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# Animal Café

## Chapter 17 - Christmas pets

"LUUUCY! LUUUCY! Baaaah!"

"Sshhh... I'm here... I'm here, Clara."

"Luuucy!"

"You had another nightmare? It's okay. I'm here now. Just calm down. Everything will be okay."

It has been two days since my shameful trip to the hospital. Lucy had brought me back to her small apartment near the Cakes & Pets. She said that for the time being, I wouldn't go anywhere else. Getting better would have to be my only priority, and everything else had to be put to the back burner.

This wasn't fun. After my mental breakdown, all I could do was cry and sleep. I couldn't talk anymore either, as if something inside me had broken. The outside world was the realm of confusion, and I didn't know how to think anymore.

Lucy nursed me and repeated a thousand times a day that I would need a lot of time to get back on my feet, but that eventually, I would, even though I couldn't see it at the moment. At the present time, I just had too many difficult things to reconcile with.

My unhealthy relationship with my mother had finally snapped as if a thin string had linked us and failed when we got too far apart. After this traumatic event, I had rejected everything else; the café, the petgirls, my move to the pethouse, even Lucy; I didn't want to have anything to do with any of them anymore. Being taken care of by Lucy and this deep desire to be alone was a major moral conflict, and it made me feel so awfully guilty for abusing her comforting presence.

I didn't want her to take care of me, yet she was the first person I called over when I had those nightmares. For the past two days, her life had been disrupted by my childish behavior, but no matter what, she was still there to console me. I didn't understand why she bothered doing this because my mind was no longer powerful enough to process feelings and emotions other than pain.

There was a battle raging in my soul between my demons who wanted to destroy me and the angels who were trying to protect me from them, shielding me with their lives.

"That's it, Clara, calm down. It's still early. Close your eyes and try to sleep a bit more."

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The sun shone through the window, brightening the small room I occupied and causing me to crack my eyelids open. There wasn't much around; hung on the wall, a nice painting of a flower field with a mountain in the background, a small dresser with a few small picture frames on it, and a closet. The simplicity of this environment probably meant this was the guest bedroom.

Since my brain wasn't fully awake yet, I appreciated the warmth of the soft blanket and the cushiness of my pillow for a short moment. It was a comfortable place to be, and I let out a long sigh, knowing that my pain would imminently come back to haunt me.

"C... Clara? Are... are you awake?"

"..."

This voice coming from next to me didn't even startle me. Slowly letting my head fall to the side to see who it was, I noticed a small girl wearing a hoodie and who had her hands stuffed inside its kangaroo pocket. Her big watery brown eyes betraying her sadness stared at me intently.

She stood up and stepped forward, extending an arm to touch mine. She paused for a moment before retracting her move, as if what she had wanted to do had been prohibited. Her butt returned to the sofa and her hands to her kangaroo pocket; she lowered her head.

"Lucy said you would need time. She said you were hurt badly and that we would have to be patient. She said you probably wouldn't talk to me, but that it was okay."

"..."

"She had to go take care of the café and asked me to stay here today to keep an eye on you. She said, "Vix, you will spend the day with Clara." I... I want to... but I don't know what to do..."

It was inevitable. Even though I was doing nothing but sleeping, I kept hurting people. Vix was the sweetest person I knew, and her heart was bleeding because of me. Fortunately, I didn't have enough energy left to feel as awful as I should have been, but I didn't want to push my luck, so I just turned my head away to look elsewhere.

"Aww... Sorry... Maybe I shouldn't talk. Lucy said I have to make sure you eat. So I will go make you breakfast. I... I'll be back, okay?"

Vix hesitantly got off her seat again and trotted out of the room. I was not too sure if it was to avoid crying in front of me or if she was in a hurry to complete her task, not to leave me alone.

The world around me seemed so unreal. My soul had left my body before they found me, and it was not fully back in yet. I had trouble understanding what Vix was doing here and what she expected from me. Something was wrong. I remembered those moments where I had cuddled with her, either at the pethouse or the café, but it didn't trigger any desire to do it again.

For the next few minutes, I heard pans and cutlery rattling from the nearby kitchen. Was Vix really making me food? Why would she do that? Lucy had done the same thing, and she didn't explain to me why. I didn't want her to do anything for me. I didn't deserve this kind of attention.

Yet, shortly after, Vix entered the room with a small tray in her hands.

"Can... Can you... sit up... I think it would make things easier... if you did."

Void of energy, I managed to push myself up, slowly, to reach the position Lucy put me into when she wanted me to eat something. With my back now resting on the pillows, Vix lowered her tray and placed it on my legs.

She shyly sat on the edge of the bed.

"So... Those are eggs and... well... you know what eggs are... Stupid me. What am I saying? I made you a coffee too because I know you like coffee. Right?"

"..."

"Take your time... Well... Not too much... because Lucy said you have to eat."

I looked down at my plate. There was one scrambled egg, one peanut butter toast, a sliced apple, and a coffee.

Coffee...

The heat of the cup radiated almost painfully on my palm when I cupped it with my hand. Vix was right... I liked coffee. This beverage had always been so comforting. I could remember the first time I had coffee when I was a teenager. It was at a coffee shop in a big mall; I had found enough courage to walk up to the cashier but couldn't utter a word. The lady had said something, and I remembered just nodding a couple of times. Perhaps she had thought I was mute because I ended up with a cup in my hand, like the one I was holding right now.

I had sat down at an empty table and, and for the first time, I had all the time in the world to inhale the vapors rising from the hot liquid. It had been pleasurable in the pure sense of the term, and when I had taken my first sip, I had decided that it was good. It had been the first time in my entire life that I had decided to drink something without having someone else telling me what was good or not. My mother had always decided everything for me before.

Without being conscious of it, my first coffee had been my first step toward building a life of my own.

"Is... Is it good? You... You are just staring at your coffee cup. You always put milk and sugar in it when you get one at the café... so I thought it was okay like that..."

I looked at Vix and nodded, to at least let her know that it was fine. Smiling wasn't something I knew how to do anymore, but I was grateful for the trouble she went through to prepare this meal.

My eyes returned to my coffee, and it reminded me of something else Vix had mentioned... The animal café.

During my first visit at the Cakes & Pets, that was what I had ordered... a coffee.

I remember having stood like a leek in front of the shop for a long time, unable to decide if walking in was what I wanted to do, to the point where the manager of the place, Lucy, had walked outside to invite me in, leaving me no other choice but to accept.

When she had asked me for my name and age, my words wouldn't come out, so I had given her my ID card instead. Curiously, she had not been offended by it and had understood right away that talking wasn't my forte.

And then, another milestone in my life. I had to face a bunch of rubber petgirls who were way more real than anything else I could have imagined. And, of course, Vix had been the first one to really draw my attention.

Her fiery red suit with her white belly, long fox ears and puffy tail, her deep black eyes, it was all very intimidating, but I admired her so much. I remembered when she had grabbed my hand to place it on her warm belly. That had been a life-changing moment. It was the first time I had been allowed to touch someone else for no other reason than to make myself feel good.

And now she was here, sitting on the edge of my bed, out of costume and worried that I was not too fond of the food she had prepared for me.

I wasn't hungry, but I still grabbed my fork and dug in the eggs, perhaps to honor her efforts.

"Good... You... you seem to like them... I will let you eat. And then... I dunno... I'll be back... okay?"

Taking a lot of time, I finished eating everything in my tray and then placed it on the nightstand. I rolled to my side and closed my eyes again as the tiredness hit me again.

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She was still there, sitting on the small sofa, hugging her knees, playing on her smartphone, hoodie down to the middle of her face as usual. She was always hiding her scars.

"Oh... Clara. Did... did I wake you up?"

I shook my head, no.

"Oh... Good... So... You... you don't want to talk? I mean... Lucy said you can't... But I'm not sure why..."

"..."

"Well... maybe I know why. I mean... When I had my accident, it was pretty much like that too. I was so scared. I had nightmares all the time about that big dog that had attacked me. After that, that was the only thing people around me wanted to talk about, so I didn't want to talk to them anymore. I guess that's how you feel, right?"

I nodded.

What she said was exactly it. I had endured enough pain for a lifetime, and I cowardly didn't want to take the risk to trigger it back. That was why I didn't want to talk or do anything that could have brought back any suffering. I couldn't get close to anybody ever again, or else the pain would come back.

"Do... Do you prefer to be alone?... I want to stay... but... if you don't want me here... I... I can go..."

I shook my head no.

"... Okay... then I'll stay here... It's okay if you don't talk... Lucy said it was okay."

The day dragged slowly, very slowly. In between two naps, Vix fixed me some snacks and kept mostly to herself while staying at my side. More than once, the thought that she would have loved to sit on the bed next to me had crossed my mind, but it wouldn't have been a good idea. I asked myself the question over and over, would I like to cuddle with her again, and the answer was no. I didn't have this attraction inside of me anymore. I had pushed it down, very deep.

At the end of the afternoon, Lucy came back, and Vix left without a word.

"So, Clara? How was your day?"

"..."

"That good, uh? Were you happy to see Vix?"

Why? Why did this question about Vix cause me to start crying? My swollen throat hurt, and my tears just wouldn't stop running down my cheeks no matter how much I wiped them off. What was that all about?

Lucy sat on the bed next to me, and I threw myself in her arms like a child. She was the only person I was willing to touch. She was the motherly presence I didn't have.

"It's okay, Clara. I told you. It will take you a long time to cry it out. Let it all out. You'll feel better soon."

"Baaah! Aaahaaa!"

"Hehe. Poor Clara. You are sad because Vix was here, and it was not the same as before, right? Don't worry about it. The pets will understand. None of them will be mad at you if you take your time. Just don't push them away, okay? They will still be your friends when you feel better. If it takes a week, it will take a week, and if it takes a year, it will take a year. They won't let you down."

Why was I so messed up? There was no one sweeter than Vix; I knew that! So why was I not feeling anything for her anymore? Had I really convinced myself that being around people would bring me nothing but sorrows?

For the next three days, Lucy worked at the café, and Vix kept an eye on me in Lucy's apartment. During those three days, she did her best to feed me, she stayed around while I was taking many naps, and we watched some TV shows together, none of them triggering any emotions. She didn't attempt to touch me, which was visibly making her very sad, but she pushed through and tried to brighten up the atmosphere by telling me what was happening at the café.

Misti got back her black cat costume from Elizabeth and was proudly wearing it around and asked to do as many shifts as possible. Vix also said that all the pets were worried about me but that Lucy didn't want them to visit me yet, which I appreciated.

"Clara, tomorrow I'm starting a new shift. So I won't get to see you for a bit. But Lucy said Asha would be the one keeping you company for the next few days. Meeka is off too, but Lucy doesn't want more than one of us here at a time."

As she explained the schedule, Lucy got back home.

"Hey, you two. How is it going?"

"Good. I think Clara is feeling a bit better. She ate all my food, and she didn't sleep as much."

"Great. Thanks for your help, Vix. Asha is waiting for you downstairs."

"... Can... Can I stay with Clara tonight? We can share the bed and..."

"Vix... No. You have to be patient with her."

"Aww... Okay. Well... Goodbye, Clara... I'll see you next week."

"..."

The small foxgirl lowered her hidden head and stuffed her hands back in her kangaroo pocket. She was struggling; I could hear it in her voice. She turned around and dragged her feet toward the exit.

What was I doing? She spent the past three days watching over me, feeding me, keeping me company while I was trying to figure out what was happening with my life. What did she get in return? Nothing. I didn't say a single word to her. I couldn't talk anymore. Only now, as she was about to leave, I understood the extent of my ungratefulness. Only now, as she had resigned herself not to receive any love from me, I felt something.

It was as if my heart had restarted beating for the first time in days, powered by guilt. But this guilt had awoken a desire to try something that could potentially diminish this awful emotion I had.

"V... Vix!"

"... Uh? Clara?"

I got off the couch and looked at the floor, tears flowing down my cheeks uncontrollably. I managed to raise my arms, just enough to signal her what I wanted to do, but my feet couldn't move. I had reached my physical limit... I didn't have more willpower than this.

Vix looked at Lucy, who gave her a little nod. After another few seconds of hesitation, she walked to me and buried herself in my arms to get the hug she had been craving for the past three days. I was crying, I was in pain, but now that she was in my arms, I felt that I had done at least one thing right.

After a short moment, it was Lucy who put an end to this strange scene.

"Vix, that's enough for today. Please let her go."

"O... okay... I'll see you next week, Clara! Take care of yourself."

One more squeeze, and then she unwrapped her arms from me and walked out the door.

When I had Vix in my arms for this brief moment, I had felt something unclogging inside of me. Something had restarted to flow even though I wasn't sure what it was.

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Another morning. The same room, the same quietness, the same morning light that tried to find any weaknesses in the blinds to illuminate the room.

What happened yesterday with Vix was already a blur, but I didn't feel as bad as I did during the past few days. The fog clouding my mind had slightly lifted, allowing me to be a bit more aware of my situation, and it was not necessarily a good thing.

The devastating conversation I had with my mother still haunted me, and Lucy's speech was competing with it. It was as if I wanted to believe every negative word I was told all my life just to get some sort of acceptance from my mom, but there was no way to rule out that it had been a



deception all along. Every time I consciously thought about this internal dilemma, I couldn't do anything else but cry.

"Clara? Why are you crying?"

Startled by the voice, all my muscles contracted, making me jerk under my bed sheets. My eyes were too wet to see who was that blurry person over there, in the corner.

"Hey! Sorry... It's just me, Asha. I didn't mean to scare you."

She approached me and tried to grab my shoulders, but not being in a good mental state, I pushed her away while trying to move my body out of reach, pushing myself with my heels.

"C... Clara? What... what's wrong?"

I just couldn't stop crying. Why? Why was I reacting this way... All I wanted was Lucy so I could hide in her arms.

Asha stood there, staring at me, not too sure what to do next. How come I had rejected the girl with whom I had spent so much time cuddling? What was wrong with me? Was it this internal battle that had not yet determined a winner? This could go both ways. If I were to believe my mother, I would need to stay far away from everybody forever, and if I were to believe Lucy, I would have to abandon who I wanted to be loved by the most and open myself to others. I had not made that choice yet.

"It's... It's okay, Clara. I won't touch you. I'm sorry. I should have waited outside the bedroom. But I missed you too much. I had to watch over you while you were sleeping."

"..."

"You... you can stop crying now. Lucy insisted that I prepare you breakfast as soon as you wake up. Vix told me what you liked to eat, so I'll prepare the same thing. Is that okay?"

"..."

"Okay... I'll be back in a few minutes... Just rest, okay?"

As soon as she left the room, I turned around and cried on my pillow. The pain was relentless, and I didn't know what to do to make it stop. Asha was my friend. Why couldn't I speak to her anymore? Something was burning inside my chest; I wished I could crack open my ribcage to let it out. I felt so ashamed for treating her the way I did, but I couldn't do otherwise.

Being left alone for a bit helped, though. I heard Asha calling someone, probably Lucy, asking for advice on how to handle me. The smell of toasts and eggs reaching my nose was somewhat comforting. Using the remaining clarity I had left in my mind, I managed to focus on something other than misery and tried to prepare myself emotionally for Asha's return.

A few minutes later, she entered the bedroom, holding a small tray. Curiously, she placed it on the nightstand and sat on the bed next to me.

"Alright... Come closer. I'm not going to touch you."

"..."

"Don't worry, Clara... It's okay. Lucy said that I should try this. Don't make a fuss, okay? It's her idea... She wants me to feed you."

"..."

"I know it's weird. Well, she said you fed me often while I was a helpless pet and that it was my turn to feed you. We can just try, right? I love it when you feed me at the café... Maybe you'll love it too... Let me try, okay?"

Her proposition was so odd, so unusual that it pulled me out of my head for an instant. This was a reality and no longer a nightmare. Asha was there, slightly embarrassed by what Lucy had asked her to do, and waiting for some sort of approval from me.

I nodded.

"Great! Just come a bit closer. Lucy wouldn't like me to drop scrambled eggs in her bed. Here... You can hold your coffee for now. Vix said coffee made you feel good."

"..."

I moved closer to Asha, still afraid that she would get hurt by another one of my harsh rejection. I didn't want her to think things would be better from now on because, myself, I didn't know how this would end up. For now, I would just cooperate and let her do what Lucy had asked. Perhaps it could help.

"Here, take a bite in your toast. Haha... It reminds me of when you met Accalia for the first time. She did that too, remember? She put her toast in your mouth, and you were so confused about it. She is a bit odd, sometimes. Did you know she is asking about you all the time? I'm sure in a few years, she will be like Lucy, all motherly. She loves taking care of people."

"..."

"Ah, by the way. I don't know if Lucy told you already, but Misti finished moving all your things from your apartment yesterday. Don't worry. She didn't work too hard as Lucy hired two

movers to take care of the heavy items. Everything is in the basement at the café now. You didn't lose anything."

As Asha was feeding me eggs and bread, she was chit-chatting about many random things. There were no real questions or expectations in her monologue as she was aware that it would be a one-way conversation, but she seemed okay with that.

It was a relief to hear that my apartment situation had been resolved. It felt good to know that my few belongings were in a safe place, but it was a bit frightening to be officially homeless. Lucy kept me in her apartment for now, but it was not my home, and I couldn't see myself moving to the pethouse anymore. Yes, I was truly homeless, jobless, lifeless...

"Clara... You know... When Lucy asked me to go check on you because you went missing in action... when I got in your apartment and I found you... well... I was very scared. But Misti was with me, and she had nightmares since then. I think she thought you had died. So, Lucy doesn't want her to come to see you yet. She thinks Misti will freak out. She probably will."

"..."

"I mean, it's not your fault, right? I hope you know that. It's just that Misti... well... She lost someone very close to her before... and she thought it had happened again. You understand?"

I nodded.

The girls at the café were pets for a reason; that was what Lucy had told me. I didn't know if she had done it on purpose, but Asha had perhaps exposed Misti's dark secret. Did she really lose someone she cared a lot about? A parent? A sister? I couldn't ask, but a feeling of empathy rose within me as I imagined those possibilities.

I didn't like it. I didn't want Misti to be sad because of me. Asha said that it was not my fault, but it certainly was. With Misti, it was all about her friends. A few days ago, when she broke her costume and Lucy got angry at her, she irrationally thought she would get separated from her friend. It was clear that she would quickly jump to extreme scenarios when placed in a challenging situation, which I had unfortunately provided.

Why did I feel so bad? I put an end to my breakfast and rolled to my side, not wanting to impose my sad face on Asha anymore.

"Oh? You... you are done?"

"..."

"It's okay... You ate enough... I... I'll go do the dishes.... Just try to rest, okay?"

Closing my eyes didn't help. A torrent of images rage-flowed through my brain, not allowing me to make sense of anything.

If I were indeed ready to abandon all my friends to isolate myself from society, why was I feeling so bad about it? Thinking about them being sad just got to me so badly. I had thought they would have been happier if I were not in their life, but what Asha had said was the opposite. It wasn't fair. I was sowing chaos even when I wasn't around people. I didn't want that. They didn't deserve that. I was the one who was supposed to suffer, not them.

Unable to stop crying, it was a miracle that I managed to fall asleep.

A while later, when I cracked my eyes open, I stopped breathing. I was still on my side, but next to me was Asha. She had laid down on my bed, her back towards me, and her head rested comfortably on the other pillow. Perhaps she needed a nap as well.

I remembered the first time I had shared a bed with someone. It was with Vix while she was a rubber pet. Lucy had forgotten us in the capsule room, and I got to spend all night cuddling with the small fox.

Then there was that time when I slept with a real girl for the first time. Trixie had invited herself to my place for the night, and we had shared a bed like this together. It was the first time I got to touch a naked girl too. Trixie's hair... it was so soft...

Asha's hair... it was soft too...

I carefully extended my arm until my fingertips reached her jet black hair. This was so wrong. Just this morning, I had prevented her from touching me, and now, I was the one who reached her while she was unaware. This was such a hypocritical move from my part... so selfish...

But... I was attracted to it...

Gently combing her delicate hair with my fingertips made me feel fuzzy inside. I had not done this enough so far to really understand why I loved hair so much. It was too new to make sense...

"I like when you do this, Clara..."

"..."

I immediately withdrew my hand to my chest. Asha... She was not asleep, and she had felt what I did. Now she knew how hypocritical I was... That I was going left and right at the same time for obscure reasons.

"It's okay... I won't talk. Keep playing with my hair if you want. I won't say anything and won't look. It's okay."

"..."

Why? Why was she offering me that after what I had done earlier? Why would she give herself as a toy for me to play with? Was it because she was so used to being a pet most of the time and that it was just a job? Was I just a client in need of affection?

I didn't know... I didn't... care...

Her soft hair... It made me feel so good.

I slowly reached the back of her neck and let my fingers plow through her black hair once more. As promised, she didn't move or make a sound. She didn't turn around. Asha simply gave me this moment, just because. It felt as if it had lit a candle into a very dark room. It wasn't like daylight, but it somehow helped a bit to find where I was going.

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I spent the next two days with Asha. Similar to what had happened with Vix, we spent most of the day not doing much. I listened to her telling me about random things between random tv shows or one of my multiple naps. Several times I tried to talk, but not a sound exited my throat, and every time I failed, I cried, I just cried.

Not being able to talk well all my life had been really hard for me, so this enormous set back was so painful. Knowing that not only I had returned to square one but even farther back in my speech inability was something tough to accept.

Yet, Asha didn't judge me. During those small meltdowns, she kept repeating that it was okay and that Lucy specifically told everybody not to put pressure on me. I was ashamed that this directive had to be applied, but perhaps it was better that way. I was so fragile that it was not hard to imagine that I could break easily.

Back in bed after dinner, I tried to relax as Asha was washing the dishes. Lucy was supposed to show up a moment ago but was a bit late. Every night so far, she had joined me in the bedroom and let me cry in her arms, talked to me, and convinced me slowly that only time could bring clarity back in my life. Coming from the person I trusted the most, my subconscious gradually acquired that line of thought.

I didn't know if it was a good thing or a bad thing, but I didn't overthink this situation despite her lateness tonight. She had a life too, and I was sucking time out of her busy schedule. Being demanding would not be right, and being messed up didn't mean I had no morality.

And thinking about Lucy, her apartment door slammed open and banged on the wall with way more energy than usual. This was different since, in an attempt not to startle me or wake me up, she had always been very delicate when opening the door.

A powerful little voice explained everything.

"Aaah! Asha! Where do I put those grocery bags?"

"Tone it down, Trixie. Clara is resting! What are you doing here, anyway?"

"Aww, sorry! Lucy asked me to go grocery shopping with her. Can I go see Clara?"

"No! Lucy said not yet."

Trixie. The girl who gave me my first real kiss. She was right there in the kitchen, so close. Insisting on seeing me caused Asha to raise her voice to make her point clearer to the rabbit girl. How could Trixie be this desperate to see me after I had walked away from them all? Vix and Asha stayed with me because Lucy had tasked them to, but Trixie had no apparent reasons to do the same thing.

Then Lucy, who entered her apartment next, put an end to their bickering quickly enough.

"What are you two doing? Do you want to wake up all the neighborhood? Go back to the pethouse, Trixie. I'll take it from here."

"No! I want to see Clara!"

"Trixie, you'll see her when she feels better."

"Shut up, Asha! She is my friend too! I want to see her."

Lucy had to intervene again as there was some tension in the air, all because of me.

"Asha, go wait outside. I need to talk to Trixie."

"Bah! Hurry, rabbit face. I'm tired."

I heard Asha leaving, and the apartment door closed slowly. Then there were some whispers going on between Lucy and Trixie, I couldn't make out what they were saying. Was she going to allow Trixie in? The thought made me nervous.

Trixie was high energy and would probably jump on my bed and bounce around until she got what she wanted, and... and... and what I just thought about her was not fair. Sure, Trixie had always been happy and ready for action, but she was more than this. I remembered...

The first time I had brought back a pet home, it had been Trixie, and it felt like it was yesterday. Lucy had made me walk from the café to my home, holding a leash. At the other end of it was a white latex bunny wearing a fuzzy pink coat causing everybody to stare at us.

Sure, this had made me very nervous, but at that time, something else more important had been on my mind. Back then, I already had a clear knowledge that Trixie was very sexual. Neither the rubber bunny nor Lucy had hidden that fact. I remembered how terrorized I was about what was to come once we would reach home.

I had never had sex with anybody before, and I feared that it probably was what Trixie had in mind. It was going way too fast for me, and the closer we got from my place, the worse it got.

And then, once at home, while I was leaning over the skin, prisoner of my own worrying mind, her two small rubber arms had wrapped around my waist in a very delicate way. She pulled me back to the bedroom despite my attempt to push back on the intention I had given her.

But just when I had thought she was about to express the sexual side of her personality, she had seen through me already. She had pierced my fears with her cute black eyes and had understood everything about me. Instead of doing what I had expected from her, she had instead asked me to read her a book. At that time, she knew that listening to me talking while gently cuddling would be way more satisfying than any sexual activity. On that night, she had highlighted my irrational fears of people.

Here, in Lucy's apartment, after my mental breakdown, I believed that, perhaps, Trixie would be the one who could understand me.

Her little footstep approached, meaning that she probably had convinced Lucy to let her visit me.

I didn't know what got into me, but I closed my eyes as if to pretend I was asleep, too scared to face her. The footsteps approached some more, and then I felt a presence near me as the mattress softly reacted to the small woman who had climbed on it.

And then an emotional whisper... almost a crying.

"Clara... I miss you so much. I don't know if you are asleep, but it doesn't matter. I'm sure you can hear me anyway."

Her murmur was so close to my ear... a tone made not to scare me. It was the version of Trixie that could get to me.

"Lucy said things about you, but I don't understand them. My brain doesn't work like that. I'm stupid. I need to know from you what your problems are. That way, my body will just do its thing and help you. She said that you couldn't talk anymore, but I don't care. You never talked much before, and it never prevented us from becoming friends. Right?"

It was the truth. Trixie and I became friends without talking. Same with Vix and the other petgirls. We all got along well without having to build a relationship through voice. Some petting and light cuddles were all that had been needed to strengthen our bonds. Words had never been a significant part of the equation.

"Clara, I want you to show me what you need, or else I won't know what to do. Okay? Lucy only gave me a minute... so I have to be quick... but I'm a rabbit, right? I'm always quick. If you show me, I'll get it right away. I'm sure of it."

I wasn't sure what she had meant until I felt something on my lips. The sensation was the same as when we had kissed for the first time in the spa's locker room. Back then, we had a conflict and were upset at each other, and that kiss had healed us right away. It was the same kiss that she was offering to me right now.

Her lips gently pressed on mine while I pretended to be asleep. Lucy, Vix, and Asha had nursed me with love for the past week, well enough that my internal dilemma, even though not resolved, was easier to understand. Between listening to what an unloving mother had tried to convince me of versus a strange life surrounded by Lucy and the petgirls, this choice was now visible to me. Lucy had asked me to choose her love over my mother's love, choose the pets over my loneliness, and choose my friends over my unwillingness to trust that good things could happen to me.



And now, this kiss from Trixie, unsolicited, yet, not imposed, felt like a request to make this choice.

Show me.

She had asked me to show her what I wanted. Her body waited for my answer. Could her body really find a solution to my problems if I showed her what I wanted? Could Trixie have this power that no other people had?

What was I waiting for? She waited for my answer and Lucy had not given her much time. She was sacrificing those precious seconds that had been granted to her to see me just to allow me an opportunity to tell her what I wanted... what I needed. She gave me her precious time.

Show me.

I had to show her.

I had to at least try.

I opened my mouth, which was easier to do when I didn't do it for talking, and I stole more of her sweet kiss... and she did the same.

That was it...

That was my choice at this very moment.

My body had shown hers something, and I got a response back.

Her response was, "I understand."

"Okay, Trixie, that's enou... Oh..."

Relatively unconscious about my surroundings, I had not seen that Lucy had arrived to pull Trixie away from the room after her allocated time was up. When the kiss ended, I slowly opened my eyes. A few inches in front of me was the pretty blonde girl, not smiling, but her deep blue eyes communicated all the emotions I needed to feel.

Lucy gently recalled her.

"Come, Trixie. That's enough for now. I'll let you see her again later."

"No."

"Trixie, don't make it harder than it is..."

"I'm not. Clara wants me to stay with her tonight. That's what she wants. I know it is! She just told me."

"Trixie, Clara didn't say a word. Come now, please."

Reluctantly, Trixie slowly got off the bed, her eyes begging me to tell Lucy what I had just said in a silent voice. Lucy had grabbed her wrist and supportively led her toward the exit.

"W... Wait!"

"..."

"Lucy, wait!"

"Clara?"

"Can... Can Trixie sleep with me... tonight?"

"... Sleep with you? Are you sure?"

"Yes. I need Trixie. Please."

With those words, the first ones since my breakdown, I had restarted to choose for myself.

I wanted to spend time with my friend.

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So warm.

I slept on my back with Trixie wrapped around me. It was the first time that I felt somewhat normal in the morning, not fearing the rest of the day. What happened last night had somehow lifted an enormous weight off my shoulders and, in some ways, made me feel like an idiot.

That selfish desire I had to sleep with Trixie, spontaneous, and inappropriate, made me realize that I didn't want to walk away from her. This desire was too strong not to see.

It had to be her. It had to be Trixie, the girl I might have been attracted to the most. A girl who had hidden problems but who wouldn't let them stop her. If there was one thing I could learn from her, she knew what she loved and wanted it all. She had a real crush on all her pet friends and played with them all and didn't want to be forced to choose.

Perhaps it had been the reason why she had managed to get through me. She had an immense heart available for everyone to hug, so it was not as intimidating to steal a small chunk from it for myself.

I ran my fingers through her delicate blonde hair while she drooled on my shoulder, still deeply asleep. The morning sun flooded the bedroom with an orange light for the first time in a very long time as we forgot to close the curtains last night. Was this a sign that this day would be different? Was this brightness the reason why I didn't feel as miserable this morning?

Trixie and I did nothing special after our kiss. She went to take a shower and met me under the blanket, and we just drifted to sleep while holding each other. We healed together.

The bedroom door opened slowly, and Lucy peeked into the room, and when she saw I was awake, she whispered to me.

"Oh, you are awake already? Can I come in?"

I nodded.

Lucy, holding a cup of coffee, tiptoed to the bed and carefully sat next to me. Surprisingly, she didn't check on me first despite this considerable development in my sick life. Instead, she did the same thing I did a moment ago and brushed her fingers in Trixie's hair before resting them on her sleepy cheek as if to check on her.

"Trixie is such a cutie, don't you think?"

"Yes."

"She hadn't slept well since your visit to the hospital. She is always reacting like that when her friends are sad. She must be the most empathic person I have ever met. Just by looking at people, she can tell if they are sad, and then she is driven to make them feel happy again. She is such an innocent girl."

"Yes. Trixie is nice."

"So, what changed? Do you understand what I mean now, when I said you should choose us over your mother?"

"Yes... I like you and your pets. I don't want to lose them. But I still want my mother."

"Yes. Over time, you'll learn to have a different relationship with her. You'll understand that she is a person with problems, probably sick, and it won't affect you as much. Perhaps you can even help her one day. It's too bad she hurt you that much, a sweet little thing like you."

She kept petting Trixie as if there was something therapeutic about it. Lucy probably had a good reason for having surrounded herself with all those sweet petgirls. Sure they could drive her nuts, but I think she liked it a lot. Having all that energy in her life and tons of opportunities to take care of those pets and teach them how to behave was something she needed to feel whole. In return, they gave her back a lot of love.

The more I thought about it, the more I came to realize that we all needed each other. There was nothing easy for anybody, and without our friends' love, it was more difficult to advance in life. Problems felt bigger, loneliness was too heavy, and responsibilities were overwhelming.

"Did you notice?"

"Notice what?"

"Your speech. It's very good this morning."

"..."

"You are not scared anymore... It's good. Now that I'm thinking about it, you probably don't have a speech disorder, at least not the way you thought. You just grew up in a toxic environment where you couldn't say a word, and when you did, you were crushed under a never-ending flow of reprimands."

What Lucy theorized reminded me awfully of the words that came out from the mouth of a certain intimidating Asian girl that I had met at Elizabeth's place, Kitty. She had not used such complex words to say it, but her quick and convincing assessment had been the same.

"Someone else said the same to me. It feels odd."

"Hehe. I bet. It's excellent news, though. But I think you'll be fragile for a while, so don't push yourself too hard, okay? Oh, and I spoke to a friend of mine the other day. When you are ready, I want you to go see her from time to time. She is a good therapist who had helped me in the past, and she is going to see you for free as you need it."

"O... okay."

"Don't worry. It will do you some good. All she wants in exchange is some cakes from the café. It's a fair trade because our cakes are the best in the world and so are you."

"Awww..."

I turned my head, blushing, but then a third voice entered the conversation... A certain blonde girl was awake.

"No, she is not going! I am! I want to see a therapist too."

"Haha. No, Trixie. You'd drive her nuts!"

"Not true! Everybody loves me!"

"Haha... Alright, you two. Take it easy today. I have to go to the café. I'll let the pets know that you are feeling much better, Clara. They will be happy, but I'll tell them to be patient. I'll see you tonight."

Trixie returned her head to my shoulder and squeezed me in her arms as Lucy kissed her on the forehead before leaving; she really loved her pets.

Yes, this day was definitely a brighter one.

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Ups and downs. That was pretty much how I could describe the past few weeks. Some days I couldn't stop crying, and I felt like I was going somewhere on others. Since Lucy saw that Trixie had a lot of success lifting my mood, she asked her to spend a lot of time with me, which was a very good thing. I knew she was not my girlfriend per se, but it sure felt like it on some days.

The rabbit girl could talk a lot, but somehow it was easier to keep up with her than before. It was as if the realization that I may not have had a communication disorder made me more confident. Being blind about my past and saying that there was no room for improvement would be too much of a lie, but understanding what had happened to me had unlocked my skills. For the first time in my life, I could envision a future where I could talk to someone without them noticing my difficulties. This was a hopeful feeling.

Today, I returned to the café for the first time. Lucy said that I could try to play with the rubber pets for a few minutes and see how it went, but I ended up staying all day. It felt as if I had never left.

During the past few weeks, I had spent time with each girl in Lucy's apartment, but they were always out of costume, which was the best thing to do. I got to apologize to Vix and Asha for how I had treated them while they had tried to help me, which was not easy to do since they wouldn't let me. They kept saying they understood and that it was not my fault, but I still felt as if it was the right thing to do, whether or not it was my fault.

While socializing with them all, a curious feeling had grown inside my heart regarding something I was missing more and more, my cute rubber pets. And this was why I came to the Cakes & Pets with Trixie today. I was ready.

It was bizarre when I entered the lounge. It reminded me so much of the first time I had visited the café. The pets had formed a row for me to choose from. How could I not go for Vix?

Since Trixie was out of her suit, she, of course, went straight to Misti, who had traded back the new cheetah costume for her black cat one.

Resting on my lap, the cute fox girl was what I needed. I traced her facial feature with my finger as my other hand was unconsciously rubbing her white belly. A long sigh from her made me understand how much she had missed cuddling with me. Her happiness transpired through her big black eyes that I had learned to interpret over time.

Lucy eventually brought me my coffee and a small cheesecake. I appreciated that everybody acted as if nothing had happened. Many of the pets came to give me hugs, but outside that, it seemed to be business as usual. It was good to know that the world had not stopped because I got sick. They were just happy to have me back.

Since Trixie and I were around, Lucy offloaded the feeding task to us. A series of squeeze bottles full of food lined up on our table, and one by one, we fed the rubber pets. Since we had Vix and Misti on us already, we started with them.

I plugged Vix's bottle in her under chin hole and gradually pressed the mixture to her mouth, keeping water nearby just in case she needed it. This activity had always been so relaxing and deepened my bond with the latex animals. Feeding someone else was a gesture of love.

Trixie, in front of me, had more trouble with Misti, who wouldn't stay still. I swore I could see the black cat telling her, "you are doing it all wrong," which made me smile. There was never a dull moment when those two were around.

"Don't laugh, Clara! She is giving me grief just because you are here today."

"I'm not. But I'm glad I'm feeding Vix."

"Vix never struggles. You are lucky. So, I wanted to ask you a question. But Lucy said it might be a sensitive topic. So let me know if you don't want to answer right away, okay?"

"I'm fine. What do you want to ask?"

"Well, it's about Christmas. On Christmas night, ALL the pets are suiting up, and we collect donations for the city children's hospital in front of the café. People can buy cakes for twice the price, but they can also pay to have their photo taken with us."

"Oooh. This is great! I like it."

"Yeah... but... It's on Christmas night... and... I don't know if you wanted to go see your family... even though... you know... they were a bunch of... Owwww!"

Trixie didn't have time to finish her insult before Misti slapped her hard in the face with her cushy paws.

"Aaaah, what was that for, you dumb cat!?"

Misti placed her paw on Trixie's mouth and pointed at me with her other one. I knew why she was doing it, and it was a nice gesture. She didn't want me to get hurt again, and when Trixie almost insulted my family, she had feared that it would trigger my trauma.

But it was all good. I spent a lot of time with Trixie in the last couple of weeks, and I knew what her opinion of my mother was. Misti was right, though; it wasn't nice to say bad things about people, no matter who they were.

"It's okay, Misti. I'm fine. Trixie always acts silly."

"Ah! You are siding with Misti, now? Fiiine. I talk too much as usual. I'm sorry."

"It's okay. I'm not going to visit my family this year."

"No? Are you sure?"

"Yes. I prefer being with Lucy and you this year. You are my family too."

"Awwwww! Did you hear that, Misti? I'm Clara's family."

The black cat slapped her in the face again.

"Aaaah! Okay okay... You are her family too! But I'm her favorite anyway."

"You are... all equal. You all helped me a lot to get better."

Yes, I wouldn't go home this year. I wasn't ready for it. I had a couple of visits to the therapist recently, and she made me decide some important things. Thinking for myself wasn't something I was used to, so it was very hard.

The first thing I had decided was that I didn't want to cut bridges with my parents. Even if it was excruciating, I now understood that their behavior was not normal, and they had problems of their own. The pets didn't abandon me when I was sick, so I'd not abandon my parents because they had issues. But another thing I had decided was to do what was right for myself, which included doing things the way I wanted. I felt good around the pets, so that was what I wanted to do, be around them as much as possible. I couldn't see my life without them. I had chosen them and Lucy.

There was one more thing I wanted.

"Trixie? Do you want to sleep with me at the café tonight?"

"Sleep here? Sure, I'm in. But ask Lucy, first. I think she said that she wasn't sure that you should spend too much time at the café right away. She might say no."

"It's okay... I will ask."

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"Here is your bunny, Clara. Don't go crazy, okay? I don't want any drama. And you don't go to the lounge, okay?"

"Yes."

"Good. I'm going home now, but call me if you need anything."

"Thank you, Lucy."

"Don't mention it. I can't wait until you feel good enough to pet sit them all again. These little devils are draining my life. I need a vacation."

Lucy hugged us and returned home, leaving me behind with Trixie. When I had asked Lucy if I could sleep at the café tonight, she had taken a long moment to think about it. She came back a bit later, saying yes, but also said I could only spend the night with Trixie in the capsule room and that she had to wear her bunny suit, or else she would talk too much. I think she wanted to put me in a situation where I would enjoy myself the most.

All the other pets would sleep in the lounge as usual, but I wasn't allowed to go see them. Lucy was too scared that the pets would lose control and overwhelm me; she knew her pets well.

I had missed Trixie the white latex rabbit a lot. She was my second favorite rubber pet after Vix. Her long bouncy ears were so cute, and she always acted funny. Now that I knew Trixie the girl intimately, it was even better, even if I sometimes forgot that they were the same person.

Trixie crawled into the bottom capsule room, and after undressing, I joined her inside. It was still early, so we would have time to cuddle a little before sleeping.

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After I slid the door closed behind me, isolating myself in the small room with the rubber pet, I dimmed the light down as much as I could.

"Do you like blue, Trixie?"

She shook her head, no.



"Red?"

She shook her head, no.

"Purple then?"

She nodded.

I turned the light selector to purple; it was a romantic choice. The fun color made her white latex phenomenally glowing. Sitting in front of me, she waited for my next move.

During the past few weeks, as I was recovering, Trixie had slept with me regularly, but without going farther than some nice gentle cuddle. She was the most sexual pet, but she had not attempted anything that could have pressured me, which showed that she could restrain herself when required. Her friends were more important than her own desires.

She probably wasn't expecting much more when I offered her to sleep here at the café, and Lucy probably just thought I wanted to get used to cuddling the pets again. But there was more to this sleepover request that I had not shared with Trixie yet.

I wanted to make love to her.

After everything she had done for me, after all the support that she had offered, after all my cries that she had endured, it was time for me to start repaying my emotional debt. I also wanted to do this for myself.

My therapist had made me talk about how I felt around those girls, in and out of costume. It took a while, but she had managed to pull the truth out of me. I was so used to repressing my feelings that I had not realized how bottled up they were.

I was attracted to the pets, in and out of costume, some more than the others, and not just at a friendly level. She made me admit that I was sexually attracted to them.

When I had explained to my therapist how I had felt when I had caught Trixie and Misti making love on the couch, she laughed a little bit and told me there was nothing wrong with it. It was okay to desire girls if it was what felt right to me. And when I told her that I had liked making love with them afterward, she said that it was important that I kept going in that direction. Refraining myself from doing so because of what people might think of me would mean going against my values and walking away from happiness.

In front of me was my rubber bunny, the one I loved so very much, and I was attracted to her like crazy; I adored the girl wearing the costume. I had the opportunity to do the right thing for myself, and it was something I knew Trixie would be more than happy to assist with. Tonight, cuddling would not be enough.

Trixie laid down on her back as I approached her, expecting that I would just rest next to her, but instead, I crawled on top of her and sat on her hips. After placing my hands on her shoulders to keep her down, I leaned forward and looked into her shiny black eyes.

"Trixie, I... I want to make love to you. Are... are you okay with it?"

After a few seconds of pause, she nodded energetically, as if I had denied her for so long that she wouldn't even consider taking a risk to discuss this, fearing I could change my mind.

"Just... just let me try things... okay?"

Trixie nodded again and brought her cushy paws to my waist.

In the past, when I had sex with the pets, they had always been the ones in charge. It was very pleasant to let them do all kinds of things to me, but today I would be the one who would try to give her pleasure, even if I had no idea how. I wanted to learn.

For a moment, I caressed her rubber mask, taking the time to admire how beautiful she was. I was subjugated by how talented the artist who had created her was. Those long springy ears, the little rubber fuzz at the base of them to hide her breathing holes, her amazing eyes in which I could see my reflection, her cute wiggly muzzle, and those tickling whiskers; I loved it all.

Her latex covered neck, and narrow shoulders made her look fragile. Her delicateness was one of the things that attracted me the most. I didn't feel overpowered by any pets because they were all as small as I was. Feeling that I could wrap my hands around her neck and sense her tiny muscles and throat through the rubber made me feel good. We were alike.

Then there was her chest, Trixie's favorite body part. As I ran my hands over it, feeling her soft and warm boobs, it made the latex covering them stretch and crackle quietly. I could feel her nipples under my fingertips, but when I tried to grab them, the latex running away from my grip prevented me from doing so, which was perfect for making her feel good.

Trixie's body twisted under my attention, but there was nothing she could do as all my weight rested on her hips.

I ran my fingers along her delicate rib cage and could feel the row of bones. She squirmed under me as I made my fingers walk on them, tickling her in the process, but she wouldn't stop me.

Her waist was just fantastic. I had not realized how much it was one of the features that had attracted me the most. I inspected her sides and her belly for a long moment, enjoying how soft and smooth they were. I could even feel her cute belly button under the slippery latex. I had to move down a little because I wanted to kiss those soft abs.

It was so warm when I pressed my cheek against her belly. I took all the time in the world to lick her slowly from her navel to her sternum. Her body language begged me not to stop, which prevented me from feeling guilty for abusing this area of her body for so long. I wasn't in a hurry to move on.

My tongue sliding effortlessly on the shiny white latex encasing her was something I adored. It was like licking a delicious ice cream that would never melt. It was okay since Trixie had a low-calorie count. I could do this for hours without being scared of getting fat.

I continued exploring south and reached her inner thigh, avoiding her sealed crotch on purpose. I wanted to complete my visit before attacking the piece of resistance. Her inner thighs seemed so sensitive, though. Despite her mask robbing her of her voice, she managed to moan audibly.

She was losing it. I knew that much about Trixie. Sex was, by far, her favorite activity. She would sleep with all the other pets without ever saying no, and more than often, she was the initiator of the action. I didn't know if she was actually sleeping with them all, but it was not hard to imagine she did.

Even her kneecaps were cute and sensitive. When I bit it lightly, that made her jerk and twist. I didn't know if what I was doing was how we were supposed to have sex, but I was going with what I thought was right when I met a new body part.

Reaching her calf and ankle was another sexy moment. Something was fascinating about the sensuality of it. How could something so delicate support her entire body weight day after day? I followed her tibia with my fingers through the white rubber, and I massaged her warm tense calf too.

As I grabbed her foot, I forced her to raise her knee a little bit. I placed it on my naked lap and inspected it. Trixie threw her head left and right as I began massaging her sole with my thumb in between her cute pawprints. I had never seen her react this way, but she seemed to like it a lot. Five; that was the number of little toes I found inside the white sock, and they were so cute and wriggly... and desirable.

I had this feeling in me at the moment that I didn't want to suppress. Her toes... I wanted to nibble on them. I couldn't see them because of the white latex, but I knew they were there for me to taste. Walking away from this desire would have been a mistake even though I didn't know why I wanted to do this.

I lifted her foot to my chest and took my first bite at those cute toes. This time, it was obvious; Trixie loved it. She slammed her two paws on the mattress and lifted her hips as if something had exploded inside her vagina.

One after the other, I snacked on her little toes as an appetizer for what was to come. But nibbling was not enough. Sucking seemed a better idea, and the initiative almost came from Trixie herself when she inadvertently pushed her tiny foot deeper into my mouth.

I closed my eyes and tried to understand what I was feeling. Ignoring the right or wrong of things, my tongue sensed the hardened skin of her sole, and my mouth accepted the sensuality that engulfing her toes all at once provided. This was deliciously sexual.

For a moment, we continued this activity. I licked her soles, sucked her toes, nibbled her heels. My body responded very well to what we were doing. A powerful arousal installed itself in my small body, signaling that it was ready for more. As odd as it sounded, her latex covered foot made me react positively, and I did my best to accept that fact.

As I persevered on this discovery, I grabbed Trixie's other foot and gently placed it on my now very wet crotch. She immediately understood where I was going with this and moved it just the right way, making me know that there was no going back.

"Aaaah! Trix... Trixie... you... you are... rubbing my... Aaaanh!"

She totally got it and expertly did what she was good at; giving pleasure. If I had been in control of my mind, I would have bet that she had done this to someone else before, but it didn't matter. Her rubber toes carefully penetrated me, and once well lubricated, she massaged my clit in a way that I had never experienced before.

With her other latex foot still rubbing on my face and in my mouth, I was trapped in a new universe of fetishism. For many long minutes, I rubbed my pussy on her foot and welcomed a new level of perversion in my life. My attention was no longer on the bunny; it was selfishly focused on my own pleasure instead.

Until I came...

I came so hard... Harder than I had ever cum before. For the first time in my life, I had fully abandoned myself to pleasure. There was no questioning, no doubts, no judgment. I had chosen to do this, to let myself skydive and feel the wind, not listening to my fears. My body had rewarded me for allowing it to experience this unprecedented level of freedom.

I collapsed on my side, and Trixie immediately joined me to cuddle, to give me her warmth. Her paws tightly wrapped around me as tears of happiness started to run down my cheeks.

"Trixie! Trixie! Trixie!"

I never hugged someone so hard in my life, but I wanted to be closer to her. Closer to my beloved bunny. My girlfriend for the night.

For a long moment, we held each other. This was love.

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"Okay, Trixe, let's try to sleep."

Trixie nodded.

She laid flat on her back, and I joined her after turning off the light in the capsule. I pulled the blanket over our bodies, not too much since Trixie was a little furnace, and I wrapped my arms around her.

This position was treacherous because my hand landed on her soft breast. Using her paw, she moved it off, sending me a clear message that she wouldn't be able to sleep if I were to do that. The problem was that my hand now rested on her upper belly, and I couldn't help myself but play with her adorable belly button. Again, her paws moved my hand elsewhere. Trixie had too many sensitive spots, so it made things more complicated at bedtime.

I could feel her belly rising and lowering quite rapidly. The only thing I could think of was that she was still turned on. After all, I was the one who had an earth-shattering orgasm, not her. I wasn't too sure how I could help while she wore her suit. Massaging her crotch would just frustrate her more.

So I decided to do exactly that, let my hand go down a bit more, and massage her crotch, voiding all prior logic. This time, instead of pushing my hand away, she arched her back and put her paw on top of her crotch, wanting to feel my fingers better.

But then, something caught my attention.

"Tri... Trixie? Where... where is your lock? Your crotch zipper isn't locked as usual."

Shocked, Trixie crunched up to look. Then turned to me with pleading eyes. I was pretty sure I knew what she wanted. She was Trixie, after all.

I forced her to lay back down on her back and placed my hand back on her latex crotch. After massaging it some more, the bunny was seriously pumping air, so something needed to be done about that. I found the small zipper tab and pulled it down, very slowly.

A few centimeters down, I could feel her engorged pussy lips along with some warm slippery liquid. Trixie tried to massage herself, but I didn't let her; it was my turn to make her feel good.

When Misti and Trixie had made love to me at the pethouse, I saw them doing something together that I had never seen before. They had not done it on me, but I was dying to try it because it seemed so pleasurable.

I moved around on the bed in a way to approach my naked crotch to her. Misti had called this scissoring or something, and Trixie had loved it so much. And I think the rabbit understood what I was trying to do since she helped me move in the proper position for it.

"Mmmm... Do you like this, Trixie."

She kind of nodded, probably too excited to focus on talking at the moment.

When our wet pussy lips connected, it was like an electric shock. Until they had demonstrated this to me, I would never have thought this was a thing women did. But now that I knew, it didn't take me too long to figure it out. We very slowly rubbed our pussy together,

helped by our natural wetness, and it was ridiculously pleasurable. Our swollen and well-lubricated clitoris collided and procured a new sensation that was beyond ecstatic.

Trixie was mentally gone as well. I could see that she tried to rub my body with her soft paw, she wanted to take care of me, but her level of sexual pleasure was unmanageable. I was proud of being able to do this for her. She was my good friend, and I wanted her to feel as good as I was.

For a long moment, we kept doing this, even after Trixie had an intense orgasm. She wanted more, I wanted more, we were not ready to stop anytime soon. We took a few pauses, but she had learned something about me that she had the firm intention to exploit; her rubber feet kept going to my crotch or my face.

I had no regrets about having asked to sleep at the café with Trixie tonight.

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"Oreo, come here. Your bow is falling again."

Many days later, on Christmas day. We had set up a little stand on the large walkway in front of the Cakes & Pets, and all the pets were suited up and ready to collect money for the city children's hospital.

The snow fell lightly, but it was not too cold. There were many people in the street enjoying their day off and walking around to absorb the ambiance of the holidays. Lucy and I kept an eye on the pets, so they didn't cause chaos or get in trouble, but everything was going well so far. Lucy sold a lot of overpriced cakes, and people weren't shy to pay money to get a hug and a picture with their favorite pet.

The bigger annoyance so far was that Oreo's red Christmas bow tied around her neck kept falling. It was the third time and probably not the last. Surprisingly, Oreo was the most popular pet tonight. By talking with people, we understood there was a new popular TV show that featured a cat who looked just like her. It was funny to see that the pets had been so jealous of Vix all those years, and now that the celebrity had shifted to someone else, it was not as fun anymore. I think Oreo was tired of people calling her by the name of the cat from the TV show. Perhaps we should have asked her to wear the available cheetah costume instead. But all in all, it was good for our small charity fund.

Lucy smiled at me.

"So, Clara. How are you feeling lately?"

"Good. Very good. I'm like a new person."

"Hehe. I would say so. I'm so proud of you. You dealt with your family issues very well. Everybody is glad to have you back. To have an even better version of you back."

"Thanks. I still struggle sometimes, but the therapist said it would take time."

"I believe it's true. So, tomorrow you are moving to the pethouse for good?"

"Yes. Vix and Asha are off, and they will welcome me, they said."

"Good. I'm glad. And don't forget about what we talked about. Our little plan for your future. Start thinking about it, okay?."

"Hmmm... Yes, Lucy."

I lowered my head, knowing what she was referring to. I wasn't too sure how I felt about her idea, but I supposed it was the right thing to do. It made me nervous.

As I was about to discuss this topic further with her, I felt a pet pulling on my arm.

"Vix? What is it?"

She pointed at a man who was standing a good distance away from our stand; perhaps he was shy. I approached him, wanting to know if he wanted a hug and a picture, but he addressed me first without the shyness I had apprehended.

"Hi, how much for a picture with all the pets and a hug from the owner?"

"A... a hug from the owner?"

"Yes."

"... One... One moment, please."

Taken aback but this odd request, I went back to Lucy, who was busy fixing Oreos' bow for the fourth time.

"Lucy... A man wants a picture with all the pets, and a hug..."

"It's five dollars per pet... so 35\$..."

"But... He wants a hug... from you."

Lucy paused for a moment, and then let a long sigh out while closing her eyes. She then stood up straight, making a serious face that I had never seen before. From a distance, she severely looked at the man in silence for a long time before telling me the most preposterous amount ever.



"Ten thousand dollars!"

"... Ten... Ten thousand!?! But... Lucy? Is it not... a bit much?"

"It's ten thousand, or he can get lost."

"O...o... okay."

With a now burning face, I looked down at my feet and went back to the man, ashamed.

"So... sorry, mister... She said... T...T...Ten thousand... dollars... I'm... sorry."

The man wasn't even looking at me. His eyes were riveted to Lucy's. There was such tension in the air, and I didn't know what to do. This was madness.

The same way Lucy had done, he let a long sigh out and then just smiled gently.

"Alright. Do you accept checks?"

"Y...yes."

What was happening? He took out his checkbook from the interior pocket of his long black coat and wrote me a check for ten thousand. Who had this kind of money to spend on a photo? Why was Lucy charging him such an unfair amount?

After detaching the check from the booklet, he placed it in my hands.

"Thank you, Clara. Come on, girls. Let's take a picture."

The check was so heavy that my hands were shaking. And how did he know my name? Did he hear Lucy saying it out loud while I wasn't listening? And how come he was organizing the photo with the pets all of a sudden?

The bouncy pets obeyed, though, and quickly surrounded him happily. The man looked at me, waiting for something.

"Oh, right! The photo!"

I rushed to grab my instant camera and put my head through the strap. I trotted in front of the group and got ready to take the photo. But then the man turned to Lucy and called her over.

"Wait! Lucy... aren't you joining us?"

"Really!?"

"Please?"

That was unreal. The strange man had just convinced Lucy to join him and the pets for the photo. Looking at that with my mouth wide open earned me a swift scolding from Lucy.

"Clara! Let's get over with this, will you?"

"Oh... Right!"

I placed the instant camera in front of my face and looked through the viewfinder...

"Smile!"

*Click! Ffzzzzzz!*

By the time the little square slid out of the camera, Lucy had already left the group and had returned to organizing her cakes. But the man recalled her right away. There was something else that was part of that ten thousand dollar deal. They were too far for me to understand what they were saying, but Lucy approached him and let him take her in his arms.

Her two hands rested immobile at her side, not participating in the hug he had asked for. He rubbed her back in a non-threatening manner and murmured something in her ear, and finally, after a bit, she wrapped her arms around him, as gently as he did.

I was mesmerized by the scene. Who could he be to her? How was he so generous, and how come he knew my name?

It didn't take too long before he let Lucy go. I was able to read his lips when he said, "thank you," but then he walked away, gently patting Accalia's head on his way out, just because she was there.

"Hey, wait, your photo!"

Vix snatched the picture from my hands by clamping it between her two paws and ran after him. After she gave him the expensive photo, she wrapped her arms around him. He returned her hug, crouched, and exchanged a few words for a moment while rubbing her arms.

After Vix gave him another hug and returned to her friends, I shyly went to see Lucy.

"Lucy, who was..."

"Alright, I'm going to bring that check inside. We don't want to lose it. I'll be back in a few minutes."

"..."

Clearly, she wasn't disposed to discuss him. She walked away and entered the animal café, leaving me alone with the pets.

The latex animals didn't seem to care too much about what had happened. Misti was trying to fix Oreo's neck bow that was crooked again, the other pets restarted to wave at random pedestrians, but Trixie turned to me for a moment, then walked in my direction.

She had sensed that I was missing a critical piece of information, and she wanted to help.

"Trixie? What is going on? What happened?"

She put her paw on my chest and shook her head as if to say, "Don't worry." Then she turned her head left and right, looking for something. The store next to the café had some big signs in their bay window. Trixie trotted to it and pointed at one of them with her cushy paw, trying to tell me something.

"A window?"

She shook her head, no.

"A sign?"

She shook her head, no, and pointed at different places on the sign.

"Oh... You are pointing at the letters?"

She nodded. All she wanted me to do was to read the letters she pointed at.

"H... U... S... B... A... N... D... Husband!?"

Trixie nodded.

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