

This story was written for the 2019 Rainbow Advent Calendar. For the full list of stories, please visit <http://alexjane.info/rainbow-advent-calendar-2019/> and join in all the festive fun on the official Facebook group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1673039336093815/>

Published by Anna Martin www.annamartin-fiction.com

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Something Wild
Copyright © 2019 Anna Martin

Characters used courtesy of Dreamspinner Press www.dreamspinnerpress.com

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the Publisher, except where permitted by law.

Original novel Something Wild published October 2019 by Dreamspinner Press.

This is a free ebook available from www.annamartin-fiction.com



Something Festive

Anna Martin

Considering how many people from different backgrounds, nationalities, cultures, and religions worked on the South Pacific Archipelago, their combined attitude to celebrating anything and everything really wasn't that surprising. Since moving here, Kit had been invited to Thanksgiving dinner, Passover Seder, an Aloha festival, Lunar New Year celebrations, and Christmas lunch. Among other things.

Kit had grown up with one lapsed Jewish mother and another who had grown up singing in her church's choir, which had made for an interesting combination of religious and cultural celebrations. Everyone who currently lived on the South Island was far away from their own family, so celebrating everything together was a good way of forging a new community of their own. Kit liked to encourage the spirit of the season. All the seasons.

Though the labs still bore signs of those celebrating Diwali or Hanukkah, a few Christmas decorations were starting to creep in too. Just last week Kit had found a tiny, imperfect tree in a pot on Logan's desk. They hadn't talked about decorating the apartment they shared yet, though he had a feeling if he didn't mention it soon, Logan would just do it himself. They had Dizzy to consider, though. Kit knew people had problems with cats trying to tear down Christmas decorations... he had no idea how their eighteen month old dissimosaur would handle all the pretty, shiny things that wanted to catch her attention.

Dizzy was almost fully grown now, though the distinctive crest on her head was yet to turn from mottled brown to red, which they assumed happened when the dissimosaur reached sexual maturity. She had continued to grow into an inquisitive, loving, and mischievous 'teenager' who stuck close to Logan's side as he worked around the islands. Kit knew he'd always be the second, slightly lesser foster parent in Dizzy's life. And he was okay with that. Most of the time.

Now that Kit was officially head of the board of trustees, he split his time between the genetics lab and his office, overseeing the work that was being done by all departments on the South Island, not just his own. The change had brought about a whole host of different challenges; from sorting out interdepartmental disputes to signing off on new research requests. Even if those requests were deathly boring, and he had to read through them in detail to assess their viability. It wasn't the hands-on research he was used to, but he couldn't deny that the change had been interesting.

Before he logged off for the day, Kit wrote an email to his moms, giving them an update on some of his most recent research. He still spoke to them on Skype or Facetime a couple of times a week, but longer emails like this gave him a chance to go into more detail. They liked to know what was going on.

Kit had taken a week of vacation in November to fly home to Chicago for Thanksgiving; mostly because Logan had grown up in England and his parents now lived in Australia, so his family didn't celebrate the holiday. They couldn't both leave the islands at the same time anymore—someone had to stay with Dizzy. Kit was still working on a paper about the moral and ethical implications of letting Dizzy travel to the mainland, but that wouldn't be ready to present to the rest of the board for a few more months.

He wouldn't be going back to Chicago again now until the spring, and his moms were okay with that. They understood that this job took up even more time than his old one, and they would fly out to see him, and Logan, and Dizzy, when they could.

After he'd been given the promotion, Kit had kept his office but found another one for Logan to move into, since Logan's old office had been tiny, with barely enough room for him and his desk. Kit had gotten away with the blatant nepotism by claiming Dizzy needed more space to roam around, and no one had argued with him. For as much trouble they'd faced by hand-rearing Dizzy in the first place, she was now something of a beloved mascot amongst the scientific community on the South Island.

The hallways were quiet and Logan wasn't in his office. Kit had worked late and most people—even the ones most dedicated to their work—had packed up and braced against the rain to get home.

So much for “summer” in the southern hemisphere... they'd been battered by storms for most of the past week and Kit was getting sick of it. He'd adjusted to the idea of not having snow at Christmas. But this was just insulting.

Kit took the stairs down to the main lobby, and walked into a winter wonderland.

“What the....”

He turned a slow circle, taking in the explosion of multicolor, twinkling lights, the strings of garland, snowflakes, paper chains, and sparkly, dangly... *things* hanging from the ceiling.

The lobby wasn't particularly big. To have packed all of this in was edging on ridiculous.

There was a giant, inflatable Santa Claus in one corner.

“Do you like it?”

Kit startled and turned around. Logan came out of the door that led to the labs with a large box in his arms. Kit tried not to notice how it made his biceps strain.

“Did you do this?”

“Yeah.” He grinned that lopsided, boyish grin that Kit had fallen for long before they’d started having civilized conversations. “Do you like it?”

“I love it,” Kit said honestly, knowing that anything less than this specific answer would break Logan’s heart.

“Awesome. There’s more in the labs.”

“There’s *more*?”

“Yeah. Do you want to see?”

“Sure,” Kit said faintly, turning his back on Santa Claus.

The labs had always been more of Kit’s territory than Logan’s. Kit still headed up the paleo-genetics team and led his team on the direction of their research, even while balancing the politics of his new role. He still thought of the labs as ‘his’ space, which was stupid, but he couldn’t break the habit.

For a long time, Logan hadn’t come back here, except from his visit every other week to drop off whatever samples had been requested from the islands. In the past few months Kit had been working hard to break down some of the barriers that stopped the teams on the islands working together, and recently Logan, as head ranger, had become a more familiar face in and around the research facilities.

Having his office upstairs on the second floor helped. It brought him into the mix again.

And he obviously felt confident enough to decorate.

It was slightly—*slightly*—more sedate back here, with more twinkling lights and paper chains, and at the end of the corridor, next to the break room, a to-scale replica of the nativity.

Kit blinked.

It was huge.

He turned to Logan. “Are you even religious?”

Logan shrugged. “Not really. I saw it online though and it was available for delivery so I just got it. I wasn’t expecting it to be this big. It took most of the day to put together.”

Kit shook his head and stepped into Logan’s personal space, close enough that Logan had to wrap his arms around Kit’s waist.

“You’re ridiculous, and I love you.”

That made Logan grin again. “Thanks.”

“Where’s Dizzy?”

Logan shrugged. “She’s around here somewhere.”

“You just let her wander off?”

Logan tightened his arms so Kit couldn’t get away, and Kit ignored the little rush that gave him. Privately, he was very into the brute strength Logan kept contained by a sweet and caring personality. Publicly, he tried to keep that particular kink under wraps.

“She can’t get out, Kit. She doesn’t have opposable thumbs.”

“It’s still dangerous in here.”

Logan leaned down and kissed the corner of Kit’s mouth. “Mhmm.”

Kit let himself be thoroughly and enthusiastically kissed, since there really wasn’t anyone else around, and decided he was going to take control of decorating for Christmas before Logan replicated his efforts here back at their apartment.

“Come on,” Kit said, pulling away with more than a little reluctance. “Let’s find her and go home. I’m hungry.”

Logan silently slipped his hand into Kit’s and led them back to the main lobby. Kit had half expected to find Dizzy somewhere along the way, or asleep in one of the empty boxes that littered the floor, and his anxiety ramped up a notch when she wasn’t there.

“Logan.”

“It’s fine, she can’t have gone far.”

Despite all the hundreds of dinosaur experts living on the South Island, and the many thousands more around the world, Kit knew the one living person who understood them better than anyone else was Dr. Logan Beck. And Logan didn’t take Dizzy’s safety for granted. They’d come too close to losing her for that.

Kit followed him back through the labs, calling Dizzy’s name and flicking the lights off when they’d cleared a room. She was big now, almost fifty pounds of feathery, stubborn dissimosaur, and though she wasn’t designed to camouflage herself in this environment, dissimosaur were still well known for being able to hide.

Logan went ahead to the staff room, and Kit admonished himself for not starting there... Dizzy liked to sleep on the sofa, or under a pillow, or in a soft corner somewhere. Because they spoiled her.

Then he found her.

“Oh, no.”

Kit pressed his hand to his mouth and thought that if it wasn’t already decided, he was definitely going to hell.

“You’ve got her?” Logan asked, sticking his head back around the door.

Kit just pointed to the nativity scene, and their dinosaur, who had made her bed in the straw in the manger. She must have kicked out the baby Jesus, because he was now on the floor, face-down half under a donkey.

“Oh,” Logan said. Then he leaned down to press his face to Kit’s neck, his shoulders shaking with laughter.

“Logan,” Kit said again, trying very hard not to laugh too.

Dizzy looked too adorable, curled in on herself with her head resting on her forelegs. Her feathers had lost the fluffy down from when she was a baby and now covered her upper body in a thick, protective layer. Kit knew he was biased, and that Dizzy had access to far better care and pampering than other dissimosaur, but she was beautiful.

“Let me take a picture,” Logan said, reaching for his phone.

“No! Oh my God, can you even imagine how much trouble we’d be in?”

“I’m not going to post it online,” Logan said. “I might just send it to the moms.”

Kit shook his head again, but didn’t stop Logan from getting the picture. He thought he might frame it.

“You pick her up,” Kit said. “She’s going to be grouchy.”

“I don’t mind carrying her home.”

That was the truth. Logan still babied her.

“Next year,” Kit said, “I’m taking charge of the decorations.”

Logan hefted Dizzy into his arms, ignoring her huffs and snorts of protest. He leaned over and kissed Kit on the cheek.

“No, you’re not.”

No, Kit thought to himself. *I’m probably not.*