

Not Just for Christmas

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Not Just for Christmas

by [Oceans_Away](#)

Summary

It's the holiday season in modern London, and Lenore wants to treat herself, so she takes herself off to Belnades' Pet Emporium. As always, she's happy to meet Sypha's stock of good puppy boys, but this year Lenore is looking for something special, and Sypha's new rescue might just be it.

This is me messing about in a puppy play space, because Castlevania does too, but very much not meant as an accurate portrayal of the kink scene. It's extremely silly... don't think too hard about it.

Written for [Lenector Weekend 2020](#), organised by the wonderful [BakedTofu](#). Day 4: Modern Day AU.

Song: [Santa Baby](#), [Eartha Kitt](#)

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Lenore's heels clacked along Oxford Street, as she stepped lightly between the bustling shoppers and careening commuters clogging London on this frosty December day. Taxi horns and newspaper hawkers buffeted her ears, periodically soothed by the festive flurry of a violin being played on the corner. The wide road was strung with fanciful lights, bounding, bobbled reindeer glimmering against the ice blue sky in a fine lattice of yellow and green and red. An eddying wind skipped through the tunnel made by the reaching, elaborately engraved buildings. It plucked at skirts and the hems of coats. She tugged her white stole a little closer around her and adjusted her navy beret. Her eyes flicked left and right at the hectic traffic. She darted through it and across the road in the blink of an eye.

Her phone jangled, rattling in her patent handbag. She fished it out and snapped it to her ear. "Hello, Sister Dear."

"Hi, Lenore." Striga's jovial voice rolled down the phone. "We've been placing bets."

Lenore smirked. "Living dangerously as ever?"

"We're trying to guess what you're out getting us for Christmas."

"Oh?" Lenore clacked along the paving, deftly avoiding a man carrying a stack of toppling hat boxes behind his marching girlfriend.

"Yes," Striga said. "We know you'll spend too much. Carmilla's bet is on jewellery, but I think you're going more left field."

"What's Morana's guess?"

"You know my wife, keeps her cards close to her chest."

"So, she's not playing because she agrees this is nonsense?"

"Hush." Striga gulped, clearly having broken into the bloodnog. "So, anyway, I'm employing a clever military tactic."

"Oh?" Lenore said again, affectionately rolling her eyes.

"Calling for clues."

Lenore laughed like a terrier. "Absolutely not! It's a fair fight or none at all."

Striga groaned dramatically down the phone. "The winner gets to define fair, Lenore."

"Then tell me your new definition when you win." Lenore hopped seamlessly over a drain and tossed her jostling, red hair over her shoulder. "And besides, I'm not out shopping for you today."

"What?" Striga sounded offended at her core. "Then who?"

“Me.”

“You?”

“Yes. I sorted you monkeys out weeks ago. Today is a Lenore day. I’m getting myself a new treat.” The glimmer of gilded lettering slipped into her eye-line.

Striga glugged again. “Well, that’s hardly in the festive spirit.”

Lenore laughed. “I’m hanging up.”

“Wait, one clue -!”

Lenore tapped her phone and popped it neatly back into her bag. She closed the final feet between her and her destination. The chocolate-box-blue shop front stood out from the file of sensible grey and brown and bottle green along the street. Emblazoned in gold, buttercream-curl letters over the glistening glass door were the words:

Belnades’ Pet Emporium

Lenore relaxed into the pleasant comfort of doing something special for oneself every once in a while. She shrugged her stole lower on her shoulders, straightened her navy pencil skirt, and strutted into the shop.

The reception room was clean, bright and chic, every surface at a neat, correct angle, leaving the marble floor spacious. The walls were hung with high quality leather leads in a variety of natural, pastel, and flamboyant shades. Shelves bore wide, plump pillows, fluffy tails dangling from clasps and plugs, padded mitts, headband ears on a spectrum of sleek to fuzzy, and sculpted hoods in the shapes of lean Alsatian faces or broader-nosed Labradors. A central roundel contained transparent mannequins of well-built men, all modelling the highest end gear, crouching on all fours or kneeling up with raised, blank faces. A tall, glass case along one wall drew Lenore’s gaze. It displayed gleaming collars on velvet cushions, like crowns presented for coronation. She drummed her fingertips together in excitement.

“Well, if it isn’t my favourite customer!” A chirpy voice with a castanet-click, Spanish accent pulled Lenore’s absorbed attention from the case of collars. A slender woman with a flicking, flaxen bob and a powder blue suit strode into the room through a black curtain on the opposite side.

“Sypha!” Lenore smiled and went to meet her. They joined hands and kissed on each cheek.

“I had a feeling I would be seeing you again.” Sypha waggled a knowing finger at Lenore, her eyes twinkling like Christmas lights. “I know it’s been a while, but the holiday spirit finds us all in its own way.”

Lenore inclined her head in concession.

“I’m always happy to see a buyer like you.” Sypha put her hands on her hips with a large, welcoming grin. “You are one of the ones that really understands, a pet is for life, not just for Christmas.”

Lenore patted her windswept hair flowing out from under her beret, and replied with grace. “I can’t imagine wanting one for so little time. A human lifespan is too short already.”

Sypha faltered slightly, but her grin didn’t waver. “Quite.”

She turned to the side and swept her arm out, motioning for Lenore to go with her. The two of them crossed the room and walked through the black curtain, Sypha withdrawing a key and saying, “I’m just being a bit sneaky with coming in and out, since they’re out of their little houses.

“They’re out?” Lenore asked in surprise.

“Well...” Sypha shrugged and sighed, “We obviously wanted to preserve the purity of the experience, the barrier between owner and pet until the bond is made, the sense of authority and position, etcetera. That’s why the cages were so important to the...” she made air quotes with her fingers, “aesthetic.” She rotated her hand, “But then the cat cafes took off and now people are all into these free range experiences.”

Lenore smirked and repeated Sypha’s words as if she’d never heard them before. “Free...? Range...?”

Sypha snorted and bumped her shoulder against hers. “Don’t worry, they’re hardly running wild. I’m still in charge.”

“I didn’t doubt it.”

They came to a metal door. Sypha slipped a key from her pocket and opened it with a swift clunk. They slipped through the door and Sypha closed it behind them. Lenore stepped into a cosy, windowless room, papered in dark, emerald green. She was instantly hit by the scents of leather and aloe and coffee and an underlying musk that made her toes tingle. And then by the sporadic bursts of noise from the puppies, all padding and tumbling about the room in various states of dress. A wide section along one wall had been barred off and segmented to make a series of spacious cages, containing low beds piled with pillows and blankets, each scattered with its own special additions, like books or exercise equipment. The rest of the room was full of couches, pouffes, rugs and various pot plants and play items, like scratching posts, balls and a corner lined with padded matting. The corner was occupied by two sparring pups. One was large, shirtless and tough-looking, in a heavy-duty brown collar, with scruffy hair and a broad, downy chest, marred by old scratches. The other was a sleek blonde in cream pyjamas, with bright, golden eyes and a collar in fine, black velvet. He was pinned by the larger pup, but was struggling valiantly, with a surprisingly deep growl. They were tussling on the mats, snarling and snapping at each other, limbs tangled and mitts squeaking on each other.

“Hey!” Sypha stuffed her finger and thumb into her mouth and whistled sharply.

The two pups stopped and scrambled over each other to gambol towards her, the brunette standing and catching her about the waist and lapping her neck, the blonde approaching more softly and sitting dutifully at her feet.

Sypha giggled in a stream of high-pitched, popping bubbles and batted the scruffy pup away. “Trevor, behave! We have a nice lady visiting us.”

Trevor peered around her and narrowed his eyes at Lenore. She pulled a sweet face at him. He grumbled in his throat.

Sypha tweaked his ear and he snuffled irritably. “I’m sorry,” she said to Lenore, “He’s a Belmont. You know that breed doesn’t take too kindly to vampires.”

Lenore waved her apology away. “Don’t worry.”

She snapped her jaws warningly at Trevor, while Sypha’s eyes moved down to the blonde. Trevor huffed in the back of his mouth and kept pawing at her hip. Lenore wrinkled her nose at him, then turned and crouched to come eye level with the other tussler. This pup was incredibly beautiful, sharp-featured, ethereally elegant and quiet. His hair fell in a soft cascade around his fey-like face, his lips fine and his eyes startling.

“And who is this?” Lenore cooed, beaming invitingly at the pup.

He cocked his head at her and regarded her peacefully.

“This,” Sypha said proudly, “is my prize. Alucard, Alu. He’s a dhampir and an utter sweetheart. Very clever and very strong and very well-behaved.” She shot a look at Trevor, who pretended not to hear her.

Lenore gazed at the stunning creature and his captivating steadiness. “He’s remarkable.” She raised her hand tentatively. “May I?”

Alu blinked, then ducked his head in acquiescence. Sypha gestured for Lenore to go ahead. Lenore carefully laid her hand on the pup’s head and slowly stroked his long hair, like running her hand over spun silk. He stayed completely still as she touched him, except for the miniscule tilt of his head into her hand.

“He can’t possibly still be available,” Lenore remarked. “There must be a waiting list a mile long.”

“Oh, no.” Sypha reached down and tickled the nape of Alu’s neck, making him wiggle his square shoulders. “This one’s mine.” She hooked Trevor’s collar, tugged him down to her height and ruffled his hair. “And so is this dancing bear.” He gruffed. She kissed his nose. “I just take them to work with me. I thought they might socialise with the others, but they mostly stay glued at the hip.”

Lenore allowed herself one more sensuous stroke of Alu’s shining hair. Then she let him go and stood. Sypha clapped at her pups and shooed them back to the mat, where they tucked close together and began to nuzzle each other on the cheek and neck.

A loud bark attracted the women’s attention. They looked over to the nearest cage. A burly brute with long ears, a shaggy red mane and beard, and a showy gold collar, was biting at the bars.

Lenore raised an eyebrow. Sypha darted between her and the cage and folded her arms, her back sternly turned to the brute. Her words were to Lenore, but very much for his pricked ears, her tone sharp. "Oh, no, no, no. You don't want that one. Real little brat. Far too much training left. He's on a timeout right now, if he remembers!" She rounded on him, glaring.

The red pup barked roughly.

Trevor perked up from nibbling at Alu's jaw and snarled across the room at him. The red pup barked louder.

"Godbrand, shush!" Sypha barked the loudest yet.

Godbrand bunched his shoulders and plonked down sulkily onto his rump.

Sypha tutted and put her hand lightly on Lenore's back to lead her away. "I've never met such a little attention seeker." She blew out of her cheeks. Lenore chuckled.

Sypha led her deeper into the room and its warm sounds and comforting scent. "I know what you need," Sypha said in a tone like a carnival magician. She led Lenore to the end of the room, where a distinguished looking pup stretched out on a pile of cushions, idly toying with the brass tag on his green collar and the button on his soft, green jacket. He seemed to be observing the the space with an air of cool detachment. Sypha made a pouty sound at him, reached into her pocket, and brought out a treat. The pup perked up, his biscuit-coloured hair curling loosely to his shoulders and his close-cropped beard bristling. He raised thick eyebrows.

"Say something philosophical," Sypha instructed, dangling the treat.

The pup's lips twisted in amusement.

"Go on," Sypha urged in a sing-sing voice, ticking the treat like a pendulum.

"Two persons who have gone through death and rebirth can be fused into The Rebis, the ultimate alchemical goal." the pup said, in a voice like fine parchment.

Sypha beamed and tossed the treat. He caught it in his mouth and winked.

"Saint Germain is my best in a while," Sypha whispered behind her hand.

Lenore nodded politely, regarding the old dog. He was certainly a fine animal, but as Sypha proceeded to get him to perform a number of tricks, Lenore didn't find herself captured. He was impressive - intelligent, obedient, somewhat playful, and a little quirky. But there was no spark. Truthfully, she wasn't sure what she'd come looking for. She'd been feeling something missing, and it was Christmas, and she knew it was silly and romantic, but she'd rather hoped that if she wandered into the right place, some small amount of luck might just drop something in her lap. She let her fingers play on the fur of her stole and half-watched and smiled, as Sypha did such things as make Saint Germain roll over while explaining Plato's cave.

Then Lenore felt eyes fall on her. Soft, cool eyes, leaving the back of her neck prickling. She hesitated, then took a silent step back from Sypha and Saint Germain, now fully absorbed in their routine, and looked around. A young puppy was in the cage at the very end of the room, not far from where they stood. He was sitting cross-legged on his bed. His hair was the colour of iron and fell in jagged waves that shadowed his face. His loose, grey t-shirt and slightly hunched shoulders diminished his height and figure. It made him seem plain, but for the vibrancy of his blue eyes. He wore no collar, his long, bare neck drawing her eye.

He looked at her.

She looked at him.

It was as if a cobweb was spinning between them

Without thinking, Lenore left Sypha's little show. She walked softly to the cage and stared through the bars, the pup watching every movement she made with fascinating conscientiousness. She held her breath and carefully curled her fingers around the bars, leaning her face a little through them.

He drew back.

She pursed her lips and whistled low, quieter than a June breeze.

He bit his lip and regarded her warily. His eyes were incredible, they were will o' the wisps.

"Hi," Lenore whispered, smiling kindly at him. "Here, Boy."

He tipped towards her a fraction.

"That's it, hello." She held out her hand, palm flat, and beckoned.

He started to slide along the bed.

"Lenore?"

He jumped and shrank back.

Sypha came trotting over, a bemused expression on her face. "What are you doing over here?"

"Tell me about this one," Lenore said, not taking her eyes from the puppy.

Sypha puffed out through her nose. "Uh, OK, I guess. Hector. He's a rescue. I know virtually nothing about him, just turned up hungry at my door one day and hasn't been claimed. He's not on a timeout or anything, he just doesn't come out of there. Seems to be quite happy just sitting in a cage. After long enough, I figured, add him to the stock, but he doesn't attract a scrap of attention."

Well, he had today. Lenore couldn't take her eyes off him. "How pretty you are," she murmured.

Sypha wrinkled her nose. "Is he?"

Lenore ignored her. She sank to crouch, slipped her hand through the bars and held it open, palm up. "Hey," she whispered, like she was telling the puppy a secret, "Hector, is it? That's a very fine name, that's a noble name. You are so precious. Can you come a little closer for me?"

Hector half-glanced at Sypha, but his eyes were constant on Lenore. He slid to the edge of his bed. He hesitated and stared.

"That's it, Pretty Boy."

Hector's cheeks darkened. He gingerly dropped from the bed and inched to the bars on all fours. He knelt near Lenore's outstretched hand. She kept herself stock still, as if he were a mountain lion met out in the wild.

They held each other's gazes for a long moment. The scuffling and growling and giggling in the room washed away, leaving them in a private shell of silence.

He lowered his head. And kissed her palm.

He only touched his lips to her lightly, like a robin landing on a hawthorn.

He raised his head again and his eyes crackled a little with a strange, electric heat.

"Sypha," Lenore murmured, not breaking his eye contact, "Bring me a collar and lead, something sturdy, but light."

Sypha was gaping at the two of them. She blinked herself back to professionalism and nodded and strode away.

"Hector," Lenore went on in her gentlest, most coaxing voice, "I think you are something extra special. Would you like to come home with me?"

Hector sucked his lower lip and frowned in thought, watching her.

Lenore's voice husked. "Would you like to belong to me, Hector?"

Hector's eyes widened.

"Here you go." Sypha arrived back at her side, holding out a plain, tan, leather lead and collar.

Lenore took them, glancing at how Hector's lips bobbed towards her hand subtly, as it withdrew. The collar was supple, but firm. Perfect. She unfastened it, the lead clasped onto the ring at the front. She hooked the loop handle of the lead around her wrist, then reached into the cage with the collar open.

"Here, Love," she cooed.

Hector's eyes fell to the collar. He moved a little restlessly. He looked back into Lenore's gentle face. His fingers fidgeted in his lap. He seemed to be wrestling with himself. Quietly. Everything he did was so blissfully quiet. He sucked in his lip and let it go, flushed darker. Lenore did the same. His eyes fluttered to her mouth.

He furled his fists, then shook them out.

He rocked forward on his knees, leaning to fit his neck into the collar. Lenore held his eye, drawing him to her magnetically, not daring to breathe, in case it startled him. He hovered with his throat near the leather for an agonising length of time. Lenore didn't so much as twitch. She ignored the ache in her legs from crouching and the drum of anticipation under her skin. She made herself stoic as stone and waited patiently. He would be worth any wait, she could tell.

Hector dipped another inch and touched his Adam's apple to the inner circle of the collar. Lenore smiled like a queen at banquet. She leaned close, so her lips just brushed the corner of his mouth, and slid the buckle closed at the nape of his neck.

"Good Boy," she murmured.

Hector sighed into her ear.

She pressed down the tail of the buckle and let her shoulders drop in relief. She drew back. She smiled once more into his soft, dreamy face. Then she stood, still holding the end of the lead trailing through the bars. She gave Sypha a dazzling, triumphant grin.

"How much?"

"Seriously?" Sypha glanced back at her fine, old Saint Germain. "You're sure this is the one?"

Lenore beamed. "I'm sure."

She could feel it, that particular type of magic that sought people out at this time of year. It hummed along the lead conjoining her and Hector. She reached down through the bars and fluttered her fingers lightly. He pressed his cheek into her hand, warm and trusting. She caressed the hewn angles of his jaw and chin. She trailed her fingertips to the thrumming pulse point on his neck. She tingled, as she felt it quicken.

"I'll take him," she said. It was as much a promise as a decision.

Sypha shrugged, bemused, and turned to go and process the sale.

Lenore looked down at Hector, his gaze tugging at their cobweb-fine connection. She bit her lip and smiled brightly.

This one was definitely not just for Christmas.

End Notes

Remember when you're getting kinky, keep it Safe (check your technique), Sane (check your frame of mind) and Consensual (check your partner). Basics of BDSM [here](#). Intro to pet/puppy play [here](#). Have fun, ya heathens!

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