of witches and familiars

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# of witches and familiars

by nightmareofthelake

Summary

the familiar Zhou Zishu finds himself in the apartment of Wen Kexing with no recollection of the past two months. While he is trying to get his memory back and at the same time keeping his appearance as a regular house cat up, Wen Kexing struggles to understand his cat while also considering his apartment to be haunted.

Based/Inspired by the art of rhymesswith on tumblr but with my own twist

Chapter 1: a cat and a man

The true origin of familiars is unknown. Some speculated that this race was born from a curse, while others believe that they have been specifically created to serve witches, wizards, and sorcerers. This race of magical beings is one of the most mysterious out there and scholars and researchers still find new insights. Like the newest revelation – discovered by a witch (whose name has been lost in time) in 1875 – that the animal form does not come from the blood but from the soul and that the original belief that the animal form was an inherited trait was refuted. It was now a known fact the animal was a reflection of the personality of the familiar.

A cat being born into a family of wolves was no longer seen as a result of infidelity. In today's day and age, it’s common to see families made up of different kinds of animals.

Zhou Zishu unfortunately belonged to an old family with outdated values which didn’t like the look of a cat amongst proud wolves. He struggled to find his place in his own family but had to finally accept the fact that he was not welcome. Outside of his family cat familiars have been popular for centuries and Zhou Zishu could have found a loving home by getting a contract with a witch.

He had everything that made a good familiar and he even had a little magic of his own which was quite rare among his kind but there was one major problem.

The problem was Zhou Zishu himself.

He didn’t want to be a familiar and he secretly wished his human half would disappear. Sometimes while in his animal form he would let instincts take over and regress into a pure wild form. This often results in him finding himself in places with no memory of how he got there. Zishu referred to these moments as 'coming to consciousness'. Sometimes he is gone for a few hours sometimes a few days pass until he wakes up. It was a scary experience the first few times it happened but after a while he just let it happen. Waking up in unfamiliar places was normal for him. Waking up on someone's couch while naked was something new.

The lack of clothing could be explained by the fact that he has a tendency to change forms in his sleep. This theory was supported by the tingling sensation on his skin that appeared right after a change.

His surroundings were harder to explain.

Zhou Zishu sat up and looked around in hopes of finding any clues.

It was a large living room. Tastefully decorated but lacked personality and soul. Something you would find in a furniture store.

But there was a scent in the air that was weak but filled the familiar with warmth and peace. It was flowery and fruity. Was it cherry blossom?

Zhou Zishu closed his eyes and took a deep breath. The scent was calming and for a faint moment, this unknown place felt like home. Something not even his own home was able to achieve.

Before Zishu could think about it any longer, he heard the front door unlock and he shifted his form almost instinctively.
“A-Xu! I'm home!"

The sudden change caused a slight whiplash, and Zhou Zishu temporarily lost the ability to tell up and down apart, but the voice sounded familiar.

Wen Kexing entered his apartment with full bags. It was the weekly grocery run and this time only half of it was for his cat. At least that's what he claimed.
To say he spoiled A-Xu was an understatement. This man adored his cat and was willing to throw his life savings out the window just so A-Xu could live like a king.
However, Zhou Zishu continued to struggle with his memory and tried to figure out who this man was. All he knew was that his feline brain associated him with food and warmth.

Wen Kexing put the bags down in the kitchen and immediately went to the living room to greet A-Xu. What he saw was his beloved cat sitting on the couch staring at one empty corner of the living room. He tried to see what his cat was staring at but couldn’t see anything. Wen Kexing had read about cats doing this from time to time, but this was the first time he saw A-Xu do it. He was well informed about the theories that animals could see spirits but suppressed the thought of the possibility of his apartment being haunted.

A-Xu on the other hand tried to focus on the corner until the room stopped spinning. Shifting too fast always made him dizzy.

"A-Xu?" he asked cautiously.
The cat slowly turned his head in his direction and gave a short meow as an answer. Wen Kexing threw one last look into the corner before giving A-Xu a hug.
"Did you miss me?"
He didn't get a verbal reply and instead, A-Xu placed his paw on Wen Kexing's cheek. The man's heart melted, and he planted a kiss on the cat's head.

Slowly, some memories – no more like echos of memories came to Zhou Zishu and he remembered the name of the man and the warm fuzzy feeling that was connected to it.

But it still didn’t answer the question of how and why he was in this man's apartment.

Two weeks passed after Zhou Zishu returned to consciousness. His memories slowly returned to him in the form of strong emotions, and they ranged from fear and despair to joy and relief. This gave him a vague idea of what might happen, but he was still clueless.

From the way of how much Wen Kexing talked, Zhou Zishu expected to get at least some leading points to his predicament. Unfortunately, all he said was a bunch of “I love you”s and a hundred different ways of how pretty his A-Xu is.

The only useful thing he could find so far was a newspaper article.

Missing for two months - first traces lead nowhere

It was big on the front page with an old photo of him next to it. The article first briefly described how Zhou Xu - the name he used as a human - failed to show up for work one day and has not been found since. There were supposed eyewitnesses who claimed to have seen him at various places, but they turned out to be wrong.
The biggest shock for Zishu was just the fact that he couldn't remember two months.

“A-Xu! Are you reading the newspaper?"
Zishu turned and saw Wen Kexing standing in the doorway. He was drying his hair with a towel and the white t-shirt he was wearing stuck partially to his body.
When he was done with his hair, he put the towel around his neck and got closer to his cat.
One look at the newspaper was enough for him to understand.
“I know you miss your owner. He'll definitely be back soon, but in the meantime, I'll take care of you."
As he spoke, he scratched A-Xu behind the ear. Leaving Zhou Zishu more confused than before.

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