

Old Darzon Had A Farm

by iztopher

Rhen buys a cat. And a dog. And a bat. And a -

For yourbloodthirstykitten, for the fic prompt "Rhen bringing home Yet Another Pet during the events of AV1 comes to mind..."

Shoutout to Ishti for letting me borrow their OC Percy.

...

Rhen had never had a pet before.

She'd broached the topic with her parents, but the adult Darzons consisted of a cobbler and a seamstress. In Clearwater, animals were selected for function first, companionship second. The family had no need of a dog to herd sheep like Billy Harper, or chickens to lay eggs like Liana, and scarcely the land for most animals anyways.

Sedona, on the other hand, had a pet shop. It was a foreign concept to Rhen, used to not-so-slyly informing her parents that *Vanna's cat was expecting kittens, wasn't that interesting, where would they all go?*

So perhaps, granted the opportunity to freely select an animal and a place to board it, she got a little bit carried away.

When they just had Fluffy and Roquefort, she resented Lars for nudging her out of the pet shop. Fluffy was as sweet and giant a dog as Rhen could hope for, laying under the dining room table while the party gathered together and planned their next move. But Roquefort was a sneaky bastard of a cat ("they're all like that," quipped Lars), and the manor was so large, that sometimes Rhen went days without seeing her.

"What if she's lonely," Rhen said, lounging on the couch, one leg draped over its plush purple arm. "If we got that little green-yellow cat, they could be friends."

"Or hate each other," Lars said from across from her. "If she's lonely, she'll come looking for us. Besides, what are we going to do with the pets we've

already got? We're supposed to head back to the Eastern Isle tomorrow. For your friend's sake, might I remind you."

Rhen's expression darted through the doorway to the dining room, where Galahad was standing in the corner with his arms crossed, eyes trained on Te'ijal. "We have a native Sedonan in the party," she said. "Maybe one of his friends could be a petsitter."

Lars scoffed. "You think Galahad has friends?"

"He has a fan club, Lars, I'm sure he has friends."

Galahad, it turned out, did not have friends. He had a friend, singular, a certain Sir Percival whose allergies spanned nearly all mammals.

"He may still be willing to help, as it does not stop him from keeping and caring for a horse, but I would rather not impose this upon him."

"If he'll just come by and drop off food once a day, we can figure out something more permanent next time. I just don't want to leave Danny to the wolves any longer than I already have."

Danny was left to vampires, not wolves, but they extracted him all the same. After they'd sent him back on his way to the Western Isle, they stumbled upon a witch selling bats, and Te'ijal instantly fell in love with one.

"Oh, she is so sweet!" she cooed, "just look at her! I could name her Leyvro!"

"We cannot ask Percival to look after a bat," Galahad said. "We cannot buy a bat. For all we know, it could be rabid-"

Lars, by now an adept necromancer, waved his hand across the creature to sense disease. "It's not," he said.

Te'ijal and Galahad each looked at Rhen, both desperate. One, however, was endearing with her pleading eyes and lopsided fangs. The other was Galahad.

"Percival did not agree to take care of a bat," Rhen conceded, then added, "but we needed a new pet sitter anyways, so..."

When they arrived back in Sedona, Sir Percival looked a little worse for wear, an awkward, rippling red flush peaking up from behind the collar of his gambeson and blooming across his nose.

But an unexpected meeting at the market revealed a Danny with a far healthier color in his cheeks after a week of fresh, seaside air and world famous cheese. One conversation later and the party had secured their permanent petsitter.

“We have a bat,” Te’ijal informed him.

“A bat? No kidding! So you don’t just have normal pets, then?”

“Is that okay?” Rhen asked.

Danny laughed. “I think it’s great! I mean, I wanted to keep traveling the world, but after that vampire business I’ll admit I was a little worried about how wise an idea it was, and then I came to Sedona and I just want to stay a while. If you have all these wild beasts and creatures, I can see the world without ever leaving town.”

Rhen grabbed him by the shoulder into a tight side hug. “Danny, we owe you.”

He laughed. “You saved my life, Rhen. Consider us even.”

“Rhen, let’s not,” Lars groaned, side-eyeing the giant bird Rhen was attempting to persuade to perch on her outstretched arm. “Those things have tried to kill us.”

“So have bats, and that’s worked out great,” she said. “John, you’re with me, right? Pirates love parrots, don’t they?”

John’s clipped laugh wasn’t quite derisive enough to be a scoff, but the intent was clear. “A Ravwyrn is a bit bigger than a parrot, vi. That thing could carry you off if it wanted to.”

“Good,” she said, “it can give Bertha a break.”

Dameon raised an eyebrow. “Do you not worry for your friend?”

“He’ll be fine - he was encouraging this! Besides,” Rhen said, “it’s impressively docile. As is the tiger.”

John raised an eyebrow. “You mean the sabretoothed goddamn

eat-your-face?”

“Oh, what a charming name!” Te’ijal cut in. “We can call it Sabre for short.”

By the time the party was gearing up to fly to Thais, their once spacious quarters had become a little cramped. Sabre had made fast, if maybe at first worrying, friends with Roquefort, and now the once hidden-behind-corners cat was constantly underfoot as a tiger stretched out in doorways to block them. Leyvro swooped in from the rafters on occasion, which would set Rolly shrieking after her. Perhaps the one solace was that Fluffy was a poor excuse for a hunting dog, and would curl beneath the dining table at his housemates’ first flight.

Rhen found it comforting. With all the noise, the flurry of feathers and fur, it was easy to distract herself from the stressors of the quest. Roquefort bumped her head against her armored leg, and Rhen kneeled down to scratch her head. “We’ll be back soon,” she promised, grounding herself in how much she meant it.

On their way out of town, she dropped the house key off to Danny. “Be safe,” she said, giving him a loose hug. “We have a tiger now.”

He laughed, but his arms tightened a little. “Only if you keep safe, too.”

Rhen smiled as she pulled away. “Deal.”

As the party made their way through the city streets and their loyal petsitter faded from view, John laughed. “I don’t care if you’d saved his life a thousand times, we owe that boy a fortune.”

“You gonna pay up?”

“Gods, no. I’m just counting it among my more impressive prizes.”