

Of wraith and dead men

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Prolog:

It was just one of those days, mused Lieutenant Silvers as he send one last glance back towards the settlement they had only recently left and not on the best of terms at that. Given this was supposed to be a recon and trading mission one could honestly say that only half of it had failed.

A few days ago their MALP had detected obvious signs of life near the gate of Taunus 5 and given that Teylas people had no trading connections to the people here let alone knew of their existence, stargate command had decided to send someone other than SG-1, namely Lieutenant Silvers and his team.

Sadly the natives soon turned out to be whacko half-worshipers. Which at least partly explained how they had managed to reach an at least somewhat mentionable state of technological development in the first place, without being wiped out by the wraith. But sadly nothing far enough along to aid the current inhabitants of Atlantis even if they had found a way to persuade them to actually trade anything in the first place. Had he already mentioned they were whacko worshipers?

The people of Taunus 5 had shown no open aggression towards him or his team and even bothered to sit down and listen to what they had to say before politely telling them to fuck off and not bother coming back as they would not aid anyone fighting the wraith. Ok, maybe that had not been their exact wording but the message had gotten thru pretty clear with all the passive aggressiveness in the air and all.

Now on his way back to the stargate he again cursed his luck as the dark oppressing clouds covering the sun all day finally released their downpour and turned the vast grassy hills into a mudslide.

A suitable end to an altogether equally miserable day.

He probably should not have jinxed it because the universe always came up with ways to make a bad situation even worse.

The loud whine of a passing Dart shattered the silence and made him take cover behind a large cluster of rocks barely high enough to cover his crouching form. Given the bareness of their surroundings he could probably be grateful there was any kind of cover at all.

Simons who had been further down the slope had found an even lousier hiding place in form of a scraggy bush he had somehow managed to crawl into and Michaels behind him seemed no better off. But covered in mud and leaves as they all were it probably would have been enough to simple sprawl out on the ground to become invisible from above.

"It's coming down!" Evans shouted from behind another rock pile when the whine grew almost unbearable loud as the Dart approached in an unusual angle.

Then they lost sight of the wraith vessel behind another hill and the thick dark pillar of smoke rising into the cloudy horizon signaled that the Dart had indeed made contact with the ground, just probably not as smoothly as the pilot had intended.

A lone Dart with no Hive in sight crashing down, seemingly unaided? Now, that counted as strange which in turn meant they had to at least check it out.

Slowly he stood up from behind his hiding spot and signaled his men to do the same while he slowly backtracked a few feet to get up high enough to see the crash site. Then he gracelessly flung himself into the dirt as to not be visible from the smoking wreck in case one of the nasty buggers had indeed survived the crash. His foresight

seemed useless at first given the condition of the Dart but proved valid none the less when sudden movement drew his eyes.

Somewhere just behind the mangled shape of what had once been a cockpit the lithe form of a wraith moved with an obvious limp and far less grace than the arrogant half-bugs usually displayed. Silvers couldn't see all that well thru the thick wads of smoke and the occasional sparks that lit the deceased Dart but the unsteady form seemed to stop for a moment. Then just as suddenly the Wraith continued to limp away from the crash site, obviously dragging something along with him he had just pulled out of the wreck.

As soon as Silvers got a clear shot he took aim just in case, but chose to let things play out for the moment. Simons next to him took in a startled breath the same instant Silvers himself recognized the Wraith's burden. Bloody civilian should be used to all of this by now.

Completely limp in the clawed grip of the Wraith feeding hand a mangled shape was pulled along: The evidently deceased body of a young man, his head pulled up as to not be dragged face first through the thick mud. Not that it would have really mattered. The poor guy must have bled out internally after the crash or gotten his lungs penetrated by some piece of shrapnel if all the blood pouring out of his mouth and nose was anything to go by.

If you were planning on having a snack on that one you're out of luck.

Why a Wraith would bother to take the dead body along in such a manner was beyond him, but then again nothing those ugly creepers ever did made much sense. Besides the life-sucking perhaps, that did, in a creepy survival kind of way.

Slowly the Wraith moved towards them, silvery hair in complete disarray and plastered to the bluish face in a bloody mess. Dark blood gushing out of various cuts that seemed to not heal quite fast enough. The mangled mess of his dark leather suit, or whatever those things were called, seemingly in a similar state.

Silvers would have felt sorry for the Creep if he had been anything but a life-sucking monster although it truly was a shame about the boy. The Wraith halted again just out of range of the Dart in case it chose to explode and drooped to his knees right next to the corpse.

Simons let out a startled chuff that must have alerted the creep, because his yellow-glowing eyes snapped up towards them and fixed Simons with a soul shattering death-glare. His Fingers tensed around the trigger but the wraith neither got up nor did anything else to sign his death sentence, the feeding hand still loosely hovering just above the dead guy's chest.

What the hell did that Thing think it was doing down there anyway?

Instead it let out a vicious snarl followed by a warning hiss, daring them to approach and slowly lowered his hand until it came to rest just below the dead guy's throat, fingers outstretched.

A creepy almost challenging grin warped the Wraith's features, bearing the sharp teeth, while his eyes remained fixed on the soldiers above him. Either the Thing didn't have the strength left to get up and attack them or the corpse proved mysteriously more interesting than live prey. Either way the Wraith seemed far less interested in the Atlantians than in whatever it had been intended on doing before Simons had given their position away. Its feeding Hand tensed but otherwise the creature remained alarmingly still, no muscle moving.

The erring silence stretched on until a sudden jolt went thru the corps as it came coughing and sputtering back to life. Silvers was startled enough to almost shoot the

Wraith about it and Michaels even let out a startled yelp.

"Geeze, wouldn't have done that if I were you!" Evans mused aloud, while Silvers still tried to make sense of what had just transpired.

"The gift of life?" Simons whispered completely awed.

Wasn't that the thing Todd did to Major Shepard after their imprisonment by the Genii?

He had only read the reports and filed that specific piece of information away as some kind of unexplainable wraith-voodoo. Then again, it only seemed fitting those live-sucking bastards could do one amazingly useful thing, karma and all.

The bluish Creep just kept that annoyingly arrogant toothy kind of grin in place while fixing them with those yellow predator eyes.

What was it with bug-people having reptile-eyes anyway?

And all of a sudden the slitted pupils unfocused and the yellow eyes rolled backwards as the Wraith tumbled to the ground, out cold.

"Told you so." Evans replied, almost smugly.

"Ok, that was bizarre..." Simons was the first to rise to his feet but Silvers motioned for him to stay put. "You go and call in Atlantis, tell them we need a jumper and a med-team!" He may have no idea why the poor guy down there was alive again but like hell would he let him die a second time over. Silvers did want some answers after all. "And do ask them if we need another wraith prisoner!" No need to waste the opportunity while it jumped him. The Thing might look half dead but Wraith were resilient if nothing else.

Kapitel 1: Of lucidity and puzzlement and everything in between

"So what should we call him?"

Simons sudden question startled Silvers out of his musing, leaving him guessing about what had brought it on. Some of his confusion must have shown in his face or maybe Simons had grown adept at reading questioning lifted eyebrows.

"Well the wraith!" Hurried the linguist to explain, somewhat annoyed. "I always wanted to name one!"

Still not sure how to reply to that the Lieutenant shared a nonplussed glance with Michaels across the briefing room table. The only other military man in his team and therefore the only one he really got most of the time.

"Well if we want to name it ourselves we have to come up with something now, before SG-1 gets back!" Simons impatiently insisted, crossing his arms.

"He is kind of bluish so how about Neytiri?" Michaels chose that moment to enter the conversation and Silvers had to admit: he did not always get the other Lieutenant either.

"That's a girl's name and you totally stole it!" Simons indignant outcry did have some merit to it. Wasn't Neytiri that hot alien chick from Avatar? Besides their skin color he truly could not see any resemblance. That wraith was far less human and anything but sexy and quite obviously not a girl. Vampire names were out of the question too, again not good looking enough. Now this train of thoughts was truly getting awkward.

"What would you call a blue-skinned life-sucking alien bug then?" Apparently they were still at it and Michaels refused to take the insult.

"Er... Wallace?" Obviously the name Simons had picked sounded not as suitable spoken aloud as he had imagined it would, even to himself. His uncertainty was well warranted given this discussion had just turned from awkward to ridiculous.

"Good God! That's just as bad as having Sheppard name him!" Evans spoke up and Silvers dreaded where this was going.

"Oh shush, you stay out of this!" Yep, Simons was definitely rising to the bait.

"I bet I could do better than any of you lot!"

"You're a Botanist you get to name stuff all the time!"

"That just means I have a lot more experience with choosing!"

"No! It means you will pick a plant name and it will probably be Latin to!"

"Would still be better than 'Wallace'!"

"Stay focused people!" Silvers chose to intervene before their bickering got out of hand, like usual. What an annoying lot he had been struck with, but then again it could have been worse: he could have gotten McKay. At least those two listened to him, occasionally. "Let's just agree that we are not in agreement and move on to the next issue!" They desperately needed a change of topic and now.

"Such as?"

"Why the Wraith behaved the way it did?" Ironically that should have been the first thing to strike the scientists' interest instead of starting this useless naming debate.

"Well I admit that is a jolly good question, any ideas on that?" Simons sent a sideward's glance towards their resident Botanist, still in the mood for a fight it seemed.

Silvers choose to take control of the conversation himself. "Let's start with what we actually know about the situation: A dart crashed and out came a wraith, so far so normal!" He cut Simons off with a hard glare before the man had a chance to fully open his mouth. "And that's where things get fuzzy. Turns out there is a human in that dart too and he dies during impact!"

"Actually we don't know that!" This time Evans was on the receiving end of his declining mood.

"As I was saying: The man died crashing!" Anything else would take too much effort to explain right now and would lead to a totally unproductive and useless controversy on how he got to be in that dart in the first place. "Wraith survives crash and spontaneously chooses to bring him back to life? I think not! Now, any ideas on what his motivation might have been?"

"I see you have already started without me?" Dr. Weir's voice drifted into the briefing room while the woman herself stood in the doorway with that knowing smirk of hers. Four heads snapped towards her while Silvers tried to suppress a wince.

I bet she has already been here long enough to witness all this awkwardness!

Sometime Silvers really loathed his job. "We were only just discussing the wraith's motives, Ma'am!"

"I gathered as much! Now why don't we just pick up where you left off? Dr. Jungblut should be here with her medical report soon anyway." Dr. Weir moved over to sit down still smiling and placed the mission file she doubtlessly just read on the table in front of her.

Damn, how he hated to be right.

"So I presume there is no easy solution to this situation?" Dr. Weir looked pointedly at Lieutenant Silvers obviously waiting for him to continue. Oh how he hated to be in charge of this bunch of morons even more. "No Ma'am. Apparently none of us can really wrap their brain around what the blue guy might be thinking!" Ok, right now he hated his own tongue most of all.

For the first time in what felt like a century luck seemed to finally be on his side because a sudden noise from the doorway made Dr. Weir turn around instead of asking more questions he could give equally embarrassing answers to.

"Ah! Dr. Jungblut how are our patients?" The sudden appearance of a slender middle-aged German woman in a lab coat saved him further embarrassment, at least for the moment.

"There seems to be no change with the wraith. Still unconscious but seemingly stable, it has yet to react to any outside stimuli. But then again, I admit, we don't really know what to do with it..."

No surprise there. If the bugger was too hungry to heal himself there was really nothing any of them could do short of feeding it, which of course, was totally and utterly out of the question. So Silvers decided to simply be grateful for the reprieve it earned them.

"How about our human guest then?"

Silvers was slightly irked by Weir's wording, not sure if she implied the wraith to be anything but a prisoner.

"Besides a few scratches from the crash and the almost-healed stab to his left lung he seems remarkably healthy for someone who was, er... dead!" Dr. Jungblut seemingly still had trouble with the concept but then again who didn't? "Mentally he appears to be holding up quite well, too!"

"So what is your opinion of him?" Dr. Weir tried to coax a little more information out

of the physician.

"He seemed confused and somewhat wary earlier, nothing unexpected given the situation. Sadly he refused to talk to us soon after regaining consciousness without giving us even his name or origin!" No surprise there either, the kid was probably either traumatized or thought they had abducted him or both.

"He did ask about the wraith though!" Dr. Jungblut finally added a rather curious piece of information.

"So he remembers?" Simons peaked up and the medical woman started to look rather embarrass all of a sudden. "Well I... might have mentioned it when I tried to persuade him to talk to us." Great, so they couldn't even be sure the kid actually knew what had happened to him, no wonder their guest was distressed.

"For all we know he might be a worshipper!" Evans decided to interrupt their line of inquiry and return to the previous topic of discussion.

"Or he could have been victim to a culling?" Of course Simons just would have to disagree.

"Why then, pray tell me, would the Wraith bother to revive him?" Yep. Check mate there. Reviving someone you wanted to feed on was probably not only contra productive to a wraith given the amount of energy it wasted but also made Silvers think of cows rumination something they had already half digested. Not a pleasant thought.

"Which takes us back to not knowing anything!" Dr. Weir concluded saving the Lieutenant from further headache.

"That is not entirely true! We can warrant al lot of guesses based on the Wraith behavior!"

"Guessing is not knowing, Dr. Simons!"

"But it is better than nothing!"

Weir seemed to finally grow weary enough of the linguist to simply let him have his way. "Ok than: Speculate away!"

"Well there is the fact that he revived him at all..."

"Which we already gathered is a mystery to us!" Evans interjected.

"Right. But there is also something else; The Wraith noticed us!"

Michaels send the linguist a rather annoyed glance. "Yes, because you just had to be a scared chicken and give us away!"

"Hey!"

"Gentlemen! Insults will not get us anywhere." Dr. Weir intervened before they could start a real argument.

"My point is not that it knew we were there, but that it did nothing about us!" Simons continued now slightly enraged.

"So what? We were armed and he was in pretty bad shape..." Silvers offered his opinion. Not that such minor detail usually kept wraith from trying any funny business.

"Think about it! He obviously had enough strength left in him to bring someone back to live, which I warrant is no easy feat! Why not just take us out, feed himself and then go back for the revival?"

"Gosh, that sounds so wrong..." Michaels complained slightly nauseated and Silvers had to agree, it sounded like they were talking about a necromancer or something.

"Maybe he just did not feel up to the task?" Evans tried to reason.

"We are still talking about a Wraith! Stop trying to make him sound like a sensible person!"

"Or maybe there is something we're missing!" Dr. Weir sharply ended their bickering. "What if he felt there wasn't the time?" Lieutenant Michaels pondered all of a sudden. Quite ingenious a thought given his usual input.

"Pardon me?" Now that Silvers actually deemed sensible to get an explanation to.

"Well what do we know about this 'gift of life' business? Next to nothing I bet! What if it's a time-sensitive process?"

"So..." Evans seemed to pick up on what Michaels was implying. "You mean to say if someone remains a corpse for too long he has to stay dead?"

That kind of made sense even to Silvers who admittedly was not really comfortable with this topic of discussion. "So the Wraith decided it did not have the time to bother with us, even if it could have used the snack? Must have wanted his friend back alive desperately then, since there is no way the wraith did not notice his own condition!"

"Aha! But is it truly that mans friend or is there something entirely different behind all of this?"

"Can't imagine the wraith doing it just for sensitive information! I might even go so far as to call this a rather suicidal move!"

And there they had really gotten down to the bane of the dilemma: Why did the wraith endanger his own live over a human? Those Creepers were smart, it must have known exactly what it was doing, down to the lack of any threatening moves towards the Atlantian expedition.

"I fear we will not get any explanations until we have talked to that young man down in the infirmary!" Dr. Weir wrapped their current lack of progress down into a nutshell successfully ending the conversation.

Crud! Why did he get the feeling things would not be that simple?