

Vladko Variations

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There are lots of Vladko stories.

There's the one about how I, this twenty-something American writer, finally fulfill my fantasy of sleeping with a foreign man, Vladko. It's perfectly hot and everything I want, so I go ahead and sign on with him for life.

Then there's the story of how Vladko is this sexy man who's everything I'm not: flashy, arrogant, rich. And even though I don't like him much on the first date, I take him home and have sex with him. And he comes. And I don't. Then we start dating, even though he barely speaks English. And we keep messing around, which is sexy and hot, until the actual sex starts, which is quick and frustrating. Then I give him an English lesson on the word "fairness" and all that entails. But it happens again and again just the same way. Then he says, "You just 'nother girl. You break up me, no big deal." And I want to punch him right there in my bed, but, instead of that, I keep sleeping with him for another unsatisfying week.

Then there's the story about how I date a second foreigner, Vladko II, and this time he is as big as a cheese log and has the body of the professional soccer player he used to be, and this Vladko knows the meaning of perseverance, and I finally get the foreign relations I've been craving.

Then there's the story where the second, super-hot, super-skilled Vladko is also a super-asshole. He blows pot smoke in my face, and I ask him not to, but then he does it again. Then he does it whenever he sees me to make a point, which I eventually get: that he is an asshole.

Then there's the story of how I give serious thought to falling in love with both Vladkos, and I imagine life with Vladko I, who is a truck driver, and yes, I also love to travel, and I want to strip him down in the cab of his semi. I imagine life with Vladko II, who is a too-hot-for-his-own-good photographer, and yes, I love the arts and travel, and I want to strip him down in his darkroom. I know I can fit in to either life. Anything for love!

Then there's the story of how I marry Vladko I, and we move to

Macedonia together where I give up my career and learn to make his favorite food, some kind of pickled lamb, and I still believe that one day he'll make me come.

Then there's the story where I marry Vladko I only after he has successfully satisfied me several times and only after he learns enough English to thoughtfully compliment my writing, even though he can only read a quarter of the words.

Then there's the story of how after breaking it off with both Vladkos, I go to an Eastern European club just outside of Chicago and see them across the dance floor at the same time. They each start crossing toward me, and my body surges for both of them at once. And I forget how they weren't very nice and how all we had between us was sex, and hardly even that. But I blush as they confront me. Then, at the same time, I feel each Vladko cupping one of my butt cheeks. Then I fulfill another fantasy that night: ménage à trois.

Then there's the one where I never sleep with a foreign man, but every time I hear an accent it's like I'm being slowly undressed. I long for it to happen, to feel the way a foreign man's hands amplify my skin, how his lips thrust and maneuver with mine. I imagine the weight of him on top of me, his foreignness inside me, the way I'd bathe in that accent and warmth. As I imagine him, my breath is short and my pulse is fast. He is perfect. And so I wait.