerful beats, she moves herself higher. She looks around.

Below, outside, is the pyramid and the camp. Distorted through the curved crystal she sees faces looking up.

In front of her is Sam.

She is floating in the air just like Janet. Wings enfold her in white down. Her eyes are closed. Janet flies closer. Gently, she kisses her beloved.

Sam's eyes fly open. Panic flashes across her face. Her wings spread, beating the air, moving her up. Janet smiles and follows.

They float, face to face. Sam is looking confused, scared. Janet opens her mouth to tell her that all is fine. For a moment, understanding fails her. There are no words. There is music. It takes a few seconds before she realizes the music is herself singing.

Angels do not talk.

She reaches out, puts her arms around Sam. Smiles to calm her. Kisses her, deeper and more intensely now that she is awake.

Angels do have desires.

Strong ones.

Sam kisses her back. Familiar curves press against her. There is familiar softness and warmth. Janet moves her hands over Sam's body. Her movements are sure, unhesitant. She knows how Sam likes to be touched. She knows how to express her love in motion.

Floating in the weightlessness of the crystal sphere, floating above the pyramid, above the camp, above the people, they dance the dance of love.

Angels feel more strongly than humans.

Would-be gasps and moans turn into a symphony of desire.

With the music comes understanding, comes knowledge.

In the song, Janet feels Sam's need for her. She feels Sam's delight in her. She sees the hole in Sam's life that she fills.

Through the song, Janet *knows* how Sam loves her.

And she knows that her own song tells Sam how she loves her. She can feel the reflection of it in Sam's singing. Like mirrors facing, the sense of love reflects and builds. More thoroughly than ever before, they know each other. Song and touch and memory and passion merge.

In a much purer, much more absolute sense than any Janet has ever imagined possible, they are making love.

They are creating love.

And while angels love more strongly and more intensely than humans, eventually even theirs must crest or fall.

For a single, pure, everlasting moment there is no Janet, nor any Sam. There is a single entity of total sharing, total communion. Total love.

And then there is nothing.

Janet awakes to chill and hard stone. The sky above her is dark and star-spattered. Gravity pulls at her. Her wings are gone. She sits up and looks around.

Next to her, Sam is waking up.

A few steps away, a crystal sculpture stands silent.

"What happened?" Sam says.

Janet crawls over to where she dropped the bag. She picks it up, starts taking clothes out. By the time Jack and Daniel and Teal'c make it to the pyramid top, Sam and Janet are no longer naked.

"I got you out," Janet belatedly answers Sam's question.

"Was that real?" Sam says. Her legs are unsteady. Janet helps her stand.

"I think so," she says.

"What we saw was..."

Daniel's voice trails off. There are tears on his face.

"...weirdo floating lesbo-angel-sex," Jack completes the sentence. His flippancy sounds forced.

"It was beauty," Teal'c says. Janet sees that even he has shed tears.

"So much for don't ask, don't tell," Sam says. She still has not let go of Janet, nor Janet of her.

"Influence of alien machinery," Jack says. "Fantastic excuse, that."

"What would a machine like that be *for*?" Sam asks.

"I know," Janet says.

The others look at her. Soldiers are standing in the distance, waiting.

"It's art," Janet says. "It's an art installation for the nearly ascended."

Daniel snaps his fingers. "Yes!" he says. "Of course! It amplifies and displays loving union!"

"It gave them wings!" Jack says. "It made them float! It made them make that..."

His voice falters.

"That music," Teal'c says. He is smiling.

Daniel shrugs.

"Variants on healing technology and inertial dampeners," he says. "Nothing we haven't seen before, really."

Janet stumbles, even though she's standing still. Her legs feel like she's been running for days. Sam steadies her, but she knows that Sam is just as tired as she is.

Jack sees it.

"Let's get the two of you to bed," he says.

"To *beds*," he catches himself. "Two of them. At least."

In Janet's mind, a last little shred of tension disappears. Relief fills her. It forces its way out as laughter. Next to her, pressed to her, Sam also laughs.

Laughing and giggling they make their way back to the stargate. The night is warm. Everything has turned out well.

They both know, to the core of their beings, that they are loved.