

## **SFX 24. Trick or treat**

Adam sat curled on the floor of his living-room, between his lover's knees. He had just brought Vlad to a satisfyingly exciting climax using his tongue, lips and fingers, and the latter were still cupped round the Russian's balls. His head was resting on Vlad's outstretched thigh and he turned slightly, to trail a gentle kiss along the sensitive inner side. Vlad murmured, and tightened his hold in Adam's hair, but didn't move.

It was unbelievably good being together again. Adam felt as if the past fortnight had been some sort of nightmare, then was cross with himself for feeling that way about Emma. Cross, too, that he was allowing himself to drift further and further into a situation where he didn't feel he'd ever be able to do without the man he was currently touching.

Jack O'Neill had been the first to warn him. Paul had added some words of caution that day when they'd waited for one to rescue the other. Niki had since added his two pence worth, or should that, Adam mused, be two roubles' worth? But he had known all along what he was getting himself into.

It had been so fantastic, realising his teenage dreams, throwing off his protective camouflage of straight Anglo-Saxon male, and giving himself to Vlad. He accepted that at some point there would be a price to be paid. He hoped it wouldn't be called for too soon, and determined to make the most of what they had.

'What you are thinking, English?' Vlad's gentle voice brought him back into the room.

'Nothing. About you. I don't know.' His muddled reply caused the other man to raise a querying eyebrow.

'Me?'

'Yes, you! About how good this is. About enjoying ourselves while we can.' Adam looked up, brushing his lips across Vlad's cock as he did so.

Vlad considered the pale, sculpted face with the white-blond hair, then leaned forward and kissed Adam hard.

'English, I am enjoy,' he said, very firmly, then rose to get dressed.

It was Sunday evening and Emma had been gone since Saturday morning. After a fairly wild reunion, Vlad and Adam had settled back into the easy intimacy of sharing – sharing their jobs, their living space, their bed and their bodies. Tomorrow SGX was due to go on another mission. Adam would tell Hammond of Emma's abrupt departure, and hope to go with them.

Meanwhile, they should eat, Adam should call his mother, and then it would be time to sleep wrapped in each others' arms.

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They were almost late for the briefing. By the time they had missed the snooze button on the alarm clock twice, showered and dressed in extreme haste, tripping over each other as they did so, and rushed to the base, Hammond was in a meeting with O'Neill and Davis, and Adam had had to cool his heels waiting. Eventually the office door had opened and he had blurted out his news and his request to be back on mission status. Hammond had seemed pleased, but by the time the formalities were complete, Adam had bare seconds to get to the room where Colonel Somerfield was waiting. Vlad was standing outside, moving impatiently from one foot the other and after a rapid wordless query and nod, they rushed in together.

The MALP had declared their destination void of sentient life, but that only meant there was nobody living near the gate. Everyone knew better than to trust the machines. One day, artificial intelligence would be just that; at the moment the MALPs were clever, but easily fooled.

The planet was, according to the pictures they had, devoid of most life. An almost desert, with few hills worthy of the name, it looked gloomy and grey under an old sun, but the reason for Stargate Command's interest was obvious. The rocks near the gate had shown signs of rare minerals. This could be the mining paradise they kept hoping to discover.

The air, said the machine, was breathable. Water might be a problem and they each strapped extra containers onto their belts as they dressed in desert clothing.

Then Somerfield gave them the unchanging speech, the one they didn't really listen to but knew in their bones, about being careful, watching out for each other, and never leaving anyone behind.

'At least we won't be cold,' he finished, alluding to their last experience. And with that he led them out into the gate room and through the rippling non-liquid that never failed to send shivers of excitement down Adam's spine.

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A couple of hours later, Somerfield had to admit that the planet was about as safe and as unremarkable as it appeared. Some dull red rocks had shown traces of minerals but the red rock outcrops were few and far between, and Bob suspected the seams of ore didn't go far. The rest of the place was mostly a granite type rock, occasionally giving way to limestone (or the equivalent) pavements, where a few tenacious plants clung to the walls of the clefts and drank whatever water there was. Other than a few spiders they had seen no animal life.

'What do the spiders eat?' Sharon wondered.

'Each other?' The others all made faces at Ron's suggestion but certainly there seemed to be a notable absence of food. Maybe these were vegetarian spiders, though Adam, who had noticed webs in the deeper crevices, doubted it.

There was nothing near the gate to suggest natives either now or in the past. Bob was pretty certain that the Goa'uld had mined this planet out and left it to die quietly. Why they should have left the gate was a mystery, but one he didn't feel competent to solve. Let the earth teams discuss it when he delivered his report.

He sent them off in twos, Sharon paired with Ron and Vlad with Adam, with instructions not to get out of sight of the gate, then settled down to wait for them, guarding their means of exit. They would survey the land as far as they could see and if Hammond or anyone else wanted more, they could send another team with transport.

It was almost sunset here, and the sky was duller and heavier than ever. Both pairs walked quickly till they had passed the areas already explored, then slowed to note their findings. This was the downside, the boring side, of missions, and there were ten of these to every one explosion of excitement. Thinking of the last excitement, Vlad thought he could probably take a fair bit of boredom. Especially accompanied by his Englishman.

As the sun reached the horizon they turned back for the gate.

Suddenly the sky came alive. Huge silhouettes of monstrous spiders splayed across the dimness and a loud buzzing announced the rise of millions of tiny flies. White, with jet black eyes making their heads skull-like in the growing darkness, they massed above the pavement areas and a quick look at the sky gave a strange expanded shadow play of the conflict that was taking place.

For some reason (Adam's physics wasn't up to an explanation), the spiders were reflected on the sky and they fought, conquered and ate the flies by the million. When they looked at the actual scene of carnage, there was little to see except a churning in the air, but the battle played out against the sky was magnificent. The flies kept coming, pouring from cracks in the stone, as dense as smoke, and the spiders threw their webs like fishing nets, catching huge numbers every time. When they munched their way through what they had caught, the watchers almost expected to hear the sound of chewing and swallowing.

They walked under the shadows, unable to help flinching as the nets caught their boots. At one point Adam stopped to brush a web from his fingers. It was slightly sticky, but disintegrated at a flick of his other hand. They could see Sharon and Ron stopping once or twice, as well, and Vlad had to clear a web with flies from the end of one of his water carriers. A spider scuttled down his leg and leapt for the discarded net.

It was a grisly spectacle, but as the explorers neared the gate and the sun dipped beneath the curve of the planet, it was over as suddenly as it had begun. The buzzing stopped, the shadows vanished, and the planet was serene again.

‘Quite a show,’ Ron murmured, but they were all sombre as they waited for Bob to dial out. The question of what the spiders ate had been answered, in a scene reminiscent of a horror movie, and the silence and deadness of the planet had shown itself to contain secrets.

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Hammond was disappointed by their report but too used to unproductive missions to comment. It wasn’t a failure. Another planet had been visited and might be visited again. Failures were events like the signing aliens, and even then, the whole mission had come home alive.

Jack was amused when Bob told him about the sky show. ‘Better send a movie team through,’ he suggested. ‘We could make a packet!’

Adam and Vlad stopped to buy food on their way home and were disconcerted by the giant black shapes strung above pumpkins and broomsticks in every shop. The displays were an eerie echo of their day’s work. In the excitement of Emma’s departure and a trip off-world, they had forgotten that it was almost Halloween.