

13. Carpe Diem

Adam surfaced from sleep to find Vlad wrapped round him. Vlad was still fast asleep, his eyelashes fanned on his cheeks and his lips near enough to kiss. When Adam tried to disentangle himself, Vlad held tighter. Still asleep. Adam considered. He peeled clasping fingers back carefully and moved slowly but firmly towards the edge of the bed. Vlad grabbed him. Adam sighed, planted a firm kiss on the lips and hauled himself out of the embrace.

"Where?"

"Bathroom."

"OK. Come back."

"Of course." He wasn't actually lying. He would go back, but he fully intended to make coffee first. He needed to pee, wash and attend to his caffeine intake - in that order.

He didn't bother with clothes. He owned a towel wrap, one of those Velcro-fastened nods to modesty, but he didn't think anyone was likely to ring the doorbell. So he padded around the flat naked. And returned with coffee to find Vlad awake, lying with his head raised against the headboard, very obviously enjoying the view.

"You said you come back."

"Well, here I am. With coffee."

"No tea?"

"No tea."

"OK. No tea. But kiss."

"Yes," said Adam. "That's easy," and a warm flood of desire drowned out the need for caffeine. He put the coffee on a table and leaned down to kiss Vlad again. It was better when he was awake - he kissed back.

Whereupon the coffee went cold while they re-enacted the experience of the previous night.

Eventually Adam produced fresh coffee and they drank it in bed, pressed close and enjoying the contact.

"We have three day," said Vlad sounding extremely satisfied. Then the phone rang.

It was Colonel Somerfield but the news was good. For some reason known only to senior personnel, they had an extra day - no work till Wednesday morning.

"Four days," said Adam, and told Vlad how he had wanted to go on a trip, a mini holiday. Partly to escape his feelings, but largely to explore the country they found themselves in.

"We could go together," he suggested.

When Vlad's phone rang, Adam stayed very quiet while Vlad took the same message from Bob.

"Where we go?" he asked, as he put the phone down.

Adam went to the computer. After a while he turned with a light in his eyes.

"Somewhere I've always wanted to see," he said. "The Mesa Verde National Park and the old abandoned Native American ruins. They're in Colorado."

"Is far?"

"About four hundred miles. We could hire a car. We could share the driving and we'd have about two days there. You *have* got an international driving license, I assume?" he added as an afterthought struck him. Vlad nodded and they began to plan the trip. One website gave them a planned itinerary and another arranged car hire.

By midmorning they were ready to go. Vlad went back to his apartment to pick up some more clothes and Adam went by cab to get the car. When he got back, Niki was waiting with Vlad.

"I take time off too," he said firmly. "I arrange. Is for me something I want seeing." Then he grinned at the look of consternation on Adam's face.

"I tell Vlad is OK. I not get between you. But I coming with." And with that he piled their backpacks into the trunk of the car and they set off. They felt, all three of them, like children let out of school - excited, and almost guilty about the unexpected treat.

"Now we really in America," said Vlad as they left Colorado Springs behind, and the others agreed.

The journey was spectacular - they'd specified a scenic route. Adam decided it was, on the whole, good to have Niki with them. It meant he couldn't give in to the temptation to look at, and touch, his new lover. Instead, he concentrated on the scenery, which was magnificent.

So was Vlad, and so were his feelings. This was so new. Not just the relationship. Any new affair that lasts more than a night brings a dizzying desire for contact that only habit can cure. The whole thing was so new. And so forbidden by his

old standards, but locking into his secret fantasies...and that, combined with the holiday spirit, made him giddy with happiness.

They stopped for something to eat near Salida. None of them had had breakfast and that was what they wanted, even though it was strictly speaking lunchtime. This was an eye opener. It was an old fashioned diner with American breakfasts that reminded them of old movies, or Twin Peaks, rather than the commissary. Some of the ingredients were strange; Adam had never had pancakes for breakfast, all of them made the discovery that biscuits simply weren't, and the waitress had difficulty interpreting their preferences for eggs. But they all left replete and revitalised.

The only difficult moment came on the side trip to the men's room, when Adam had to leave quickly to cover his reaction to Vlad. Niki thought it was hilarious.

The views were glorious. High mountain peaks and unexpected valleys. Very little traffic because they'd steered clear of the major highways. Some of the roads were narrow but by European standards they were fine. By early evening they were booking into the Best Western Turquoise Inn, just twenty-eight miles from their destination. It was the last comfortable hotel shown on the printout and they decided to make it their headquarters. They could enjoy the drive there and back.

The clerk was almost a problem. He offered a room for the three of them and when they refused he pointed out that it was cheaper. Vlad saved the day. He pointed dramatically at Niki.

"He is making noise," he said. "Like pig," he added helpfully, and as Niki snorted he nodded vigorously.

"You are hearing," he said, and even the clerk had to grin. He gave them two rooms and they went to settle in and freshen up. Niki was spluttering and Adam could hardly control himself.

"You," said Niki. "You is the pig," but he was laughing too much to say more.

The hotel, to Adam's relief, was similar to the ones he knew in England belonging to the same chain, and boasted a very acceptable restaurant, so they spent a pleasant evening having dinner and then drinks. There was plenty of vodka.

In the bedroom, he felt unaccountably shy again, but Vlad hugged him and undressed him, slowly this time, spending ages on every inch of his body, and bringing him to the brink of orgasm over and over again.

When the Russian turned him over, parted the cheeks of his arse and kissed him, Adam thought he might die, of equal parts of shame and pleasure. This was so exquisite, so intimate, and at the same time so much a break with every taboo he had ever known. And now Vlad's tongue was exploring him, licking, probing. He heard himself whimper and then floated away on a tide of sensation that he'd never imagined in his wildest thoughts. Rocked by his own reactions, he was aware, as if in a dream, of Vlad entering him, of Vlad's orgasm and the stillness after. This time, it was Adam who clung, and entangled himself with his partner.

"Ya lublu tebya," he heard him say. He had no idea what it meant, but it sounded good. And for the second night together, they slept.

Next morning they were treated to a Best Western breakfast. The philosophy of the chain is that a good breakfast sets their customers up for the day, and the three young men soon felt they'd need nothing more before evening.

They were on their way. To a site all of them only knew from books and television, but that beckoned like a dream, and led them into the labyrinth of America's distant past.

Note: Ya lublu tebya - I love you. N.B. I have used an English transcription rather than Cyrillic characters because of the difficulty of transferring formatting from Word to Live Journal. Anyone who wants to help is more than welcome, but actually, Adam heard it rather than read it so it probably doesn't matter.