Chapter 19. A Holiday Interlude.

Why was it, Adam wondered, that longed for events took their own sweet time to arrive, and disasters rushed into place at the speed of light? Emma would be here tomorrow.

They had held a council of war, and Vlad had agreed, after Niki had shouted at him, to move back to his old apartment. He had thought Adam would face Emma and tell her the truth. Adam, on the other hand, felt that Emma didn't need to know just yet, especially when she'd just spent a large chunk of her salary on a holiday in America. A holiday that would definitely be ruined if her boyfriend turned out not to have room in his flat for her. Even if the reason didn't freak her out. He would tell her. He truly would. After she'd gone home. A sort of Dear John letter. A letter that could refer to Vlad, someone she would by then have met. A letter that would let her down lightly, saying what a wonderful time they'd had.

"You are have wonderful time with this . . .this . . ."Vlad's English deserted him.

"Emma." Adam was patient. After all, it was Vlad who would have to move out. And he would miss him. Desperately.

"You are not to having so wonderful time! You are hearing me?"

"No, well. I don't suppose it'll be a picnic."

"You are have picnic?"

"No, it's an English phrase. Not being a picnic means things won't be easy."

"Emma. She is not easy? She does not liking the picnic?" Fortunately for Adam's sanity, Niki stepped in with some wellchosen translation, before collapsing in a fit of giggles. Vlad shrugged but looked mollified. Adam wondered how on earth they'd coped so far. The pitfalls of a relationship without a totally common language were manifold!

They agreed, thanks to Niki's diplomatic skills, that the Russians would keep a low profile. They would be there as friends, but not all-the-time, in-your-face friends.

And having sorted his romantic problems, Adam turned his attention to requesting more leave from duty.

General Hammond seemed surprised and not at first inclined to grant any leave at all. Adam explained about unexpected visits and the need to entertain Emma and the equally urgent need to keep Emma from inquiring too deeply into his work. Grudgingly, he was given a week, and told he could remain on earth for the other two weeks of his girlfriend's visit. As he stammered his thanks, he noticed O'Neill in the doorway, giving him a strange look, but it was neither the time nor the place to explain. So he didn't. Don't ask, don't tell, could, he decided, well become his personal motto.

Over a cup of coffee he related his interview with Hammond, and its outcome, to a disbelieving set of friends. Everyone, it seemed, saw him and Vlad as a couple. Emma would be a complication in their lives as well as his. Sharon remembered her name from their first conversations, and offered, predictably, to take her shopping. When Adam said he didn't think Emma was into shopping, there was further disbelief all round. Then they rallied and started to tell Adam where to take her, and where all the tourist spots were, so he had to admit he'd seen none of them himself.

"You are going to enjoy yourself, Adam Fenwick," was Teal'c's considered opinion, and Adam began to hope he might be right.

He felt a sense of unreality as they tidied the flat and carried Vlad's things back to the place he had once shared with Niki.

"It's only for three weeks." He hugged Vlad as if they were about to be parted forever. Vlad kissed him and grinned.

"Go, St George. Be getting your dragon. Be brave, my English knight," was all he said.

Emma arrived at the airport in the late afternoon, after an internal flight from New York, and Adam picked her up by car. He had gratefully accepted Siler's offer to lend him a car for the length of Emma's stay. These American friends of his were good people. More open, more generous, perhaps, than a lot of English were. He felt thoroughly at home here, accepted in a way that was new to him and exceedingly agreeable. He wondered if Emma would notice the difference.

She came out of the airport terminal, blinking in the bright sunlight, trailing a heavy wheeled case and looking around in a lost fashion that was very unlike her. Adam reminded himself that she'd just had a twenty four hour journey, from Newcastle via Manchester and New York, including airport waits and stopovers. He waved and crossed the roadway to meet her, kissing her cheek and using the suitcase as his excuse for failing to add any further endearments.

She exclaimed over the car, and exclaimed even more when he said it was a loan. Then they were off and her eyes were big with excitement. Her first glimpse of America. Her holiday had begun. It took just over half an hour to drive from the airport to the outlying area where Adam lived. He deliberately drove through the centre of Colorado Springs to give his passenger an idea of where she'd arrived. All the way, Emma was chattering. About the buildings, the signs, the traffic, and even the people. Adam was sympathetic. His own arrival, only a few months previously, had felt like stepping into another world. Almost as much so as stepping through the Stargate, though of course that comparison was strictly off limits. Considering that England and America had so much in common, the differences were startling, obvious and huge.

Emma approved of the flat. She particularly approved of the furnishings Sharon had helped him choose. She admired the picture of St. George, but without much warmth. She enjoyed the meal he'd bought - a simple quiche with new potatoes followed by ice cream. Not cordon bleu, but easy and satisfying. They had some wine too, a Californian 'blush' wine, lighter than a rosé but less ordinary than a white. Emma, as usual, had half a glass and sipped it slowly. She had never been a drinker.

She was exhausted by the journey, and by the seven-hour time difference, and was glad when Adam suggested she should go to bed. They had never slept together for a full night, and he could see the look of relief in her eyes when he showed her the single bed in the small bedroom and explained he'd be sleeping on the couch. Almost as great as the relief he felt that she didn't query the arrangement or suggest that he join her. He hadn't thought she would. She had never initiated their rare sexual encounters. But one never knew. She might have felt guilty at turfing him out of his bed, or thought she should show him some affection after their long absence from each other. Fortunately, she simply thanked him and began to unpack. He left the room and she closed the door. Minutes later she headed for the bathroom, well wrapped in a cotton robe with sensible pyjamas peeping from underneath. Her goodnight, on her way back, was cheerful, if somewhat sleepy, and the door closed again.

Adam read for a while. He looked longingly, first at the television and then at his guitar, but he didn't want to spoil Emma's chances of sleep, and he picked up a book with a sigh. The book, the first volume of Manda Scott's Boudica, combining two of his great loves, northern Britain and Rome, soothed him and eventually he was able to go to sleep on his couch without thinking too much about his other great love, his Russian.

They had a whirlwind week.

They visited the Cave of the Winds and admired the stalactites. They hired horses from the Academy Riding Stables and rode through the red sandstone formations in the Garden of the Gods. (Adam expected to have saddle sores after that and his suspicions were well founded). Then they dined at the Balanced Rock café and Emma chose a bracelet at the jewellery counter in the 'trading post'. They took the cog railway to the summit of Pike's Peak, explored the ghost town at Wild West, and bought a gift for Adam's mother at the Van Briggle pottery next door to the museum.

Adam was glad when Emma turned down the chance to go white water rafting in Echo Canyon. His work held enough excitement and he preferred his holidays to be a little more staid and safe. They went to the Cheyenne Mountain zoo, advertised as 'the closest you'll get to Africa without a passport' and both of them were thrilled to feed some of the giraffe herd by hand. It was Emma who found out about the Manitou Cliff Dwellings, which resembled those at Mesa Verde, and Adam felt like an expert, showing her round. He was glad he'd been to the bigger site, not only because he'd been with Vlad, but also because the scenic drive had been wonderful and the whole experience had been amazing. Plus, he could bring the Manitou place alive for Emma.

Finally, they spent a day in the city, taking in shops, architecture and an exhibition at the Fine Arts Centre. Emma found a leaflet advertising a gold mine theme park, which they hadn't time to visit, and another for the 'North Pole Santa's Workshop', which had them in fits of laughter as they considered just how far from the north pole Colorado Springs was situated.

Vlad and Niki called, a 'friendly' visit, just as they were wiping their eyes, so the joke had to be shared, and the resultant snorting and spluttering served to hide the desperate looks Vlad gave Adam.

They ate at a different restaurant each night, choosing ethnic cuisines with care, learning new dishes and drinks. Mexican. Italian. American. Spanish.Sometimes one or more of Adam's friends joined them. Back at the flat, Adam played his guitar and Emma sang, Northumbrian and Scottish folksongs for the most part, with a few Dylan or Baez numbers thrown in for good measure. She seemed satisfied with the fun and the laughter. And the complete lack of any physical romance. Adam found himself unable to hug or kiss her. He had never been very demonstrative in their relationship but now he excelled himself. His kiss at the airport had been that of a friend, a greeting salutation. And that was all he could manage. Emma didn't seem to mind. Or even to notice.Adam suspected he was just an excuse to visit America.

On Thursday, after a particularly good evening, he felt somehow obliged to put his arm round her as they left the restaurant but when they reached the car, he noticed she appeared almost relieved to be separate again. Well, that was fine by him. And he wasn't going to question it.

The others had ideas about entertainment. Sharon offered a shopping trip for the weekend, despite Adam's warning, and was amazed all over again to find Emma lukewarm about the idea. She'd thought it was simply Adam who didn't find retail therapy enthralling. So she and Teal'c suggested a foursome for dinner and dancing. Teal'c intrigued Emma but she was too polite to ask questions about his 'tattoo'. They booked dinner for Saturday night and Sharon and Emma went to the bedroom to inspect Emma's clothes for a suitable outfit. Teal'c quietly updated Adam on news from the base. Neither team had been off world, but SGX were scheduled to go on Monday. Vlad was fine.

Adam was missing him more than he'd thought possible. He wanted to see him, to touch him and to kiss him, instead of which, on Sunday, he phoned him. And felt a dizzying sense of disorientation as he heard the familiar voice. It sent warm treacle through his veins and he hoped he didn't look as besotted as he felt.

"Vlad! I just wanted to wish you luck for tomorrow. Stay safe, you hear?"

"I am staying safe for you, St. George." There was laughter in the voice. "It is you who is being in danger, I think."

"No, I'm fine. Everything's going well. Emma's enjoying her holiday."

"Not too much enjoying," was the response, then Emma came into the room and Adam murmured conventional goodbyes.

"Someone important?"

"One of the team I work with. They're missing me. They'll have me back tomorrow!"

"You're working again?" Emma's voice rose a notch. She knew Adam had work to do but she'd hoped he might have at least the first fortnight of her holiday with her.

"Yes. We'll make plans for things you can do on your own, or find someone who's off duty and can entertain you." Emma looked dubious but was soon distracted by talk of a party for the following Thursday or Friday. A party she and Adam would hold, for all his friends, at the flat. If she was surprised by the number of friends he'd made, she didn't say so, but she did say she wasn't sure she could cope with so many new people at once. All of them 'foreign' to Emma, on her first trip out of Western Europe. She was practical and capable, however, and they had soon worked out what they would buy, what they would cook, and what they would drink. Emma would enjoy arranging everything and buying the things they needed from the local supermarket. Orange juice figured high on Emma's list, and after a moment's thought, Adam decided that he, too, might be safer with a non-alcoholic evening. After all, Vlad would be there.