

Roen's Tale

Chapter 7

By A.R.G. *aka* Sovereign Kyle

You can reach or follow me on;

<http://www.furaffinity.net/user/sovereignkyle/>

<https://www.weasyl.com/~sovereignkyle/>

<https://twitter.com/ARG00001975/>

sovereignkyle@gmail.com

*All named characters herein are © and my property,
please do not redistribute without permission.*

Pridewyn, the village of cats. Despite the few exceptions, relations between Pridewyn and Arroketth have never really been good. For some reason, canines and felines just don't get along that well.

As we stand at the top of a hill overlooking the village, Sarn grumbles, "I'm not going in there."

Rami gives him an odd look, "Afraid of cats?"

"No, afraid I'll start a fight. Better if I stay out."

"I'll go. No one else needs to," I state.

"Are you kidding, I'm going," Rami states. "I wouldn't miss this for anything."

Amsel sighs, "We'll all go."

"But..."

"Including you, Sarn."

He sighs heavily, "Alright, but I'm spending most of my time at the inn."

"Not me, I'm gonna find me a female with a long fluffy tail."

"Rami, this is a dangerous place for a dog to play that game," I warn.

"I've already been sprayed by a skunk. What could be worse?"

All three of us just look at him blankly. "Loose a limb?" Sarn grunts.

"Or your tongue?" Amsel states.

"Or your life?" I finish.

"Well those would be bad too, but it might be worth it." We break into laughter at his comment, and head back to our jata.

As we ride towards the village, the ma'pai farmers we pass, all give us suspicious looks. This is something we expected, so we try to stay relaxed, nodding politely when we can. When we stable the jata, the manager seems polite enough, so we head off into the village, to the council hut, to find out where Mika is.

Walking into the outer room, we're met by a mediator, a leopardess. She gives us a cursory look, "May I help you?"

Amsel nods, "We were hoping to have a word with Mika, if possible."

She shakes her head apologetically, "I apologize, Mika has already been sequestered for the approaching Trials."

He frowns, "Already? I was hoping to speak with her before that."

She nods, "She started early this time, to begin training her successor."

He sighs, "Can't fault her for that. Would there be anyway to have a word with her."

"I'm sorry, right now there are only a trusted few who can see her."

"Could I get a message to her? I was hoping she could provide some information about a journey she was part of long ago."

She sighs, thinks for a moment, then huffs, "I'll need to check with the council. Please wait here."

We have a seat as she disappears into the council chamber. Rami looks to Amsel, "Think you'll be able to see her?"

He sighs, "I'm not sure..."

The chamber door opens and the mediator waves to us, "Please, the council would like a word with you."

We follow her into the council chamber, and stand in the middle of the room. The councilors all look at us for a moment, but only one stands, the lead councilor. She's a cheetess and her voice carries both kindness and authority. "Why do you want to speak with Mika?"

Amsel bows slightly, "We had hoped to speak with her about a journey she went on many years ago, to a place called the Dig."

She pauses for a moment, then asks, "What information are you looking for, from her."

Taking this as my cue, I step up beside Amsel. "Ma'am, we are hoping to acquire, or copy, a paper she received from one of the people she traveled with, a rabbit named Grere."

"Why do you believe that she would still possess this paper?"

"The others in the part felt them important enough to hold onto, or pass on to their young."

She nods, conceding, "I will send the mediator to her."

Amsel suddenly raises his hand, "If I may, while the paper is a priority, if either I or Roen could speak with her for a moment, that would be equally helpful. If needed, I offer to compensate her for her time."

"You realize that any such visit were to happen—and I'm not suggesting that it would—it would be closely observed."

He bows to her, "I would expect nothing less."

She bows back to us, signaling that the meeting is over. we all return her bow, then follow the mediator back out into the foyer. Amsel looks at Rami, "Go on ahead and get the jata restocked, so we'll be ready to go. We'll meet you later at the inn."

Rami's ears droop, not happy to leave so soon, but he nods. "Come on Sarn, let's get the supplies restocked."

As they take off, Amsel turns back to the mediator. "Would you happen to know how soon we'll know something?"

Shaking her head, “Apologies, we won’t be able to talk to her for another day yet.”

He sighs, but nods. “Thank you.”

Rami and I sit in the café overlooking the course. As we watch the workers come and go, he notices something and leans forward, trying to get a better look. Having my curiosity, I lean forward and see a female snow leopard, dressed in leather armor, proudly walking along the opposite bank of the river, watching the workers much like we are. I glance at Rami and see his now familiar look of desire that tells me he wants her.

“Not her,” I warn.

He gives me a curious look, “Why not, she’s a snow. Best fluffy tails around.”

I chuckle, “Your fetish’ll be the end of you, you know that.” With a subtle gesture I bring his attention back to her, “Look at the way she walks; she has a warrior’s pride. Now, look at how the others stay away from her; she’s been shamed somehow. Put those together, she’s looking for redemption and the only way she’s going to find that is through the Trials. I doubt she would even give you the time of day, my friend.”

He sighs and slumps back in his chair, obviously not interested anymore. “You can certainly crush a male’s hopes and dreams.”

“No, what I’m saying is, pick a different female.”

He smiles again, “I suppose there are plenty of snows in Pridewyn.”

Amsel finally shows and sits next to us, “Have you ordered yet?”

“Waiting on you.”

Rami looks around, “Where’s Sarn?”

“He’s at the inn.”

“Serious?”

“Yep, going to be out any more than needed until we leave.”

I wave a waitress over, “Well, it’s his loss, this place has the best seasoned fish.”

When one comes over, she’s a serval, and I see Rami’s face light up slightly as he looks at her tail. I sigh and shake my head as I place my order. Amsel follows, then Rami, and as she leaves, he watches her go.

Amsel chuckles, “Already?”

“That’s his second,” I state. “First was a snow. I had to change his mind.”

Amsel shakes his head, but Rami just smiles and tries to subtly glance at the waitress. “She’ll rip you apart,” he states.

Rami laughs, “I’ll be alright.”

Seeing her approach with a tray of drinks, I chuckle, “Sure you will.”

While sunning myself, I watch the cubs play in the shallows of Pride River. Their giggles and mewls fill the air, bringing a relaxed smile to my face.

After a while, a little bobcat cub comes up to me, “What’cha doin?”

I give him a curious look, “Sunning myself.”

“Why?”

I smile, realizing what’s about to happen. “Because it feels good.”

“Why?”

“It’s warm.”

“Why?”

Turning the tables, I ask, "Don't you like to sit in the sun?"
He smiles, "Yeah, but I'm a cat."
Suddenly a female voice calls, "Tuka, come here."
He turns around and looks at her, "But ma, I'm tawkin wif da fox."
"We need to get ready for lunch. Grab your toys."
He looks back at me and sighs. "Bye mistew fox."
I nod and lean back on the lounge chair, "Later, little one." He heads off, following his mother, and I let my eyes close, enjoying the sun as it warms my fur.
Seeing a shadow, I open my eyes and see Amsel standing over me. "What are you doing?"
"Sunning myself. Helps me relax."
He shakes his head, "Seriously, I stopped doing that when I was a pup."
Knowing he's here for another reason, I ask, "What's up?"
He sits on the chair next to me and sighs, "Rami got taken to the shaman."
"What happened?" I ask, setting up suddenly.
He frowns. "She uhm...she tore him up."
I sigh, "How bad?"
He looks out across the river for a moment before answering. "No nao berry bad."
I lean back in the chair and rub my face. Females, especially cats, will usually eat a nao berry, or two, depending on how strong their urges are during estrus. Without the berries suppressive effect, their mating urges can be very primal, and dangerous.
"What are we going to do with him?" I moan.
"Shaman says he'll be ready to travel in a couple days, if he stays in bed."
"Well, we did warn him. Does she know?"
"She took him there, a wreck too, crying and all. Guards thought at first that they had fought, but between her statement and mine..."
"Why didn't she eat a berry first?"
"She says Rami told her not to."
I shake my head, "Figures."
"Yeah, that's what I thought, too."
Changing the subject, I ask, "Heard anything from the mediator yet?"
He shakes his head, "Not yet, but it's only noon." As he stands, he asks, "Want to get something to eat?"
"Yeah, might as well."

Spending some time in the library, I find myself being watched by the librarian, a lioness. She scowls at me every time she looks up from her work, which is quite often, and I try not to let her know that I'm aware of her looks as I read from a scroll and take notes.

After nearly an hour of this, I sit up and casually look around. She stops her work for a moment as she watches me stretch, and I take the opportunity to stare back at her for a moment as I flex my fingers. She quickly goes back to her work, trying to hide the fact she was staring at me.

After I switch scrolls, a young caracal sits opposite me at the table. It takes her a while, but she eventually manages to speak to me. "What are you researching?"

I look up from the scroll curiously. Seeing the honesty on her face, I answer, "The Wilds."

She tilts her head curiously, "Why?"

"Because, I'll be going there soon."

She fidgets with her own scroll for a moment, then asks, "Are you a scout? I heard a lot of foxes are scouts."

I sigh quietly, reluctant to feed the stereotype, not matter how true it is. "Yeah, I am, but not all foxes are scouts."

"Oh! I didn't mean it that way, I was just...curious." Her ears droop telling me she's being honest, and apologetic.

I turn back to my reading as I answer, "Don't worry about it."

She falls silent for a moment, then seeing me make some notes, she asks, "Why are you going out there?"

"Some friends and I are looking for a place called the Dig."

"Oh, isn't that way out east?"

"It is, but we've been following clues from some people who've been there. That's why we're here, once we have the information, we'll be heading east."

"Oh." She leans on the table and watches me for a moment, then asks, "How many villages have you been to?"

I write a couple things in my notebook before answering her. "All of them."

She sit up suddenly, "You've been to all eight villages?"

"Nine, we went through Garrent too."

She leans towards me, trying to keep her voice low, "Did you see the ghost?"

I sigh, "No, but we did hear it. So we tracked it to a hut, but the hut was empty when we entered."

She darts around the table and sits next to me, "What'd it sound like?"

Realizing I'm not going to get much more work done, I let the scroll roll up. "Hard to describe, but it sounded something like nighttime creature cries."

She sighs and her ears droops, obviously disappointed by my statement. "Oh..."

"Were you hoping for something more?"

Perking up a little, she nods. "I was, but now..."

"Roen?"

We both turn to see a mediator standing behind us. "Yes?" I state.

"Amsel asked me to deliver this to you." She hands me a piece of paper, then states, "He and Mika will be in conference for a while."

I take the paper from her and nod, "Thank you."

As she leaves the caracal leans over to me, "What's that?"

After unfolding the paper, I answer, "It's part of a code, made by the last group that went out there." I quickly move the scrolls aside and start copying the page into my notebook.

She watches me for a moment, then asks, "So, your name's Roen?"

"Yeah."

"I'm Nith."

I pause a moment, extending my hand, "Nice to meet you Nith."

She giggles slightly but shakes my hand. "So, what's it say?"

Smiling at her interest, I start to explain to her that most are simply numbers, and what they're for. To her credit, she remains attentive, despite not knowing what a sextant is. Our conversation lightens with my attention going to the decoding, and hers, to the scrolls she had picked out.

Hearing her roll up her last scroll, I glance up at her. Seeing the fatigue on her face, and noting the angle of the sun through the windows, I ask, "Hungry?"

She sighs and nods, "I could eat." She then gives me a curious sideways look, "Is that an offer?"

I shrug, "Would you like it to be, or do you have something else to do?"

With a smile, she says, "I'd like that."

"Rami, I can't believe that you had her do that."

Lying in his bed at the inn, he rolls his head to me. "Why do you seem to find all the nice girls?"

I sit in the one chair, facing him. "They find me."

He sighs heavily, "But why you? Why not me?"

I can't help but chuckle, "Would you really want a nice girl? Seriously?"

He starts to laugh, and then starts to wince, "Don't make me laugh, scabs pull fur." He lets out a ragged breath, then smiles, "I guess I just can't help myself."

I shake my head, "No you can't, but you need to be more careful."

"Amsel's already given me the third degree. Not you too."

"Hey, I did warn you, you didn't listen."

He sighs again. "Yeah, but I'm not dead yet. The shaman said I'll be ready to travel tomorrow."

Entering the room, the serval comes in with a tray of food, and states, "If you quit moving around."

"Roen, meet Rinel. Rinel, Roen."

"He speaks highly of you," she states.

"I know. Thanks for watching after him while he heals."

She frowns and glairs at Rami. "Last time I let someone tell me to not eat a nao."

I chuckle as I surrender the seat to her, "Get your strength back. I finished decoding it, so we now know the way."

"Great," he smiles. "I'll be ready."

With a nod to Rinel, I step out of the room.

Rami looks across the river at the walls, blocking our view of the courses. "I sure wish we could stay for the trials."

"Rami, they won't be ready for another month," I chide. "Without delays, we could be close to Three Lands by then."

He sits in the saddle behind mine as I climb up the jata. "Yeah, but still, it'd be nice."

"Yeah, I know."

Sarn gets up on Rami's jata, and looks uncomfortable for a moment. Amsel gets up on his, and states, "Alright guys, let's get going."

With a heavy sigh, I turn my jata to the eastern road, and see two familiar faces. Both Rinel and Nith are standing across the street, watching us.

“Rami. Look.”

“What? Oh.” Before he can say anything more, they come running over and climb up on the jata with us.

Rinel wraps Rami in a hug and sniffs back her tears. “Take care of yourself.”

Nith, though, sits on my leg and looks around, “Wow, I’ve never been on a jata before. The view is great.”

I chuckle, “Yeah, it is.”

She turns and wraps me in a hug, “If you get back this way, I’d love to hear about your journey.”

I smile and return her hug, “And I’d love to tell it to you.”

From behind me we hear purring, Nith and I both turn to look. Rinel is nuzzling into Rami’s neck as he gently licks at her ear.

Nith sighs happily, “That’s sweet.”

“Well, well, well, he’s finally found someone.”

I glance at Amsel who’s grinning as he watches. “Who would have thought, a cat and a dog...” His words disappear in a subtle laugh. “We really must be going. Rinel, I promise to bring him back for you.”

Nith gives me a quick nose bump, “Take care of yourself.”

“You too.”

As she hops to the ground, I hear Rinel softly sobbing, “I will miss you.”

Rami holds her close for a moment, and softly says, “I will be back.”

With a sad sigh, and a nose bump, she says, “You better be.”

After she’s climbed down, I gently prod the jata into motion as I wave goodbye to my new friend.