

Part 5. In which our hero takes a vacation

12.Small Victories

Adam was not in a good mood.

He had wanted to go somewhere - anywhere, really - on a Greyhound ticket, maybe. He was tired of being at the wrong side of the Atlantic and not seeing much of anything above ground. But it was already six o'clock on Friday evening and Tuesday morning didn't seem far enough away.

He had also wanted to explain to Vlad. To say that alien aphrodisiacs just weren't in the picture. To provoke him into another kiss. That was about as far as that thought had got.

Instead he e-mailed Emma and pretended he'd been working on computers all week.

Then he opened a bottle of wine and settled down with his guitar. No songs this time - his brain wasn't coping with words. He went through his Spanish repertoire - mostly Sor and Rodrigo, then settled for practising some Vivaldi - written for lute, transcribed for modern musicians. He still hadn't found anything Russian but decided to look out some easy piano pieces and see what he could do with the melody line. There would be some available to order on amazon.

After about an hour, his second glass was almost empty, his fingers were getting numb and the music was becoming discordant. His mood had not improved. St. George, Adam reflected, didn't have problems like this. He only had to kill dragons - and obviously found that easy.

Sharon got ready for the evening with her head in a whirl. She decided against make-up but put on some earrings and a bracelet in uncut garnets, a gift she'd bought herself when she made sergeant. She loved the slight sheen of the dark stones against her skin. Her wardrobe was not extensive but she had a couple of dresses she really liked. She chose a black one, low-necked and figure hugging, and slipped into some matching sandals. A quick pirouette in front of the full-length mirror and she was ready.

Perfume? She had no idea what Teal'c's reaction to earth perfumes might be. A faint misting of honeysuckle - she bit her lip. Too late now. She hadn't time to shower again.

The doorbell rang and his first words were,
"You smell very beautiful, Sharon. You are like a summer flower." After that, the evening had to go well.

Niki surveyed his disconsolate friend.
"Tell me again," he said. "Tell me *exactly* what happened." He hadn't made much sense of the story yet, but had gathered that Vlad was extremely upset.

So Vlad told him again, carefully and sequentially and comparatively calmly, then buried his head in his hands.
"You really are an idiot, you know," said Niki. "So far as I can make out, they were surrounded by beautiful aliens, who at that point were considered to be friendly, and the only effect the aphrodisiac had on St. George was to send him for a walk to clear his head. Then the minute *you* appeared, he was putty in your hands."

Vlad looked up.
"Furthermore," Niki went on, "You didn't even give him the benefit of the doubt. You just blurted out some crackbrained apology and left the poor guy to go home alone."
"But..."
"Rubbish!"
"And anyway..."
"So as I can't stand watching you agonising, I intend to take a hand in this."
"What...?" But Vlad was talking to the walls. Niki had picked up his keys and left the apartment. Vlad took refuge in the darkness of his doubts, drawing all the might-have-beens around himself in a cloak of misery. There was nothing, he thought, that Niki could usefully do.

When the bell rang, Adam almost didn't answer. His black mood had settled like a northern sea fog. He reached the intercom as the bell sounded again.

"Niki here. I am visiting you." The second sentence seemed a little unnecessary, but in any case, Adam pressed the buzzer to let the Russian into the building, and then opened the door. He glanced round quickly. Well, if Niki wanted to sit down, he'd just have to move some sheet music.

"I haven't any vodka," he greeted his visitor. Niki grinned and pulled a half bottle from behind his back. Adam found him a clean glass and poured the last of the wine into his own.

"So why am I honoured with a visit?" he asked. "And where's Vlad? I thought you two went everywhere together - apart from off-world, I mean."

"Is why I am here. Is very unhappy. Is drinking too much vodka." Adam raised his eyebrows at this. Niki criticising someone else's intake of vodka meant the situation was serious.

"I am ask you. He tell me what happen on Vaal. He think you offend. No," he corrected himself quickly, "He think he offend you. And he say sorry, but is still unhappy. I am ask if you are friend."

"Well of course I'm still his friend." Adam's usually pale features were a dull red.

"You know he is militia, militaria, whatever? He must careful." The anxiety in Niki's voice showed his concern. "You and me, Brit, we not milit..we can say true." Adam looked around wildly. The guitar didn't seem to be offering any advice. Nor did the picture of the saint. He took a deep breath.

"You could tell him..." He stopped, unnerved by the enormity of what he was about to say.

"What? What I can tell?" Niki coaxed gently.

"That he can offend me again as often as he likes." Adam's voice was a whisper. "And he asked me to forget - but I won't," he added.

Niki heaved a sigh of relief. He'd been right. Right in his suspicions. Right to interfere. Adam looked about as ragged as Vlad. He poured vodka for himself and pushed the bottle towards Adam.

"I thinking maybe you needing," Niki said, a half smile on his face. Which turned into a full one when Adam tossed back the remains of his wine and picked up the bottle.

"Is only way to give Russki and Brit Dutch courage," the Russian added, "But not *too* much. Or will be no use!"

They drank without speaking for a few minutes, then Niki said there was a barbecue planned behind his apartment building that evening, in the garden where the Russians had sung, earlier in the year. He made Adam promise to be there by nine o'clock. He, Niki, would ensure Vlad was present.

After which, he left Adam to freshen up and decide what to wear. He hoped the Brit was sufficiently high on vodka to keep to the agreement. Sometimes, being a matchmaker was a hard job.

Sharon and Teal'c headed for town. They were going to a jazz club that Teal'c knew and liked. They could eat and drink to their favourite music. Sharon had been thrilled to realise Teal'c was a jazz lover.

They both ordered steak and Sharon asked for red wine, at least partly to boost her confidence and cut through her inhibitions. No aphrodisiac here - just her own growing desire. This date was at Teal'c's invitation. Teal'c stuck with fruit juice. He had never acquired the earth habit of using alcohol.

The live band were unknowns, but good, and the audience was appreciative. A few people were dancing, or moving together, anyway, on the minuscule dance floor. The lighting was low - probably cost saving, but definitely romantic. Sharon tasted her steak. Delicious. She looked up under her lashes at Teal'c, who was being serious about the food. Eventually he broke off to take a drink and to speak to her.

"The food and the music are good here. Do you like it, Sharon?" She nodded, her mouth full, hoping he could see her in the half-light.

"And it is especially good to be here in such delightful company." She almost choked - with amazement, with pleasure. Then found her voice.

"The feeling's mutual, Teal'c."

"What are the stones you are wearing?"

So she told him about the garnets, about treating herself after her promotion, and then it seemed easy to tell him all about herself, her childhood, her striving and her success. He watched her gravely, intent and interested. When she finished, he started to tell about his own past. Some of it was common knowledge. Some, just small memories really, was new, and had been brought out and polished for her, a gift.

They didn't dance. They left earlier than they'd intended, both needing a more private space, together.

Adam headed for the buzz of voices and the smell of burning meat. He knew one or two of the people from the apartments by now. They were a casually friendly crowd, knowing him simply as a computer geek from the UK, taking him as they found him. Ken and Joanne greeted him and thrust a hamburger into his hand, together with a paper napkin to protect his black jeans and the white T-shirt with the Kielder Forest logo.

"Cool shirt," said Joanne. "Where's Kielder?"

"It's a forest, and a lake, near my home in England. Well, it's a man-made lake, a reservoir, really, but that doesn't stop it being home to a lot of wildlife - and tourists."

"Is it a big area?"

"Yes, huge, and despite the tourists you can walk all day and not meet a soul."

"I always thought of England as small and overcrowded," said Ken.

"Well, London's overcrowded, and one or two other cities, but there's plenty of space." Adam continued to stand near the glowing barbecue, watching the crowd and chatting idly.

Niki had resuscitated Vlad, given him black coffee and a serious pep talk, found him clean clothes, persuaded him to pocket condoms and lube, "in case" and had finished with an admonishment.

"Your Brit wants you, Vlad, but he's shy and he's easily scared. Be careful with him. And," he finished, "Use his apartment, not ours."

Now he propelled his friend across the grass towards the group of cheerful neighbours. Adam saw them. His first instinct was to run away but he took a deep breath and stood stock-still. Niki pulled Vlad over. Their first few words were banal in the extreme.

"Hi, Brit. You are OK?"

"I'm fine, Vlad. You?"

"I fine too. What you do?"

"Eating." Well, yes, that was pretty clear.

"What you eating?"

"Hamburger."

"Is good?"

"Yes."

"Maybe I am trying."

Adam didn't reply. He just held out the remaining half of his hamburger. Vlad took it and raised it to his mouth, never taking his eyes from Adam's.

"Remember," murmured Niki, "His flat," and hoped one of them had enough sense left to hear him.

Later, Adam wondered how they'd got safely across the road. Maybe, he thought, the whole world had stopped for everyone, not just for them. Perhaps the traffic had stilled and let them pass without incident. He had no idea. But they *had* crossed, and they *had* reached his flat. 'Safely' was, of course, a matter of opinion.

As soon as the door was closed, he was in Vlad's arms. The Russian was unexpectedly gentle. Adam wasn't sure what he'd thought would happen. Not this dreamlike kissing and caressing, at any rate. The kisses were an improvement on the first one, on Vaal. He hadn't thought anything could be.

Still...

All his fears resurfaced. He'd gone through this as a teenager, when he'd decided to ignore his feelings and live straight. Now the repressed emotions were hitting him hard. He must have tensed, because Vlad was stroking him, whispering to him, in totally incomprehensible but soothing Russian. As the hands reached his hips he forgot to breathe.

He did manage to gasp when Vlad's hands pulled down his jeans and reached his cock. Partly because the kiss ended and Vlad's mouth was following his fingers downwards. Adam wondered vaguely whether this should have been his role. There wasn't much he could do about it. Moving to a position where he could reciprocate didn't seem possible at the moment. Vlad's lips and tongue were giving him more pleasure than he'd ever dreamed of. An explosion of pleasure that left him shuddering and disorientated. He'd never known sex could be like this.

Vlad stood, and hugged him, holding him close. He felt at once safe and very far into danger. He tugged ineffectually at Vlad's belt, but the other man pulled away and led him to the bedroom, expertly stripping him and dumping him on the bed. Then he stood over him, undressing in fluid easy movements. Adam was mesmerised. Vlad was still hard. Adam found he wanted that cock in his mouth. Desperately. He reached up and pulled Vlad down beside him. Savoured the strangeness of sucking, licking, and then swallowing. They lay in each other's arms for a while, not talking, unless the occasional Russian endearments counted.

So, Adam thought, he'd wasted a lot of time. He was made for this, as he'd suspected way back in high school. But at least an expert was handling his initiation.

Vlad reached onto the floor for his jeans and pulled something from a pocket. Half smiling, his hair flopping over his eyes, he took a condom out of its wrapper and uncapped the tube in his hand. Adam watched him, thoughts seething.

Should he?
Probably not but...
Would he?
Almost certainly...
Would it hurt?
Did he want it?
Could he stop now?

Then Vlad was on top of him. Fingers searching, finding. One hand trailing across his inner thighs, tentatively, the other exploring his arse. Not so tentatively.

Adam tensed, every horror story about male rape he'd ever heard suddenly flooding his mind, then ebbing. This was Vlad. The touch was insistent but gentle. He'd dreamed of this. Vlad's fingers were inside him now and Adam, considering the inevitability of everything, relaxed. But Vlad stopped, his face questioning.

"What?"
"Don't..."
"Don't what?"
"Don't stop. Please. But..."
"But what?"
"I've never...it's the first time..."
"I am knowing. You are enjoy."

With that, Vlad repositioned Adam's legs and reached for the lube. Adam felt a moist coolness and Vlad kissed his forehead. Then pushed. Very slowly but very firmly. Used his other hand to stroke Adam's cock, by now aroused again. Adam managed not to cry out as he felt the other man's cock enter him. He tried to relax. All he could think of was his heart, pounding. Loudly. His body drowning out his brain. Meanwhile Vlad thrust. Moaned.

Somewhere deep inside himself, Adam reached the edge of an impossibly high cliff. Leapt. Soared. Tumbled in freefall to land softly in his lover's embrace.

And Vlad muttered words in Russian that sounded victorious, ending in a resounding, "Da!" before falling asleep.

Note: English -Yes! Russian - Da!