

### **Part 3. In which the study of Latin is shown to be justified.**

#### **6. NEW DEPARTURES**

It was some weeks before SGX were all fit and ready to work. Colonel Somerfield and Sergeant Vaughan spent the time training, writing reports, and training again. In between training they visited their stricken colleagues, and took various items they thought might cheer them up.

Bob Somerfield was an observant man, and he soon removed Sharon's offerings to Vlad, and took them to Potts where they were better appreciated. Sharon simply assumed they were being passed around, and continued to supply Vlad with the unwanted magazines. Potts was delighted and nobody disillusioned Sharon. Niki was more aware of his friend's preferences, and brought a different magazine. This was not passed on and was hidden under the sheet whenever Sharon visited. Somerfield raised his eyebrows but decided that photographs were just that, and nothing to do with military discipline. Adam swallowed hard and pretended he hadn't seen the cover.

Adam had started sparring with Teal'c in earnest. Both men were enjoying the exercise and learning from each other. Teal'c endorsed Hammond's decision to use Adam as an instructor, and soon, what had been a hobby became a large part of the Englishman's life.

He had looked at a map of the USA and realised just how far Nashville was from Colorado Springs, but the Internet had thrown up nearer groups. One based in Colorado. He toyed with the idea of joining the Colorado Chapter of Legio IX Hispana and went so far as to download application forms. He also phoned the contact listed in Wyoming. However, when he costed the kit and the travel, and made a realistic assessment of his free time, he changed his mind. Regretfully, he backed out, but asked them to keep him informed about displays. He was sure Teal'c would enjoy watching the men demonstrate their skill with pilum and gladius. Perhaps Vlad and Niki would be interested too.

For himself, he would have to be content with modern weapons in a modern setting, and fresh air in the company of the alien.

Niki was definitely interested in the Roman displays. The Romans had never penetrated as far as Moscow, probably having more sense than Hitler or Napoleon, but the southern soviet states had all come under Roman sway or fought for their independence at one time or another. Niki had always enjoyed ancient history and was prepared to be educated and entertained.

Vlad fancied watching a troop of men performing, especially if some of them were going to display Adam's style of prowess with a pole. He said little, but agreed he'd be delighted to join them, once he was up and about. His skin was healing well, and was not infected. Unlike the unfortunate Potts, he would soon be out of the infirmary.

His release was treated as an excuse for a celebration, with vodka featuring hugely, but this time Niki made sure there was chilled white wine for Adam and for Sam. Some of the other Russians had turned up to welcome Vlad back and the air was full of their musical language. Not for the first time, Adam wished he understood it. They were in the big yard behind the apartment where Vlad and Niki lived, and had eaten a great deal of barbecued steak and hamburger. Everyone had drunk enough to be mellow. As the evening wore on the Russians formed a circle and burst into a Cossack dance, accompanying themselves with a traditional song. Afterwards, someone produced a guitar and the men continued to sing. Their songs hinted at the steppes and the forests of their homeland, and Adam found himself transported back to his own roots, and to the wall. Vlad's arm was resting casually round his shoulders as they listened to the last song die away.

"I think you are playing, Brit?" Vlad asked. He had seen Adam's guitar at the flat, and although many people keep instruments they can't or don't play, few take them across the Atlantic. Adam nodded. "I'd like to learn some of that stuff," he said, and Vlad slapped him on the back, grinning.

"You are liking Russians?" he asked, a hint of double entendre creeping somehow into his tone.

"I like these Russians," Adam confirmed. "Particularly their music."

"I think he was wanting something else," muttered Niki, who was close by. Adam pretended not to hear.

He was, of course, aware of the hints and had noticed the magazine. But he vaguely hoped that if he ignored it all, either it would go away or at the very least, he wouldn't have to make a decision. Because it would be the most difficult decision he had ever made.

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They all enjoyed the mock Roman battle, and respect for Adam increased when they saw the discipline and fitness needed to fight with the long, heavy pila. The men wove around each other in a balletic movement that avoided friends and threatened foes. Teal'c was fascinated and asked hundreds of questions, on their way back, not only about the techniques, but also about the Romans in general. Adam had learnt more from his beloved wall than he realised, and was able to answer to Teal'c's satisfaction and to his own. One thing they agreed, there and then, was that in future they would spar wearing packs, to simulate the weight of the armour.

"Daniel Jackson would have enjoyed talking to you, Adam Fenwick," Teal'c remarked. "You share his interest in ancient people."

"Who was this Daniel?" asked Adam. "Saint Daniel, from what I've gathered," he added.

And so Teal'c told him about the missing, presumed ascended, member of SG1 and in doing so filled in a number of gaps in Adam's knowledge of the Stargate Project.

"Not Saint Daniel," he chided gently, "Just Ascended," and with that Adam had to be as content as the rest of them.

"I think you are teaching me to fight with the piles," interrupted Vlad. "Pilum," corrected Adam automatically. But he didn't refuse. He would enjoy teaching his Russian friend to manoeuvre the heavy weapon and improve his balance and skill. Teal'c, too, seemed to think it was a good idea and they arranged to meet in the practice field the following day. Niki was less enthusiastic.

"Is good watching," he said. "I think is perhaps not so good doing." And despite some effort on Vlad's part, he refused to join the new Roman "team".

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General Hammond was in his office, reading reports, when an incoming traveller was announced. There was no one due. Various teams were out, among them SG1 and SGX, but they had only left within the last day or so and it was supposed to be a quiet time in the gateroom.

SGX dialling signal, sir," Siler told him as they watched the iris. "Hope nothing's gone wrong this time...." Hammond agreed. He'd only just cleared the team for active duty after the injuries sustained on Sahara.

Sergeant Vaughan came through the gate alone. She seemed perfectly fit and saluted smartly before reporting.

"We found some very unusual artefacts, sir," she began. "They appear to be Roman, in our view, but, of course, none of us are experts." She handed the general a fragile and obviously old scroll. The writing was almost certainly a variant of Latin. "The thing is, sir, we \*need\* an expert," she finished somewhat unnecessarily.

"Yes, you do, but why didn't you simply request one?" Hammond was curious. It was unusual for a team member to return through the gate like this.

"Well, sir, we knew SG1 were out, which means Jonas is unavailable, and of course Daniel is no longer with us. So Vlad thought of Adam Fenwick."

"And Colonel Somerfield sent you back to fetch him?"

"Well, yes, with your permission, of course, sir. But we really think he could help, and he hasn't been through the gate before so..."

"Hmm. Point taken, but of course he's a civilian and we will have to ask him, not order him. Meanwhile, why haven't I heard from the colonel? "

"There's some sort of communication problem, sir. It might be on our side or yours - we don't know. Anyway, we're out of contact and the colonel thought the simplest thing was to send me, while the others set up camp. The planet seems peaceful enough, and we haven't met any "natives" yet. We're in a desert region, quite near the sea, and there *is* a river so we have fresh water..."

"Yes, yes, sergeant. These details can wait for your report. I'll page Fenwick and put the idea to him. From all accounts he may be just what you need. At any rate, he's well able to look after himself, so he probably can't come to much harm and he might enjoy the experience."

Hammond considered, while he waited for Adam to arrive. The Englishman was cleared at the highest level, had proved his physical fitness beyond doubt, and was the nearest thing they had, on base, to an expert on Rome. Of course, if the finds *were* Roman, experts aplenty could be drafted in, but for an immediate opinion... There was no evidence, to date, of any Goa'uld/Roman connection but one never knew. Besides, the British would be delighted if one of their people went through the gate at last. Though Hammond didn't envy Fenwick the inevitable debriefing.

Adam was hard at work when his pager beeped. There had been a worrying silence from the teams out in the "field" and it had finally dawned on someone that maybe, just maybe, the fault lay on this side of the gate. Sure enough, there was a gremlin in the system and Adam was trying his best to eject it.

He immediately contacted Hammond to explain the situation and was told to give his current task priority but report to the general as soon as he reasonably could.

It took him over an hour.

Sharon was in what he had learnt to call the commissary as he passed and he did a quick double take. SGX were off world, weren't they? But he only waved and hurried on.

When Hammond put the proposition to him, he was excited, overwhelmed and terrified in about equal measures.

"When...?" he began.

"Now."

"But..."

"Sergeant Vaughan is here to escort you." (So that explained the glimpse of Sharon).

"But..."

"I've considered all the factors very carefully."

"I'm not really..."

"An expert? Perhaps not by international standards, but you're here and you're adequate."

"So..."

"Off you go, Mr. Fenwick. Have a pleasant trip."

"I need to..."

"No time."

"And I ought..."

"No time for that, either." And Adam was escorted firmly to the gateroom where someone threw him a standard pack and Sharon joined him on the ramp.

"You have the right, as a civilian and a foreign national, to refuse this mission," Hammond intoned quietly, but the iris was already opening and Adam found himself shepherded through by Sharon.

Just like Bilbo leaving Bag End without a pocket-handkerchief, he thought to himself, and then stopped thinking altogether as the enormity of the wormhole took his mind and hopefully his body, in a direction that defied belief.