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Note: This spinoff of Feliformia may contain spoilers. I recommend you read up to Chapter 9 of the main series prior reading this spin off. Enjoy!

Feliformia - Side Story - Rubbercat Tails

Chapter 4 - The Art Student

"So, when will she arrive?"

"Saturday, late in the afternoon. Flight 234."

"Sounds good. I'll go pick her up and take good care of her."

It was so exciting! I just got off the phone with the Art college person who accepted my candidacy to be part of a very cool student program, even though I knew nothing about the Art nor was overly interested in it and had no intention to going back to school

No, this program was to help a student in need. I would be renting one of my spare bedrooms for cheap to a young girl named Elizabeth, and in return, she would help me with my house chores; my home was rather big, so I could use some help.

Her airplane was supposed to land in two days from now, and she would be staying with me for the next two years, which was the duration of her Art program; that was if everything went well, of course. There was always the risk that she would be a slacker, but it was unlikely. If the girl had been smart enough to come to my city to do whatever she dreamed of, chances were slim that she would be half-assing that plan.

Another thrilling reason was that I've been alone in my big house for quite some time, and I didn't feel like I was going to get in a steady relationship soon. Maybe this student could become my friend somehow; I could use some company these days.

"I can't wait. I can't wait! Why am I so excited?"

I was bouncing on my seat, waiting in the airport's cell phone parking lot for her text. Her plane had just landed a few minutes ago and it felt way too real all of a sudden! I didn't know what to expect since I haven't seen a picture of her, but as an artist, I bet she would be somewhat wild,

wearing crazy clothes and multicolor hair. It was fun to try to imagine what she would be like, but I simply hoped we would get along well.

My cell phone buzzed me out of my daydreaming.

Bzzz "I'm waiting in front of door 7. I'm wearing a green dress."

"On my way! Black SUV. I'm a small red-hair."

I tossed my phone on top of the dash and drove off the lot. Following the arrival signs, I quickly got there and started counting the big yellow numbers on the concrete columns of the pick-up zone.

And there she was, a young woman wearing a green dress in front of column number 7.

"Oh my... She is not looking like a punk at all."

I pulled over and put my car in park, then got out to greet her.

"Hey, hey! Elizabeth? I'm Erika!"

"Hello!"

Geez! Talk about a pretty girl. And I was so jealous of her dress too; it was so cute. Granted, she was an Art student; but I still didn't expect a fashion show at the airport today. A quick refocusing was required here because my role was to make her feel welcome, not comment on her good look.

"Alright, Elizabeth, get in the car. I'll put your luggage in the trunk. We are going straight to your new home."

"Thank you."

We left the crowded airport, and the drive home was the perfect time to break the ice and have a little girl chat. I wanted her to get used to me as soon as possible, but at the same time, I didn't want to scare her or make her feel I was a crazy talkative monstrosity; I started simple.

"So, Elizabeth? Can I call you Liz?"

"... I would prefer Elizabeth."

"Oh... sorry. So, are you excited about moving to a new place?"

"I am grateful for the opportunity."

Mmm... She didn't look shy to me, but I felt she wasn't going to be a big talker. I had to give her a break, though, as it was more than likely because of the anxiety. I could only imagine the stress caused by going to live with a stranger at such a young age; it must have been terrifying for her. Maybe if I talked about people she loved, it would make her feel more at ease.

"So, I bet you are going to miss your parents. They can visit you whenever they want, you know."

"It won't be necessary."

"Aww! How come?"

"I don't have parents..."

"You... you don't?"

"No. They passed away when I was little. I grew up with my aunt."

Erika! Dumb ass! I had a plethora of subjects to talk about, and I ended up on THE one that turned to be a tragedy. I bet if I had decided to talk about Art, it would have been a safer topic. Elizabeth was kind of looking down at her feet now because of me.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to... I can ask some stupid questions sometimes. I blame my aged and withered brain."

"How old are you?"

"My age? I'm 36."

"You are not old. And you are pretty."

Thank goodness I wasn't drinking coffee while driving; else, I would have spat it all over my dashboard and probably caused an accident.

"Did you say I was pretty? No! You are the pretty one, Elizabeth. Look at you. You could easily be an actress."

"It is not what I want to do."

"What do you want to do then?"

"Crafting."

"Crafting?"

"Yes. Crafting."

"Crafting what?"

"... Just crafting in general."

Ookay. Elizabeth was not too open to talk about her life or what she liked to do. It was going to be an interesting next few months if she didn't open up a little. I wasn't disappointed yet, but maybe I got just a bit too excited too quickly, thinking she would be as enthusiastic as I was, and would have liked to become my friend right away.

The rest of the trip was more of the same laborious and awkward conversation. I tried to make her talk but was not receiving much in return; it was just not flowing between us.

As we approached my house, the nervousness shifted to my side. I spent the whole week cleaning everything to make sure she would get a good first impression, and now she was about to discover her new world; I hoped she would be pleasantly surprised by her new environment.

I parked in the garage and acted as a good host.

"Welcome home! I hope you'll like it. You'll see, I prepared a big bedroom just for you."

"This house... is..."

"... Is what? Big?"

"Yes..."

"I know... I went a bit overboard, but I like it that way. Don't worry, though, you won't have to do all the cleaning yourself. Come, I'll show you."

I dropped her luggage in the hallway, then we headed to the living room where I explained to her my sarcastically, uncomplicated rules.

"So... You can use all the rooms in this house except for my bedroom. Look outside, there is a huge pool and long chairs, feel free to use everything. I work most of the time, so if you want to invite friends over, you can too."

Elizabeth looked through the window at my well-furnished backyard and pool area, but her reaction was different than what I had anticipated.

"... I apologize. But I think they made a mistake."

"A mistake? What mistake?"

"Yes. I asked for the smallest payment possible. I cannot afford to live here. I will contact the school and—"

"Hey! Wait, wait, wait! That was not a mistake. I am the one who chose the rent level. I'm asking for the lowest amount on purpose."

"... But... It... it is not fair..."

"Elizabeth, you got lucky. That's all. I don't need the money. I just wanted to try something new, that's all. Helping a young student girl sounded fun. Stop looking traumatized for a minute... come, I'll show you your bedroom. It is upstairs."

She was genuinely uncomfortable. I had this high paying job, and I didn't need more cash; I just wanted to have someone around to chat with from time to time and do fun things. I wasn't that lonely, but... yeah... I was still a bit lonely. Since I broke up with my boyfriend years ago, I had not found any other interesting men, not that the first one was. Everything was so dull recently. My life was just about work and nothing else. I wished I could tell Elizabeth that, but it would freak her out, probably.

"Here, that's your room. Do you like it?"

"I... it's... big."

"Stop it, Elizabeth. It's fine. It's your room! You can even decorate it the way you want."

"There are two large windows."

"Yes... What about them? You have curtains too... Nobody will spy on you."

"But... two windows... for one bedroom is—"

"Aaah. Enough with the amazement. Come on, put your suitcase on the bed, and let's go eat something. I will try to cook for you whenever I'm home."

"... Cook... for me?"

"Yeah... Let's go."

I couldn't find a way to pierce her awkwardness armor, so I decided not to care anymore and just be myself around her. She would have to adapt eventually.

We went back to the kitchen, and I made her sit on the kitchen island stool while I pulled the ingredients out of the fridge. I decided to go student-like and straightforward.

"Hotdogs! We never know about delayed flights, so I thought a simple classic would be the best."

"... Hotdogs?"

"Oh... you don't like hotdogs? Are you a vegetarian? I didn't even ask."

"No. I eat meat all the time. Hotdogs are fine."

"Well, I'm not convinced it is real meat, but okay, then... I'll toast the buns and microwave the sausages; it's going to be ready in a minute."

"... I would like... to help. Please, let me take care of it."

"Help me to prepare hotdogs? I don't need your help with that. I know you are supposed to help me with the chores in exchange for the cheaper rent, but I'll give you suggestions later. Like removing the leaves from the pool or vacuuming occasionally."

"... but... I can help... with the hotdogs..."

What was wrong with her? She still looked as uncomfortable as the first minute she got here. Maybe hotdogs were not a good choice? I didn't know what was bugging her so much. She should be happy; I provided her with the best guest bedroom I had, I wasn't charging her much at all, and I was even cooking for her. Why was she so disturbed?

Shortly after, I served the meal, and we ate in silence. Elizabeth barely put anything in her stomach before retreating to her bedroom to read a book, claiming she was tired. She wouldn't survive on a hotdog and a half. Ah, well, not much I could do. Tomorrow would be a better day.

The next morning, I woke up well-rested but wanted to relax even more. Usually, this time of the day was conducive to sexual entertainment. I felt a bit frisky, so I pulled a small vibrator from my nightstand drawer and slid back under the blankets to apply some joy to my crotch.

"Mmm... Good morning, little you. Aaanh! Oh, this feels good. Aaaanh!"

I tried to keep quiet; I didn't think about this beforehand, but I would lose a bit of privacy now that Elizabeth was around. Usually, I could just moan to my heart content; I would have to change my old habits.

"Aannnnnggh... She is so pretty. Mmmm"

Maybe it was not the most mature thing to do, thinking about a pretty girl while masturbating, but somehow it was a bit of a turn on to know she could be on the other side of my door, listening to my moans.

"Aaaanh!"

My sexual life was pretty dull, so simplistic fantasies such as the fear of getting caught or thinking about a lesbian relation could quickly get me going. I always thought there would be more fun things to do in bed, but I didn't know if they were for me. What would be the point of buying fuzzy handcuffs and whips if I were alone anyway? What I was doing right now with my imagination provided me with as many orgasms as I needed.

"Mmm... I'm close... aaanh!"

Maybe one day, when I would be sick and tired of my vanilla lifestyle, I would go out there and try something crazy, but unfortunately, it was not going to be anytime soon.

"Aaaah! AAaaanH! I'm... I'm cumming... aah!"

Sshhh! I have to be quiet. Else Elizabeth might hear me and think she moved in with a pervert.

After my onanism session, I got out of my room; it smelled like food. Was Elizabeth already up and having breakfast? Well, it was a good sign. I wanted her to feel at home, so I was glad she didn't wait for me, mainly since she barely ate anything last night.

I trotted down the stairs and headed to the kitchen. What I witnessed was beyond my comprehending.

"Oh... My... God! What is going on here?"

"I cooked you breakfast. Please eat whatever you want."

"You... you did all of this yourself?"

"Yes. Please, eat. It's for you."

I sat on the stool, staring at what she had prepared. There were crepes, scrambled eggs, neatly cut fruits, croissants, coffee... I got a full continental breakfast.

"But... Elizabeth... How? How did you do all that?"

"I am proficient in the kitchen. Please, eat while it is warm."

I understood why my hotdogs were not appealing to her; she must have felt as if I had tried to poison her last night. I was twice her age, and I could never have prepared such a good looking breakfast. With my crazy work schedule, I was always in a rush.

"Thank you for breakfast... but... something is different about you today."

"Do not be concerned about my behavior. Just enjoy your food, please."

"That is it! Your behavior! Thanks for the pointer. You are so much more formal today... and less shy."

"Please... I... I do not want to discuss this. I just... want to be useful."

"Aaah! You are funny, Elizabeth... Well, bon appetit! But aren't you going to eat too?"

"I will eat once you are done."

She was a bit odd, but her food was amazing; I didn't expect this at all. If she were this good in a kitchen, maybe I would ask her to cook for me when work kept me stupid busy. I sipped my coffee while still trying to wrap my head around this feast.

"This is so good. Everything is so fresh. Did you have a crystal ball that told you I was about to wake up?"

"No, when I heard you masturbating, I knew you were about ready for breakfast."

All the coffee located inside of my mouth sprayed out in the palm of my hand.

The rest of the week was rather interesting. Not only was Elizabeth cooking breakfast for me every day, but she also prepared dinner before I arrived home. I loved my job, but it was very intense, so what she was doing was very much appreciated. I couldn't believe how great of a cook she was. She could turn the most hardened piece of meat into something delicious every single time.

Another thing I started noticing was the absolute cleanliness of my house. Perhaps she was unsatisfied with my housekeeping skills, so she needed to do it better. My shower has never been as shiny. Heck! She was even mowing the lawn and cleaning the pool for me.

Today was Saturday, though, and Elizabeth was never doing her housework when I was around. I think she didn't want me to feel guilty because I didn't have to lift a finger anymore. I never really thought someone would hide from me to clean a bathroom.

As I was about to go shopping, I found her, nose in a book, in the upstairs lounge... and a little something piqued my curiosity.

"Hey... Elizabeth? That book you are reading... What is it?"

She sandwiched her little thumbs between the pages and showed me the cover. It looked like a bunch of anime characters.

"Well, this is cute, but... is it not the same book you were reading when you got here? It's not that big. Surely you must have finished it already."

"Yes, it is the same. But it is the only book I brought with me. So, I'm rereading it. I like it."

"That's nice that you like it, but If you want, you can borrow some of mine. I mean, look, my bookshelf is full."

As I said that, I realized the said bookshelf only contained books about management, economy, and business. It was probably not what Elizabeth wanted to read. Peter Lynch had not much in common with anime characters.

"I'm good. Thank you. This book is the first volume of a series I wanted to read. When I can afford it, I'll buy the subsequent volumes."

"Sorry, I don't have anything exciting to read for an 18-year-old."

"It's alright. I'm not bored with this book."

"Okay, then... Hey, I have to go out for a bit. I will be back later. Call me if you need anything."

"I will. Thank you."

I went to the garage and climbed in my car. As the garage door was opening slowly behind me, a huge smile appeared on my face. Elizabeth didn't know this about me yet. My incredible visual memory allowed me to remember every word I read. I couldn't be trusted...

An hour later, I was back home and called Elizabeth over. I placed one of my hands on my lower back, pretending to be in pain then called over my victim.

"Hey, Elizabeth?"

"... Yes?"

"Come here for a minute, would you? I hurt my back, would you mind going to my car and carry my package inside?"

"Oh! Of course."

Subserviently, she went to my car, pulled the small cardboard box out of the truck, and brought it to me.

"It's a bit heavy, where do you want me to put it?"

"Oh, just put it in your bedroom."

"... I'm sorry? Did you mean your bedroom, Erika?"

"No, I said yours."

"My... Bedroom? But... why? What is it?"

My back miraculously healed, and I placed my two hands behind my head, circled my red ponytail with my fingers, making it jump up and down. I just smiled at her most conspicuously. She was taken aback by my reaction and understood that something wasn't quite right.

She placed the box on the floor and knelt in front of it, giving me a couple of unconfident stares.

"What are you waiting for, silly? Open it!"

"..."

Her delicate finger pulled on the flaps, which made the cardboard box pop open, revealing its content. Her mouth opened wide, and the world stopped for a brief moment. She plunged one of her hands inside the box while the other held the cover open, and she pulled out one of the items; it was a book that looked awfully like the one she was reading earlier, except there was a number two printed on it.

"E... Erika! Those... Those are..."

"Yes, they are. Happy birthday!"

"But... It is not my birthday..."

"Oh, I know it's not, I'm saying it anyway. Those are the ones you wanted, right?"

"Yes... but... why?"

"Don't ask silly questions. You cooked a lot for me, and I wanted to help you get used to your new environment. It's a small gift because I like you."

She pulled out one volume after the other, examining at all the different covers.

"It is not small... The 25 volumes are in there. This... this is too much."

"I know, right! Who in the right state of mind would write 25 volumes?"

"It is not what I meant... It must have cost you—"

"Hey! None of this money yakking in my house. Accept your gift, as it is from my heart."

She stood up in all her beauty and stepped toward me. Then she pulled me in a big unexpected hug and wouldn't let me go. That was the first time she dared human contact with me since she arrived.

"Thank you! Thank you so much, Erika. It is the best gift ever. You are amazing!"

"Haha! I'm glad you like it."

I wrapped my arms around her and felt all fuzzy inside. She was so pretty and smelled good too. I think I made a good friend just now... but seriously... 25 volumes? She could have picked a smaller series. That stunt nuked my whiskey budget for the next few months.

I was getting along more and more with Elizabeth. I had not told her yet, but I would not charge her any rent starting next month. She was doing so much work around the house; it was unbelievable. I didn't have to lift a finger anymore, which was great since I worked harder than ever. She gave me some sort of peace of mind, which allowed me to relax.

But work was still work. Today, they pushed me a bit too hard, and I decided to take the afternoon off. They didn't like it, but I was so valuable to the company that there would be no consequences. Losing me would hit them way too hard, and they knew it.

I drove back home with no guilt.

I had to go to the store later today, so I parked in front of the garage. I decided to walk around the house to take a look at my backyard. As usual, the pool was pristine, and the grass was freshly mowed.

"How does she find time to do all that? She is a freaking machine."

I walked to the patio door and slid it open to access the kitchen area. I put my keys on the kitchen island, then went right to the living room couch to decompress a bit from my insane morning. I loved how we could see the kitchen from here. Open concepts were so much better than separated rooms, in my opinion.

A few minutes later, I heard some light footsteps. Elizabeth was coming, maybe she had heard me? At the exact moment when I was going to say hello, she entered the kitchen with a stack of neatly folded towels in her arms and started storing them in one of the cabinets, humming happily.

My heart literally stopped. What in the world was she wearing?

It was a pretty green maid uniform with a full white apron and a little headband, and she was acting very comfortably in it. She looked like one of the anime characters from her books. It suited her so much and she was unbelievably cute... but... why?

Once she was done with the towels, she paused for a short moment when her eyes landed on the keyset sitting on the countertop. She picked them up and immediately understood what was going on.

"Hi!"

Her face quickly morphed and turned beet red. Embarrassed as I've never seen her before, her grey eyes locked to the floor, and she attempted to flee.

"Liz! STOP!"

She froze on the spot... I walked up to her.

"What are you wearing?"

"..."

"I'm not scolding you... I'm just curious. Where did you get this uniform from?"

"I... I made it myself."

"... It is awesome. It's so pretty."

"... You... you think so?"

"Of course, I think so. Look at you. But I'm just not sure why you are wearing it."

"... Sorry... I will take it off..."

"That is not what I meant. I'm just curious about you, that's all. I'm not judging you. I think it's adorable."

"... I... I like roleplaying."

"What's that?"

"Pretending... to be... someone else. And dressing up..."

Now that Elizabeth was telling me this while gasping for air, it made some sense to me. She did tell me about her love for crafting, and she was also into those weird Japanese books full of colorful maids. I also noticed her frequent personality switches, which always confused me greatly. When cooking, she was all formal, and when reading, she was shy and dreamy.

"So, that's what you do when I'm not home? Dressing up to do your chores?"

"... sometimes... I mean... yes."

"And this is why you never clean the house when I'm here?"

"... yes..."

"Okay, well... We can't allow that."

"... I'm very sorry. I will go take it off right away."

She turned heel and began to walk away, looking humiliated.

"Would you come back here, silly girl..."

"... okay."

She turned around again, still looking at the floor.

"Listen to me now. Here is the deal. From now on, you don't do this in secret. You wear it as often as you like, whether I'm here or not."

"..."

"Good. Also, you don't have to pay rent anymore. You will stay here for free."

This time she lifted her head and looked at me, shocked and disapproving.

"But... Erika... No! I live here. It is only fair that I contribute."

"You're right! So instead of giving me unneeded money, you'll work as my maid. That is way more useful to me. How does that sound?"

"... I... I would love to."

Well, this day didn't go as planned. The last thing I expected to end up with was a pretty maid named Elizabeth. I merely wanted to enable her to be herself without judgment. As I said, I didn't need the money, but I needed a best friend.

"Hey, Elizabeth... Can I get a hug?"

"Of course."

Her arms wrapped around me, and she pulled me into her warm and soft uniform. This student program was the best move I ever did.

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