

Shifting Views

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This is set during the SG-1 episode "Points of View". As far as I know it doesn't contradict anything that happens in the episode, although I may of course have messed up somewhere.

Featured fandoms: Stargate: SG1

Featured pairings: Sam/Sam/Janet

A.S.S Story codes: fff

Story rating: PG

The SGC infirmary looked almost exactly like the SGA one had looked before the Jafar demolished it. For doctor Samantha Carter, this only made it worse. It would've been easier to deal with if it had looked completely different. This *almost* the same was...

"The bloodwork shows increased levels of stress hormones," doctor Fraiser said from behind her. "Which I guess is to be expected, given what you've been through."

She walked around the examination bed so Samantha could see her.

"If you don't mind," she said, "I'd like to make a quick ultrasound to check for Goa'uld."

She put her gloved hands on Samantha's neck, under her blonde bangs, and checked it again.

"You don't have any obvious entrance scars," she said, "but unfortunately we've learned the hard way that sometimes they are sneakier than that."

"Oh," Samantha said. "Yeah. Sure."

She was too tired to argue. Not that arguing would make anything better anyway. Even if she didn't go through with the medical examination, the nightmare would still go on. She would still have lost everything, from her Jack on down to the last speck of dust. She and Kowalsky had lost everything in a way that nobody else ever really had. They weren't even in the same *universe* any more.

Doctor Fraiser walked over to the other side of the room and started preparing a machine.

"Good," she said while she worked. "Take your clothes off and lie down, will you?"

"Just like that?" Samantha said. "Don't I even get a flimsy green gown? Is that a military thing or just how you do it in this universe?"

The sounds of Doctor Fraiser working with the ultrasound machine stopped.

"Oh," she said. "Sorry. I'll get you a disposable gown."

She brought one from a closet.

"I'm sorry," she repeated as she handed the garment over. "I keep thinking that you're Sam. You sound exactly the same, and even smell the same as her."

"Oh," Samantha said. "All right then."

Modestly covering herself as well as she could, she changed into the gown.

Half an hour later, she was sitting on the examination bed with a blanket covering her legs. Doctor Fraiser had left to do some lab work, and put a portable curtain around the bed. Samantha still wore the ugly gown. Ordinarily, that would've bothered her. Now it seemed insignificant. All her own clothes were gone. She had nothing but what they gave her. Somewhere deep inside her, a raging sorrow fought to be let out. It didn't get anywhere. She was too tired for rage, too numb for sorrow.

"Um, hello?"

Samantha looked up. Her strange short-haired twin was standing at the foot of the bed, looking at her.

"Major Carter," Samantha said. "What brings you here?"

"I just came by to see how you were," the major said. "And please call me Sam."

"Doctor Fraiser says I'm not a Goa'uld," Samantha said. She looked away from her not-twin, fixing her gaze on the ceiling instead. "Does everybody call you Sam?"

Sam sat down on a simple chair standing by the bedside.

"Only my friends," she said. "Which is where I'd like to include you. It'd be kind of weird not to be friends with myself."

"Doctor Fraiser called you Sam," Samantha said.

"Well, she's a friend," Sam said. "We've been working together quite a lot, these past couple of years."

"She also knows what you smell like."

"She's a pretty close friend."

"And she seemed to think that it'd be perfectly natural for you to be naked around her."

There was a noticeable silence before Sam replied.

"Ok, so Janet's a bit more than just a friend," she said.

Samantha looked down from the ceiling and straight at Sam.

"Is that why you never got together with Jack?" she asked. "Because you're gay?"

And is that why you're in the military in the first place, she added to herself. Air Force Major, that's a pretty butch thing to be. On some sort of scale.

"What?" Sam said. "No!"

She looked shocked at the suggestion. It felt both surprising and familiar to Samantha.

"I mean," Sam said, "I'm really mostly straight. Janet's the only..."

The sentence tapered off into nothing.

"Not really comfortable with the thought, are you?" Samantha said.

"I'm not ashamed of what we have!" Sam protested.

So like me, Samantha thought. So very like me.

"But it feels kind of weird, huh?" she said.

Sam sighed and did that particular brief tilt of the head that indicated slightly forced agreement. As with so many other things, it felt strange seeing someone else use a gesture she only knew from the inside.

"Yeah," Sam said. "It feels kind of weird."

"I never really knew Doctor Fraiser in my universe," Samantha said. "Since I was there to fill the frontline research role, I guess the job she does here wasn't really needed."

Sam looked at her again.

"So she's dead along with everyone else?"

Samantha shook her head.

"She still worked with the Stargate project, but in a secondline field capacity. So in my world, she was the one that got to go through the stargate at a regular basis. As far as I know, she's at Beta Site, helping to build a viable human colony."

"She must be so scared," Sam said. "I mean, she's very brave and knows what to do in a crisis, but she'll be scared inside."

They both fell silent.

"I should go," Sam said after a while. "I have work I should be doing."

"Right," Samantha said. "Work."

Sam got up from the chair.

"You... let us know if there's anything you need, right?", she said.

Is that 'us' as in your Stargate Command or 'us' as in you and your Janet? The thought flashed through Samantha's mind. She kept it inside.

"Sure," she said. "I will."

"Do you mind if I keep the curtain open?" doctor Fraiser said. "I feel strange with someone I can't see in here while I'm working."

"No, no, that's fine," Samantha said. She was still sitting in the examination bed. Still waiting for something to happen.

"Although I must admit that I'd rather be out of here," she said.

"It won't be very much longer now," Janet said. "We're just waiting for the results on the bacteria cultures. Can't hurry bacteria."

"Didn't the people who caught us when we came through the mirror do all this already?" Samantha said.

"Yes," Janet said. "But we don't entirely trust them, so we're doing it too."

She moved away and started dividing blood samples into racks of test tubes. It was slow and tedious work.

"I could help with that, you know," Samantha said. The room wasn't that large. They could still talk comfortably.

"Thanks," Janet said. "But General Hammond would have my guts if I let someone still under investigation help with the vetting."

Samantha looked at Janet as she worked. The brunette doctor certainly was cute, she had to give her counterpart that much. She tried to imagine herself kissing those lips, embracing that body.

It was surprisingly easy.

"How did you and Major Carter get together?" she said.

Janet didn't even flinch.

"What makes you think we are?" she said.

"I told me."

"Maybe you were joking."

Samantha shook her head. "We're similar enough that I could tell," she said.

"Well," Janet said, "this is still the Armed Forces. We're not supposed to admit that such things as same-sex relationships exist."

No denial that they are together, Samantha thought. Not that I expected there to be. My quantum twin wasn't lying to me, not to herself.

"How different are we really?" she said. "Major Carter and I? Would it be difficult for you to tell us apart if I got a haircut like hers?"

"No," Janet said. "She's got more muscles and far more scars than you have. She's more tanned. Her hands are rougher, as are her feet. She's got a little less body fat, so her breasts are slightly smaller."

Janet looked up at Samantha and smiled.

"In other words," she said. "She's a soldier on active duty, while you're a lab rat like me."

The computer next to her beeped. She turned to it and pressed a couple of buttons.

"The cultures for you and Kowalsky came up clean," she said. "So you can leave here whenever you want. Which should probably be pretty much right away, because Hammond wants the two of you in the briefing room as soon as possible."

Samantha sat down on the bed and looked at the room around her. Her room now, apparently. She and Kowalsky had been given permission to stay, to join SGC, and the General had said that they could keep their current quarters until something more permanent could be arranged. Which could be some time, considering one of them already officially existed and the other one was officially killed in the line of duty.

The picture of her and Jack sat on the bedside table, ripping open the wound in her heart every time she looked that way. She kept seeing his last moments, firing at the invading Jafar even after the energy blast from a staff weapon had ripped his chest clear open. Over and over, the scene replayed in her head, and she remembered the detached way in which the medically trained part of her cataloged the visible extent of the trauma.

As if she could treat it.

Seeing the Jack who lived here didn't help. With every word he said he proved both how like he was her Jack, and how different. Far more than a comfort, he was a steady reminder of exactly what she had lost.

Warm drops hit her hands. She looked down, confused, and found her hands blurry. It took several seconds before she realized that she was crying, that the drops were tears running down her face.

She lay down, facing away from the door, desperately hugging the thin pillow. There was no point in trying not to cry. There were too many tears, too much pain and sorrow powering them. Deep inside, she could still hear herself screaming.

There was a knock on the door.

"Whatever," she said, not caring if whoever it was would take that as a yes or no. She heard the door open.

"Er, hello?" a cautious voice said. Her twin. Major Carter. The lucky one, with a home and a job and a lover and a planet to live on.

Samantha didn't respond. She felt the bed move as Sam sat down on it.

"When did you last eat?" Sam said.

"I've not been hungry," she answered.

"Wrong answer."

Sam's hand stroked her arm.

"Look," Sam went on. "I won't pretend that I know how you feel, because I don't, and to be honest I hope I never will. But I *have* seen other survivors of bad Goa'uld attacks behave like you're behaving now, and it's not good. It's a death spiral, not eating because you feel awful and feeling awful because you don't eat. And I won't have me do that to myself, so you're coming with me to the commissary. Right now, like it or not."

Samantha wasn't sure if she liked it or not, but that was too small a feeling, it drowned in the pain.

"I'm not fit company for people," she said.

"It won't be people," Sam said. "It'll be me and Janet. Maybe Daniel and Teal'c, I don't know yet. And it's all right if you just sit there like a zombie and pick at your food. What you *aren't* doing is hiding away like a wounded cat, because I'm not going to let you."

She got up from the bed and tugged at Samantha's arm.

"Now come," she said.

It was easier to go along than to fight, so she got up from the bed. Her short-haired counterpart was smiling at her.

"Hey," she said. "It's going to get better, all right? This is the bottom. From here on, it's only up."

Samantha tried to smile. Tried to be brave. Tried to believe.

Sam sighed.

"I guess you need time," she said.

The commissary looked exactly like the one back at the SGA. It was big, bare, functional and filled with that particularly military mix of people in a terrible hurry and people with all the time in the world.

Her company was of the latter category. There were herself and her strange double, of course. There was her double's lesbian lover, and that phrase kept acting like a speed bump for her train of thought. There was Teal'c, who in SGC uniform looked enough unlike the version she'd seen before that she didn't have any problems with him. And finally, there was doctor Daniel Jackson, whom she'd heard of but never met in her own reality.

"Where's Jack and major Kowalsky?" she asked.

"They're with the general, figuring out if we're going to try to do something about your world or not," Sam said. "And to be honest, I thought it'd be a little easier on you if O'Neill wasn't here."

There was a point to that. Apart from her double, these people were like just anybody who she'd never met before. Like people she might run into in the commissary back home. Not like quantum-mechanical clones almost but not quite like their originals. They chatted among themselves, joked about inconsequential things and told the kind of trivial stories that friends tell each other. Simply listening to them soothed her nerves. After a while, she even started feeling hungry and ate some of her food, which got her a glowing smile from Sam.

"Does anybody *not* want coffee?" Janet said when they'd all eventually finished their food. There were head shakes all around.

"Right," Janet said and got up from her chair. "Sam, help me carry?"

"Sure," Sam said, and rose as well.

"Let's see," Janet said. "Daniel, milk and sugar. Teal'c, black with lots of sugar. Me, black. Sam, black. So I guess Samantha black as well?"

She looked quizzically at Samantha.

Samantha shook her head. "With milk," she said. "Or cream, if there is any."

"What?!" Sam said. "You take milk? All right, that settles it, you're *so* not me!"

That got a laugh out of everybody, even Samantha.

"Back in a moment," Janet said.

The two of them walked away towards the coffee makers. They stayed very close to each other, almost but not quite touching.

"Why do I get the impression that there's more than coffee involved here?" Samantha said.

"There's a little nook near the coffee makers," Daniel said. "You can't see into it from anywhere in the commissary. They're almost certainly planning to get a few kisses in before they return with the coffee."

"Ah," Samantha said. "I see."

She wished she *could* see it, in the ordinary physical sense. See what it looked like when she kissed another woman. Another, very pretty, woman.

"It's still so weird," she said. "Seeing myself not with Jack. It makes me wonder why we never got together in this universe."

"Probably because Jack O'Neill found someone else first," Teal'c said.

"*What?*" Samantha said. "He has *someone else*? Who? And why didn't anyone say?"

"We are not supposed to talk about it," Teal'c said.

Samantha frowned. Not supposed to talk? Why would...?

Duh! something at the back of her mind said before her confusion got any further. For the same reason they're not supposed to talk about your copy and the doctor. Of course.

"He's with a *man*?" she said.

Daniel looked embarrassed.

"Yeah," he said. "Me."

For a few seconds she just looked at him.

"Is *everybody* in this universe secretly gay?" she finally said.

"No," Teal'c said. "I am not."

She couldn't tell if he was joking or not.

"So," she said, "if you're the only one of SG-1 who's not, what do you think of it?"

"Among the Jafar, such relations are strictly forbidden," he said. "They foster loyalties that are not to the Goa'uld. The only physical relations that are encouraged are those that result in more hosts and more Jafar. Any happy relation of any other kind is a small victory over the System Lords. Therefore, I approve."

"I see," she said. And she did. When fighting such an overwhelming enemy as the goa'uld, one had to take victories wherever one could, to keep from falling into despair. Love was a powerful force, and if this group had so much more of it than most others, maybe that went some way towards explaining why they fought so much harder and won so much more. It would be a strange and appealing irony if the reason this world had not been overrun by alien overlords was a love that it wouldn't even admit existed.

A hand that really did look much more worn than her own put a mug of coffee in front of her.

"Here," Sam said. "There was no cream, so you'll have to do with milk."

Samantha looked up. Sam was leaning slightly over her to reach the table. She couldn't help but notice that her double had a shirt button undone that hadn't been when she left.

"Thanks," she said. "Milk will do just fine."

As Sam and Janet sat down, the conversation drifted back to what it had been before they left. Something about something they'd found on some planet somewhere that had made them all turn a bright green for almost a week, and how Daniel had tried to cover it up with skin cream so he could go see some band play in a club.

Samantha sat back and sipped her coffee. Sam had been right. This really did ease her wrecked nerves.

Lying on her bed back in her empty room, Samantha couldn't stop thinking about that open button. Her mind came back to it over and over again, worrying it as her hand might do with a scabbed-over cut. It was such a small thing, but with so much possibility in it. While Sam and Janet were gone and out of sight, had that button been the only thing that got unbuttoned? Was it what was left over after a very brief but intense make-out session? Was it a tease, a brief promise of something else to come later when they were alone and had the time? Was it Janet's discreet way of promising a later disrobing, and all that would follow from that?

For Samantha's inner vision, Janet pushed Sam down on the same examination bed that Samantha had lain in earlier. Her nimble surgeon's fingers undid all the buttons of Sam's military green shirt, and Sam arched her back so it fell open and those soft, skilled hands could focus on flesh instead of cloth.

Samantha groaned and covered her face with her hands. *She* wasn't the one who had fantasies like that! That was for her mirror-image, her otherworld self. For Major Samantha Carter of the US Air Force, not for Doctor Samantha Carter who'd just never got around to changing her last name to O'Neill. She shouldn't be thinking this, shouldn't be trying to imagine what Janet Fraiser looked like under her clothes. What it would be like to slowly open her clean white lab coat to find nothing but naked female curves underneath. What it would be like to touch, to caress, to kiss...

She had to stop *doing* that!

Yeah, said the annoying voice in the back of her head, because obsessing over everything you've lost is so much *healthier* than having sex fantasies. For sure.

"Oh shut up," she said. "It's not about that at all."

It's not? the voice said. You're a human. A social animal. You *need* other people, you've read enough psychology to know that. You just had all but one of your people taken away, and Kowalsky was really more of Jack's friend than yours anyway. If you want to heal, you need to form new connections. If one of those connections happens to involve physical intimacy, so much the better.

"She's already taken anyway," Samantha told her inner voice.

By *you*, the voice said. Which has to mean something. If nothing else, try to make friends. See what happens.

"Oh all right then," she said. "I'll go talk to her. Them."

But somehow her body remained still on the bed, her eyes fixed on the picture on the bedside table and tears running down her face.

The infirmary smelled of disinfectant and recycled air, just like Samantha's lab back at SGA had done. What equipment that was more research-oriented than strictly medical was the same, all the way down to the brand names and model numbers.

And the bed was also the same, the same as back home as well as the same as when she'd been in it before. She'd been in the room they'd assigned to her, talking to the Jack that wasn't hers, when the strange seizure had shook her.

Which was why she found herself back in Janet's domain, again dressed in a green hospital gown and waiting for something she knew not what. Well, she'd have to go back home or die, of course. That much was clear. She and her double couldn't exist in the same universe, it seemed.

"Hey," Janet's soft voice said. "Are you all right?"

"No," Samantha said. "Not really."

The cute doctor gently stroked her cheek and smiled. It was a gesture only of comfort, nothing else, but it still sent shivers down Samantha's spine.

"Is there anything I can do?" she said.

"Not unless you're a physics genius as well as a doctor," Samantha said.

"No pain?" Janet asked. "No discomfort? I might be able to do something about that."

Samantha shook her head.

"I'm fine, as long as the laws of nature don't try to reject the fact that I exist."

"Well, then," Janet said. "Give me a shout if you think of anything. I'll just be in the next room. Got paperwork to catch up on."

She turned to leave, and was a handful of steps away when Samantha got enough courage gathered to speak.

"Doctor Fraiser?" she said.

Janet stopped and turned back towards her.

"Yes?" she said.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Of course."

"When I go back to my own universe," Samantha said. "If I find the Janet Fraiser there, do you think she would..."

Her voice trailed off. She didn't know how to put it in words. There was too much confusion, too much doubt and strangeness.

"Yes," Janet said. "I think she would."

She came back to the bed and sat down on the edge of it, right next to Samantha.

"Being with women may have been a new thing for Sam," she said, "but it wasn't for me. I've always been about equally attracted to men and women, and I fooled around quite a lot back in college and med school. So if your Janet is enough like me that she ended up working for the Stargate project, she'll almost certainly be like me in that way too. And since you're a beautiful woman very much to my taste, I can't imagine her not being interested."

She tilted her head a little and smiled.

"That was what you wanted to ask, wasn't it?" she said.

Samantha nodded. It was, even if she never could've put it that boldly.

"One more thing," Samantha said.

"Yes?"

"Do you think I could kiss you? Just to see what it's like?"

Janet's smile widened.

"You know, Sam and I talked about that," she said.

Samantha looked aghast.

"What?" she said. "About me kissing you?"

"Kind of," Janet said. "We were talking about how similar you really are to her, and the one really big personality thing she and I have in common."

Samantha looked questioningly at her, but didn't say anything.

"We're curious," Janet said. "Very curious. Far more so than is good for us. And I suspect that you and the Janet from your world are the same there."

"What do you mean more curious than is good for you?" Samantha said. "And why do you think I am too?"

"Come on," Janet said. "You're here! You work with the Stargate! Not only do you have the kind of stubborn inquisitiveness that makes for a good scientist, you work at a project that involves jumping through an aeons-old alien-made device that tears holes in the fabric of time and space, bringing back artifacts that regularly turn out to be life-threatening. You wouldn't be doing that if you weren't as curious as we are, nor would your Janet. And we wouldn't be doing it here if we hadn't got more curiosity than sense."

She had a point, Samantha thought. Any sensible person would've quit the project the first or second time their life was put in serious jeopardy.

"So what does that have to do with us kissing?" she asked.

"Oh, come now," Janet said. "A chance to make out with a version of my lover from an alternate reality? How could I *possibly* let a chance like that pass? I'd be regretting it for the rest of my life!"

Samantha's heart jumped.

"So that's a yes?" she said.

"Basically," Janet said. "There are a couple of practical matters, though."

"Like?"

"First, we probably want to be somewhere more private than here," Janet said. "Second, are you really sure you want to stop at just kissing? And last, Sam wants to watch."

Samantha had a feeling she ought to be scandalized at the thought of her sort-of-twin watching her like that, but she wasn't. She was intrigued. Even a bit excited.

She smiled at Janet.

"Are you sure *she* wants to stop at just watching?" she said.

Janet laughed, and her laugh felt warm and soothing on Samantha's frayed nerves.

"No," Janet said. "Quite the opposite."

Sam's room looked pretty much like the one Samantha had been given, except for being bigger and having much less free floor space. The extra space was being taken up by a desk full of computer equipment, and more bookcases than she would ever have imagined could be squeezed into a room that size. Up against a wall, almost as an afterthought, stood a bed.

"So, um, this is where I live, mostly," Sam said.

"She has a flat over in town," Janet added, "but she's hardly ever there. On account of it being on the wrong side of the Stargate."

Samantha frowned.

"Wrong side?"

"The Earth side," Sam said. "She's trying to be funny."

"You should get out more," Janet said. "It's not healthy for you to be stuck down here all the time."

"I *do* get out a lot!" Sam said. "Just not on this planet. Besides, with dad a Tok'ra, just about everything I care about is down here or on the other side of the gate. Except Cassandra."

Samantha sat down on the bed.

"Dad's a Tok'ra?" she said. "How did *that* happen? In my world he died from cancer a while ago."

Janet sat down next to her.

"Well, that was how it happened," Sam said. "The symbiote could cure the cancer, so he volunteered to be host for Tok'ra whose old host was dying."

"Huh. Is it working out for him?"

"Yeah," Sam said. "I mean, he's alive and healthy. And Sel'mak got him to start talking to my brother again."

She looked confused for a moment.

"Or should that be our brother?" she said.

Samantha looked away.

"This world is so much better than mine," she said. She could hear the bitterness in her voice herself. "And soon I have to leave it forever."

"You'll make yours better," Janet said. She put her arm around Samantha's waist and pulled herself close.

Feeling Janet's warm and soft presence didn't exactly make Samantha any less confused, but at least it was a more pleasant kind of confusion.

"Thanks," she said. "I wish I could believe that."

She felt Sam sit down on her other side and place her arm just over Janet's.

"Do it a couple of times and you will," Sam said. "Trust me on that."

A brief laugh escaped Samantha before she knew it was coming.

"Not that I intend to do it more than once," she said. "But I do believe you. You should know."

"See," Janet said. "A laugh. You must be feeling better."

To her own surprise, Samantha realized that she did. It was hard not to, with two good-looking and friendly women holding her. She leaned back against their arms and closed her eyes. For at least a few moments, she felt safe.

Softly, Janet stroked her cheek.

"Do you still want that kiss?" she asked. "Or would you rather just rest until it's time to leave?"

Samantha leaned back heavily, until she was lying down and had pulled the other two women with her. Their arms were still behind her back, pushed down into the mattress.

"Yes," Samantha said. "I still want it."

Janet turned onto her side and put her free arm across Samantha's chest. On the other side, Sam copied her movement, so the three of them ended up embracing with Samantha in the middle.

"So turn this way, then," Janet said. "Unless you want me to do this instead."

Something warm, wet and soft slid along the edge of Samantha's ear. She gasped loudly at the sensation, somewhere in between a tickle and a caress. She turned her head towards Janet, who was smiling impishly.

"Liked that, did you?" Samantha said. Her face was so close to Janet's that she could feel their breaths mingle.

Instead of responding, Janet moved her head even closer. She stopped when their lips were a fraction of an inch from touching.

"Your move," she whispered.

If Samantha had ever had any real doubts that she wanted to do this, they had gone away without her noticing. She was nervous enough that she could feel herself tremble, but it was the giddy nervousness of going somewhere new and exciting. The sense of Janet in front of her and Sam's warmth against her back felt nothing but pleasant. Without even consciously deciding to, she moved her head that last hair's breadth forward and touched her lips to Janet's.

It felt surprisingly familiar. A little softer, a little smaller. As well as slow, sensuous and careful. Time turned irrelevant as she tasted and felt, explored and enjoyed Janet's mouth, until finally she had to break away to get a proper breath in.

"You really are amazingly similar," Janet said. "Fascinating."

Sam ran her hand down Samantha's side.

"So did you like it?" she asked.

Samantha nodded, not trusting her voice to carry words.

In front of her, Janet smiled.

"So can I have a go?" Sam said.

"Give the woman a moment to adjust," Janet said. "She looks like she's still trying to make sense of things."

"No," Sam said. "I don't think so. I think what will help her make sense out of things is this..."

Sam moved a little, and with a surprisingly strong hand pushed Samantha down on her back. With only a split second's pause, she bent down and forcefully put her lips to Samantha's. For a moment, Samantha was frozen in surprise. Then she opened her mouth and accepted Sam's kiss.

The kiss was... weird. It tasted like nothing, since it was the same taste as in her own mouth. There were little irregularities on Sam's teeth that she knew well, only from the other side. And, obviously, Sam knew *exactly* what she liked in a kiss, as well as she knew what Sam liked. Without really meaning to, she reached her arms around Sam and cradled the back of her head in one hand, just like she liked herself. Sam's hand moved down Samantha's hip and thigh, just fast enough and hard enough for Samantha's taste.

They both broke the kiss at the exact same moment. Sam looked down at Samantha with a strange expression. Samantha suspected she had the same one.

"Ok, that was spooky," Sam said.

"But nice," Samantha said. "Very nice."

Sam rolled over on her back.

"Oh yeah," she said. "Very nice. Makes you wonder what it'd be like to..."

The sentence trailed off into nothing. It didn't matter, Samantha knew exactly how it would've ended.

Janet had propped herself up on one elbow and looked down on them both.

"Could I bring a camera?" she said, obviously also having guessed what Sam meant. Not that it was very hard.

"No!" Samantha and Sam said in unison.

"Just asking," Janet said.

"What do you want to do now?" Sam said after a short silence.

The question brought her current situation crashing back down on Samantha. Not only loss and exile, but loss of the found sanctuary as well. Followed by impending desperate danger. The tension that had lessened in the arms of Sam and Janet started creeping back into her muscles.

"If it's all right with the two of you," she said, "I'd like to rearrange us all more comfortably on the bed and then I'd like to try to sleep safely between you."

Janet bent down and placed a gentle kiss on Samantha's forehead.

"Of course," Sam said.

They were gathered in front of the quantum mirror. Everybody was kitted up for the mission, and Samantha had shown doctor Jackson how to handle the control device for the mirror. Not-her-Jack, Kowalsky, Sam and Teal'c were going over equipment and plans. Her own part in it all was simple enough, and she had nothing better to do than to wait and worry.

Which she did.

"Hey."

Samantha started. The voice had come from right next to her.

"Preoccupied?" Janet said. She was standing there wearing her customary white lab coat.

"Scared," Samantha said. "What if I can't convince the Asgard to help us?"

"You can," Janet said. "Don't worry about that, they're good guys."

She handed an envelope to Samantha.

"Here," she said.

Samantha looked at it. 'Dr Janet Fraiser', it said in Janet's neat handwriting.

"What's this?" she said.

"You hinted earlier that you might try to look up the Janet Fraiser from your own universe," Janet said. "So I wrote her a letter."

Samantha turned the envelope over and back again, looking at it and feeling slightly lost.

"What's it say?" she said.

Janet smiled.

"That's private," she said. "Between me and me. Enough to convince me that it's genuine, or that someone's a *very* good mind reader."

"Then at least tell me what it's for."

"Us, of course," Janet said. "I think she'd be as happy with you as I am with my Samantha Carter, so I thought I'd help me get started."

Samantha smiled.

"If this goes on," she said, "we'll have to make up a whole new bunch of pronouns."

Over by the mirror, people were starting to move around. General Hammond's voice could be heard, making sure everything was ready.

"I think it's time for you to go," Janet said.

"Yeah," Samantha said. She put the envelope safely in an inside pocket. Acting on an impulse, she bent down and gave Janet a quick kiss.

"For luck," she whispered.

"I know you can do this," Janet said. "Just remember to give yourself time to be happy after you win, all right?"

For a few moments, they just looked at each other.

Then, a fatalistic calm overtaking Samantha's fear, she set off towards another universe and a new, better life.