

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 well-chosen 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.

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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.

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.