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Animal Café

Chapter 5 -My Lovely Pets

"Thank you!"

Wow... That came out well for once. I just ordered a smoothie from the kiosk at the mall, and when they handed it over to me, I didn't hesitate or think; the words flew out of my mouth flawlessly. Regularly talking to the pet girls was making a big difference. Saying thank you maybe was not a big deal for most people, but to me, it was a small victory.

I walked to one of the empty tables and sat there with my drink and cellphone. The goal of my visit to the mall was to shop around for a new pair of shoes. Usually, my communication disorder was in the way of such simple activities. Shopping for new shoes could be scary to me; the thought that I would have to talk to someone during the process was paralyzing me, to the point where I didn't want to go anymore.

But not today. The smoothie order was not my only victory. I also felt confident to go from shop to shop, trying to find exactly what I wanted, not just buying the first pair that fit me to avoid going to other stores.

Also, just sitting here at the table in front of the smoothie kiosk was something I would not necessarily have done in the past. I ran the risk to have someone walk up to me for a chat, forcing me to expose my disorder; like when those two girls sat at the table right behind me, some anxiety set in as if they entered my oversized personal bubble.

But I resisted. I sipped on my smoothie and checked my emails even though none of them were from people. They were either bills or online orders, which was rather sad. But while I was pretending to do that, it was an opportunity to listen to people around me and observe how they were socializing. I eavesdropped on the two girls behind me who were chatting about a new purchase.

"Why did you buy that dress anyway?"

"What? You don't like it?"

"It's not that... I'm just wondering why. Are you going on a date with a hot guy?"

"Nooo... I just like it..."

"Right! A hot girl then?"

"Nooo! I just like it!"

"So when are you going to wear it then?"

"I dunno... Maybe after my next shift. I'll find an occasion!"

"You are hopeless! You know that?"

Those mundane conversations were something I was incapable of. What they were saying was inconsequential and purposeless; the poor girl didn't need a reason to get a new dress if she had the money and liked it. The other girl should have minded her own business. Yet, I saw this all the time... Friends were teasing each other to have fun, and I was unable to do the same with the people I knew.

This is part of why I liked going to the animal café so much. I didn't need to use speech all that much to communicate, and it took a lot of pressure off my shoulders. I understood the pet girls well even if they were mute, so it gave me a break from real life. Practicing my communication skills was not imposed on me if I didn't feel like it.

I kept listening to what they were talking about, admitting to myself that I envied them for being able to discuss in such a friendly manner. It looked like a third girl was about to join them.

"Heeey! Over here! We're here!"

"There you are, guys... Well hidden. I couldn't find you."

"It's quieter here... Give me my food!"

"Hey, calm down, let me sit first... So, here's your pad thai, and you, I got your teriyaki chicken."

"Thanks! What are you having?"

"I got vegetarian egg rolls."

"Aaah! Gross! How can you live without meat!?"

That last bit of conversation almost made me chuckle. It immediately reminded me of my little pet sitting adventure the other day, when I had to feed Trixie with Meeka's vegetarian food. It didn't agree with her too much. I didn't mind it personally, but some people just needed their meat.

I guess the latex animals were not that much different than regular people after all. They all have different personalities, different tastes, and different ways to cuddle. The pets were just much cuter and didn't talk nearly as much.

Their little chit-chat continued.

"So, when do you go back to work?"

"Tomorrow... I'm doing four days in a row this time. And you guys?"

"Tomorrow as well for five days."

"In two days for me... I don't remember for how long, though."

"But hey, Meeka, too bad you missed last Monday. Lucy took a day off, and Clara got to pet sit us! It was sooo much fun!"

"No way! Lucy let Clara take care of you all?"

I sprayed my smoothie all over my table when I heard what I just heard and started trembling like a leaf. As the white liquid was dripping down my chin under everybody's stares, behind me were three of the pet girls that I cuddled and had sex with. But they were ordinary people. I couldn't see them, but just hearing their voice sent me to a terrible place. What if they recognized me? What if they talked to me?

"Hey, you okay there?"

"..."

A voice... perhaps Meeka's voice... paralyzed me further...

"Hey? You good?"

"... Y— Yes... Thank... you!"

Turning around to look at them was not an option. I grabbed my napkins and started wiping my chin and table clean as people resumed their normal activities, including the three pet girls behind who lowered their voice for a moment. They were possibly scared by the freak who had spat her smoothie everywhere like a child.

My visits to the animal café during the past little while were such a life changer. That place became the most important thing in my entire existence. The pets were now my friends, and they helped me grow so much through understanding and enjoyable experiences. I didn't want to change anything for now. I wanted things to continue the way they were. Why did my destiny bring those three girls to me, here at the mall? What were the odds? Why? I didn't want to change... I didn't want to see them as human... not yet.

As my eyes welled up with tears, the three civilian pet girls behind me resumed their loud chat, having fun as if nothing had happened.

"Ah, anyway! What are we doing this afternoon?"

"MOVIES!"

"Asha... can't we do something else for once?"

"No!"

"And you, Misti? Movies too, I guess!"

"Yes! Yes!"

"I give up! You guys are killing me... Okay... Movies it is! Eat your food so we can go!"

Asha... Misti... Meeka... They were so close to me... I knew them all so well and even had sex with two of them. The curiosity was eating me alive, but I refused to turn around. It would destroy everything.

I stayed there, trembling, and hoping they would not discover me... I couldn't leave or stay; on the one hand, I wanted to keep listening to them, and on the other, I wanted to flee. Two decision walls were slowly closing on me, leaving me with a fear for the worse and not daring to take any actions that were susceptible to compromise everything I had worked for recently.

For the next twenty minutes, I sipped on my smoothie and tried to render myself invisible while the three pet girls had a lot of fun. I had no idea they were also friends outside the café.

Eventually, Asha, Meeka, and Misti left... They walked away in the opposite direction, so I couldn't even see what their back looked like; I probably would have closed my eyes anyway.

After a minute or two, I carefully turned around to confirm they were really gone... and they indeed were. I let out a big sigh of relief and let my head drop on my forearms. Now that this madness was over, I was left with an absolute loser feeling.

Who was doing that? Any average person would have been happy and thrilled to meet the pet girls out of costume... but not me. Instead of being overjoyed like I should have been, my messed up head made me feel miserable and scared...

Out of the blue, as I was banging my head on my table in despair, two small hands landed on my shoulder, almost making my heart explode. My breathing ceased.

"Clara... don't turn around... We recognized you."

"..."

"I'm Asha... Don't worry about anything, okay? We know you, and we love you. Nothing will change."

"..."

"Come on, breathe a little bit for me... I just wanted to make sure you were okay. The others are waiting for me elsewhere... It's just the two of us... Good... Breathe..."

As I tried to take some air in, I recognized the gentle touch of the snow leopard girl, but instead of soft paws, they were hands... and it felt so good. Somehow, the way Asha was talking to me right now was the same way the pet girls had treated me so far... with kindness and understanding. There was no judgment in her voice.

"Clara... Would you like to look at me? You don't have to, but I think it would be good for you."

"... I... I..."

"Take your time... Think about it."

This was not fair... Ending up in a situation I didn't want to be in. Asha wanted me to look at her, but it was way too scary to do so. The animal café has been so good to me... changing anything would mean risking losing something too precious... It was too soon for that...

"... N— No."

"It's okay. Another time maybe... but I want to give you a big hug... Can I at least do that?"

"... Yes."

From behind me, Asha wrapped her naked arms around my shoulder and placed her chin on my shoulder, to the point where I felt her soft cheek rubbing on mine. She then whispered something in my ear...

"We love you so much!"

Her words... The faint wind of her warm moist breath brushing against my ear fuzz... Her lips must have been so close. All of that sent an amazing shiver down my spinal cord. Nobody ever did that to me before. It felt so intimate and so genuine.

When her arms slid off me, she made sure to drag her hands around my neck and also in my hair.

"See you at the Pets & Cakes, Clara!"

"CLARA!"

"..."

"Where were you!? We were so worried. We thought you were DEAD!"

"..."

I was at her animal café only 5 days ago. Lucy was a bit over dramatic and motherly as always.

"So... did you think about my offer?"

"... Yes."

"Aaaand? Would you like to pet sit again? I was hoping twice a month."

"... I can do it... Mondays I can."

"GREAT! ... But... I don't really have enough money to pay you right now. The costumes are expensive, and I need to keep my pets alive and healthy."

"... It's okay... I'm fine."

"Well, you may be fine, but it's only fair that I compensate you for your hard work..."

"... They... They are... my friends."

"Aaaw! You are so cute, Clara. No wonder why they like you so much. Okay, so what about this... I will let you bring a pet home whenever you feel like it. Would that work for now?"

"..."

I couldn't answer because my throat froze due to the surprise... but it was definitely a big YES. This was the best payment ever.

I nodded.

"You are not a pet, Clara..."

"..."

"Use words with me... I know you are getting better at talking."

"S— Sorry... Yes."

"Alright... Here, take this... It's your own access card for the lounge. You keep it. Now go see your friends, they will be happy to see you."

I headed to the lounge door but was a bit apprehensive after having bumped into Misti, Meeka and Asha yesterday. While I eavesdropped, I learned that two of the three girls were going to work today, but I didn't know which ones.

I opened the door and squeezed myself into the lounge. There were a couple of clients already, so some of the pets were already busy. I initiated my usual headcount. The grey wolf was sitting between a young couple, Vix the fox and Oreo the cat were cuddling with three girls, and Trixie launched herself into my arms, asking for a hug and interrupting my task.

"Trixie!"

So that was four of them. As I was walking to my favorite booth, I spotted Misti, who was napping on the carpet in a corner, she was wearing a red collar, meaning that she had done a bad thing, or Lucy simply wanted her to rest.

"Is Meeka ... here?"

Trixie shook her head, no.

"And Asha?"

She nodded and pulled on my arm, then pointed at my booth. Asha was lying there, on the bench, probably napping as well. It made me wonder if Misti and Asha had done something cuddly late last night after their movie night.

I sat next to Asha and gently placed her head on my lap, trying not to wake her up. For the next fifteen minutes, I cuddled Trixie, telling her about random things, but certainly not about my little encounter with the three girls at the mall. I preferred to pretend it didn't happen. Lucy brought

me a little piece of cheesecake and my usual coffee, but she didn't stick around as she had other things to do.

I was so happy that nothing had changed so far, I still loved my cute rubber pets and still treated them as real animals. They made me feel so comfortable. The only difference was that Trixie was much more adventurous than before. She playfully massaged my boobs and slid her paw near my crotch, just to tease. I couldn't deny that the sexual white rabbit was the one turning me on the most, and it was directly attributable to our hot night together inside the micro-room with all the other pets.

Then the door opened, and Lucy let more people in. Two nerdy looking guys this time. This café was bound to attract all kinds of people; I certainly wasn't the first one who never had cuddled before. Trixie pointed at them in a way to notify me that she had to leave me and go to work. There was a rule not allowing someone to hog on multiple pets at the same time if there were other clients without one.

Trixie slapped Asha on the head, not so carefully, then gave me a quick hug before going to sit with the two new guys.

Asha stretched adorably then sat up to look at her surroundings. When she realized I was here, she pulled me into a tight hug and wouldn't let go. The snow leopard was so affectionate, and what happened yesterday between the two of us was no stranger to it. I felt like giving her a lot of love as well. Asha was the only critter that ever spoke to me using her real voice, and the only reason she did so was to make sure I was okay. She was a genuinely caring person, in or out of costume.

But a little feeling of guilt burned inside of me.

"Asha... I'm sorry."

The leopard girl cocked her head, probably not sure why I was apologizing.

"I... I should have... looked at you. Yesterday."

She shook her head and patted mine.

"I wanted to... but it was too scary..."

Asha leaned on my chest and gave me a little squeeze as I scratched the back of her head. It was not easy to admit, but when I walked home last night, I couldn't help but think I had chosen the wrong path. I should have been more courageous and discover who she really was.

"Would... would you like to come to my place... tonight?"

She pushed herself from me, a bit in shock due to the bold question, then she pointed her paw at my chest.

"Yes... Lucy said I could bring one of you home if I wanted to... Would you like... that?"

Raising her two arms in the air, Asha started dancing on her seat, some sort of victory dance. She alternated several moves, showing her unambiguous agreement with the idea.

"This... This is my place, Asha..."

The snow leopard, wearing a black hoodie that Lucy had forced her to wear, looked quite badass. As soon as I let her leash go, she started roaming around my small apartment, not needing any permission. She was definitely nosier than Trixie was when she had visited.

She looked at my shelves and tried to learn new things about me. The pictures seemed to be what interested her the most. She pointed at a specific one with her cushy paw.

"Those... are my... parents. They are not in this city."

Using her paw once more, she pointed at my parents then hugged herself... then pointed at me.

"Yes... They love me. They are... nice."

While she kept exploring my place, I took off my shoes, placed my coat in the closet, and put her food in the fridge. I brought her back to the entryway, undressed her, and hung her leash and collar to my door handle. If I were going to bring pets home on a regular basis, I would have to add a hook to the wall for the pet gear.

"Okay, Asha, you can rest on the bed, I just need to take a shower first."

I couldn't believe how much better my speech got when I wasn't nervous. I was home with one of my favorite pets, and I felt very safe. Maybe I was slowly finding a way to crack my communication disorder... Maybe the key was to manage my anxiety and irrational fears.

Asha jumped on the bed and hugged my body pillow.

"You are so cute... I'll be back."

When the shower temperature was to my taste, I pulled the curtain and entered the steamy cloud. I soaped up my body using a body wash that smelled like lavender; it was my favorite.

Closing my eyes and enjoying the relaxing aroma seemed like the right thing to do at the moment.

Then I heard a suspicious noise. I cracked my eyes open...

"AAAAAH!"

She scared me so much... Asha pulled the curtain with her paw and was looking at me with her head sideways.

"ASHA!"

The little snow leopard stepped in the shower and tried to reach me with her cute paws.

"Asha! No! ... You'll slip! It's full of soap!"

As I was warning her, she started to lose control of her legs... Latex feet on a soapy PVC surface was robbing her from all traction. The snow leopard quickly ended up on her knees, pulling me down with her!

"ASHA!"

I had no idea how we ended up like this, but I was now on my back with an adorable rubber pet on top of me. My soapy body in contact with her slick skin couldn't do anything else than provide me with an incredible feeling. Asha just wanted to play, and this unexpected situation turned into her favor. She got a bit of water in her breathing holes, but outside that, she was more than happy to be on top of me and had no plan of letting me go until I gave her what she wanted.

She laid her torso down on top of mine, and sensually moved around to make us feel amazing.

"Asha... You could have waited... But... this feels good."

Aaah... Pets... Those crazy little things.

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