First Impressions

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Summary

Ridiculously AU fic that takes place instead of Dairine and Roshau'n's infamous (and unseen!) trip to the moon in Wizard's Holiday. What if Roshau'n's manual malfunctioned and sent him and Dairine to England in 1793?

Notes

Written for araine over on LJ in response to a comment_fic prompt. I am very very tempted to continue it, but this is not a promise. All ridiculousness is entirely my fault, and I apologize in advance...

Dairine’s first thought upon regaining consciousness was fear for the fact that she had, momentarily, lost it. Her second thought was also based in fear, this time that she was not, in fact, on the moon, although the fact that she was still breathing meant the spell hadn’t dumped them into vacuum.

Her third thought was less of a thought and more of a feeling: pain. Every bone in her body ached, reminding her of her last summer at the beach and the way she’d felt after being pounded into the seashore by a particularly vindictive wave. She was lying on her back on some uneven but relatively horizontal surface whose bumps and crannies aggravated her battered nerves. Each intake of breath made her sides hurt—not enough to suggest she’d broken a rib or punctured a lung, but just enough to be annoying.
“Correct me if I am wrong,” a voice said from beside her, “but your system’s satellite is not supposed to have an atmosphere.”

Dairine stifled a groan that had nothing to do with physical pain before opening her eyes, sitting up and stifling another. She and Roshaun were lying in various states of disarray in a broad stretch of field under a familiar-looking sun that shone at noonday height above them. In one direction, the field continued until it vanished into a rank of trees; in the other, Dairine could just make out a large dwelling of some kind. “We’re not on the moon,” she said, before immediately feeling ridiculous for having stated something so obvious.

A skittering sound from behind her startled her into turning around, but she let out her shocked breath when she saw that it was just Spot, struggling to make his way over the uneven ground. Ignoring Roshaun’s incredulous look, Dairine scooped up the laptop computer and popped open his screen. Spot would know what to do. “Spot,” she said, “what went wrong there?”

*Our course appears to have altered in transit.*

“Yeah, I can see that,” Dairine muttered, “but *why*?”

*Indeterminate. I am still processing the data.*

Dairine reminded herself that it was not a good idea to bash in the brains of the only thing that could get them out of Powers-knew-where, then asked, “Where are we exactly?”

Instead of responding verbally, Spot projected a map onto his screen—a map Dairine vaguely realized. “Wait, we’re in *England*?”

*Hertfordshire, to be precise.*

Roshaun stood up in a flourish of hair and robes. “Does this mean we have merely transited to somewhere else upon your planet, then?” Dairine cringed at his tone; she didn’t have to be looking at him to know that he was raising one eyebrow at her in elegant disapproval.

She turned to face him while still balancing Spot in her lap and felt the squish of mud soaking through the bottom of her jeans as a result. *Damn.* “This is *not* my fault,” she said. “And I don’t see you offering any advice.”

Roshaun brushed an invisible speck of dust off of one sleeve—Dairine was even further miffed to see that he had somehow managed to avoid the muddy patch of ground entirely—and said, “Perhaps the best course of action at this point is to return to your dwelling and troubleshoot there. If my manual implementation is malfunctioning—”

*Uh-oh.*

Dairine and Roshaun both stopped mid-glare to look at the small computer. With a feeling of dread added to the pain, Dairine asked, “What is it, Spot?”

*We are in Hertfordshire—but we are also in 1793.*

“And that is a bad thing?” Roshaun asked.

Face in her hands, Dairine mumbled, “A *very* bad thing.” She took in a deep breath, opened her eyes, and was searching around for the right course of action to take when a movement at the edge of her field of vision caught her eye. Someone was walking across the field toward the big manor house in the distance—and toward her and Roshaun.
She let out a strangled sound and immediately wished she hadn’t done something so embarrassing in front of Roshaun, but at least it had drawn his attention toward their visitor. “A very bad thing,” he repeated, pulling his manual implementation out of his robes and sinking his fingers into it in a way that Dairine found surprisingly threatening.

“No,” she said, grabbing Spot, “don’t do anything obtrusive! Spot, we need new clothes, quick!”

_Working_, he said, and a second later his screen filled up with characters in the speech, which Dairine began desperately to read, hurrying over the syllables and hoping that Roshaun had listened to her. The figure was getting closer—she was a young woman, perhaps just past twenty, in a modest gown of the style that Dairine had heard Carmela call “empire-waisted”—and it was imperative that she didn’t find Dairine and Roshaun to be out of place. With a last gasp, Dairine finished the spell, and nearly fell back down as the energy exertion took its toll. Her head went a little funny, she closed her eyes, and by the time they were open again the woman was within easy viewing distance of the human and alien from far in her future. Dairine took a deep breath in, certain that even in the right clothes they’d look out of place, and grimly expected the worst.

But the woman looked right past them, almost as if she hadn’t even seen them. _What the—?_ Honestly, came Roshaun’s thought, _you thought of costuming yourself, but not of simply making yourself invisible?_

Dairine let out an angry breath through gritted teeth, and was very glad that Roshaun could not see her expression—almost as glad as she was that she didn’t have to see the smug smile she knew would be curled across his lips.

And then the woman stopped, turned around, and squinted in exactly their direction. _God_, Dairine thought, _it’s like she sees us!_

The woman took a slow step toward them, followed by another, faster, until she stood directly in front of them, an eyebrow inclined at an inquisitive angle. “I am on errantry,” she said, “and I greet you.”

Dairine felt the invisibility spell dissolve from around her, and found herself looking at Roshaun, who was looking back at her with an expression of equivalent disbelief. They both turned to simultaneously stare at the woman in front of them. “Uh, we greet you too,” Dairine said. “I’m Dairine, and this is Roshaun—and we’re really not sure what we’re doing here.”

The woman—their fellow wizard—looked troubled by that last comment, but she nonetheless curtsied and said, “My name is Elizabeth Bennet. Temporary advisory for Hertfordshire.”

_She appears rather young to be an advisory_, Roshaun said silently to Dairine.

Dairine was almost inclined to believe the insinuation of fraud that lingered beneath the surface of Roshaun’s thought, but Elizabeth had made her statement in the Speech. _It can’t have been a lie._

Elizabeth glanced anxiously over her shoulder at the manor house. “Cousins, I feel we have much to discuss, but can we do so as we walk? My sister Jane is not well, and I am going to see her and provide whatever aid I can.”

Roshaun seemed as though he wanted to protest, but Dairine silenced him with a thought. _I don’t know how things work on your planet, but on mine we listen when advisories ask us to._ Aloud she said, “Of course. Lead the way.”
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