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# Animal Café

Chapter 20 - Chaos, cakes, and pets

"Morning, Clara!"

"Mmm..."

The bed was warm, the sheets silky, and my pillow very squishy; I could have slept all day. I cracked my eyes open, and in front of me was Accalia, with her cute Asian face. She just pulled me out of my slumber and placed a basket full of random breakfast items next to me.

"Hey, where is your lover?"

"... My... lover?"

"Yes... Oreo! Where did she go? She was next to you when I left the room to go prepare breakfast half an hour ago."

"Oh, I don't know. I was sleeping."

As I pulled myself up to rest my back on the cushioned headboard, I noticed a pile of latex on the floor along with some straps, more than likely Oreo's harness. A weird sensation went down my spine when I realized that Oreo was no longer hidden behind a layer of glossy latex. If she were to come back to the bedroom as a human, I wasn't too sure how I would react.

Accalia noticed what I was looking at and theorized about the whereabouts of our little friend.

"Ah. She undressed. She must be in the shower then."

"She... she doesn't mind undressing... around us?"

"Well, yes, she does. But we are pushing her to do it more outside the café. We won't tell Lucy that she is wearing a catsuit outside work, but we won't let her get away with everything either. It would be good if she were more comfortable in her own skin, you know."

"It looks... hard for her."

"Yes, Clara. Oreo is struggling. But she is doing well overall. So, what did you think of her?"

I only met Oreo for the first time yesterday. It went well... strangely well. Embarrassingly well. Accalia was in the washroom when I had discovered Oreo and her habits of wearing a latex catsuit outside the café and being into bondage, and then, things degenerated slightly. Right after I had untied her, we ended up secretly making out while we were alone. How was that even possible? Why had I felt an urge to kiss a girl I had never met before so intently, and why has it been so pleasant?

It was confusing me greatly because I liked other pets too. I made love to several of them, and it was very fun. But kissing Oreo was just not the same, and I didn't understand why. My emotions were like scrambled eggs right now.

"Oreo is... nice."

"What? That's it?"

"Yes. She is friendly."

"Clara... come on. Tell me the truth. When I joined you two in bed yesterday, I could see in your eyes that there was more."

"N...no... I cuddled with you too. You are both nice."

"Silly Clara! Whatever."

As she poked me on the forehead with her finger, a small voice coming from afar interrupted our conversation. Oreo must have exited the shower.

"Acca... Could you bring me my latex suit?"

"No, Oreo. Clara wants to see you out of your suit. Get out from behind that wall and come eat breakfast with us."

"... Aww..."

Timidly, a small girl looking down at her own feet turned the corner and entered the bedroom. Her fuzzy hair was short and black, and her skin creamy white. She had wrapped a towel around her torso, which wasn't enough to hide her delicate arms and sexy collarbones, the same collarbones I had felt countless times with my fingers when she was dressed up as a pet. Her small hands pressed to the middle of her chest were adorable, and the way she twisted her toes on the soft carpet left no doubt about her current state of mind.

I said her name.

"O... Oreo?"

She lifted her head, and we locked eyes, which sent a powerful wave of... something... throughout my body. Why was my body reacting so strongly every time she looked at me with her mesmerizing eyes? It was so odd.

"Hi, Clara."

As if seeking protection, she fast-walked to the bed and sat near Accalia before wrapping her arms around her. I would probably have done the same if I had been in her shoes.

Of course, Accalia was mature and socially skilled, so she didn't even flinch like I would have done. Instead, she plunged her hand inside the breakfast basket and pulled out a croissant from it, and offered it to Oreo.

"Here you go, your favorite food."

"Thanks."

"You want one too, Clara? I'm not sure what you like other than cheesecakes."

"Yes, I like croissants too. But I never eat them because I have no money for that."

"Ah, no longer a problem. Don't forget that if you want something, you just write it on the fridge screen, and you'll more than likely get it."

"Yes, Asha showed me."

We continued to eat our breakfast quietly. Accalia did most of the talking, but Oreo and I occasionally shared an awkward gaze that we didn't know how to interpret. Knowing that I would spend the next four days with Oreo and the next three with Accalia was kind of odd, and I didn't know how it would turn out.

So far, I have spent most of my time with Trixie, Misti, Vix, and Asha. It was easy with them because they either just decided what to do or just wanted to cuddle all day. With Trixie, it was all about going out on dates, and with Vix, it was all about sweet cuddles. They all were different.

But Oreo, outside our accidental make-out session, I didn't know what she would like to do. I knew for sure she loved bondage, and Accalia even tied her back up last night for fun, but could I take charge and do such an extreme activity? I didn't know... Maybe it would be better if I left everything to Accalia to decide for now.

Yeah... that was what I would do. It would be easier.

"Hey, Clara? Do you hear something?"

"Hear... something?"

"Yes... Something is buzzing."

We all kept silent, trying to listen, and yes, something was indeed buzzing. I quickly realized that it was probably my cell phone since the noise came from my pile of clothes on the floor.

My nakedness was problematic. I would have jumped out of bed, but they would have seen me naked.

"My... My phone is ringing..."

"Well, are you not going to answer it?"

"I'm... naked..."

"Aaaah, Clara! We've seen you naked often. Why are you so shy about your body? You are very cute."

As if Oreo had sensed and sympathized with my discomfort, she got off the bed, pulled the phone from my clothes, and handed it over to me. Her good deed to save my honor was quickly rewarded with some teasing from Accalia.

"Ah! Oreo, you should wear Apricot's suit! You are a good obedient doggy. You went to fetch Clara's phone!"

"I'm not a dog! I just wanted to be nice."

"Ahan! Being nice for your special person... right?"

"... Shut up, Acca! It's nothing like that."

"Ahan!"

As Oreo jumped on Accalia to make the teasing stop, I unlocked my phone and looked at my call logs. Nobody ever called me, so it was unusual. But quickly, I discovered that it was Lucy who had attempted to reach me, which was even weirder.

"Oh, Lucy called me."

"Aaah, no! Oreo, not my ears! Don't pull on them! They are sensitive!"

They were not listening to me, so I decided just to call Lucy back. The phone only rang once before a panicked voice answered.

"Clara! Where are you!? I need you to come to the café right away with Oreo!"

"... With... Oreo? Why?"

"Trixie just broke her arm! We are heading to the hospital right away. Tell Accalia to meet me at the Civic Hospital, okay? Do you have your key to the café? Can you go right there to take care of the pets for me?"

"Yes, yes. I do. I will tell Accalia."

"Okay, thanks. Call me back if there is anything. You are in charge of the café until I return. Take good care of the clients. We are leaving now. Bye... and thanks!"

"..."

My plan, to let Accalia decide everything for me, had suddenly collapsed on itself. Not only did I feel horrible because Trixie had broken her arm, but on top of that, did Lucy just ask me to

RUN the café? I had taken care of the pets on her days off, but I had never operated the café during business hours. It was crazy! I wasn't qualified to do that.

When I took my eyes off my phone, I noticed that Accalia and Oreo had paused their fighting and were just staring at me, waiting for me to tell them what was going on. There was no doubt that they had heard my voice tone and suspected something was wrong. Or maybe it was my shaky hands and my absence of breathing that put them on high alert.

"Trixie... She broke her arm."

"WHAT? SERIOUSLY?"

"Yes. Lucy wants you to meet her at the hospital, Accalia."

"Which one? The civic?"

"Yes... And Oreo, we have to go to the café right now."

"... To the café?"

"Yes. Lucy wants us to take care of it today, but I don't know how to do that. Do you?"

"... No. I'm just a pet."

Accalia was already busy putting her clothes on, but she turned to me with a reassuring smile.

"Don't worry, Clara! You'll be fine! It's not hard. You just feed the pets and bring cakes to the clients. They will be so enamored with the pets that they won't even talk to you."

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The pets went ballistic as soon as I opened the lounge door. Vix grabbed my leg, Asha was gesticulating like crazy, Meeka escaped the lounge, and Misti jumped on Oreo, her best friend. Right away, I didn't know what to do anymore. Lucy had left no instructions about what she wanted me to do.

It was chaos. Was I really supposed to let the clients in the café? What about the food and drinks? Was I supposed to take care of all that by myself? I was panicking a little. At least the café didn't open for another thirty minutes, so I had a bit of time ahead of me to get my bearings together. Knowing Lucy was busy taking care of Trixie, the last thing I wanted was to call her back so soon.

First thing first, I had to calm down and come up with a good plan. I wobbled to the nearest couch and sat on it. Vix climbed on me and wrapped her arms around my neck. Her big black pet

eyes were so cute, and she smelled good too, but it wasn't time to cuddle. I think she just wanted to reassure me.

"Vix... What am I... supposed to do?"

Vix shrugged.

"Did Lucy tell you anything?"

Vix shook her head, no.

"Is Trixie okay?"

Vix nodded. Then she shook her head, no, which was a bit confusing. Well, a broken arm wouldn't make anybody feel good, so the question was a bit irrelevant.

Misti joined us on the couch, pointing at her own skinny belly.

"Did... did you have breakfast yet?"

Misti shook her head, no.

"Oh, I guess I have to start with that then. Oreo, do you want to help?... Oreo?"

Wait, was Oreo gone? I quickly stood up and didn't see her in the lounge anymore. The last time I saw her, she was with Misti, but now Misti was with me. Did she leave me all alone?

"Okay, stay here. Okay? I'll go get you food and try to find Oreo. And Meeka has escaped too. Aargh!"

I exited the lounge and made sure to close the door behind me so no more pets would sneak out. Just as I was about to start looking for my two lost friends, a loud rumbling noise came from the kitchen. That was scary.

After a short jog to the kitchen, what I saw made my jaw drop. The big fridge door was wide open, the shelves had collapsed, and the whole reserve of food bottles fell out; some of them had even burst on the floor. But what worried me even more was that some cake boxes had fallen out as well and had been crushed. I placed my two hands on my head, panicking and imagining what the cakes looked like inside their box now.

"Nooo! What... what happened!?"

And then I saw Meeka, the rubber raccoon, hugging her knees in the corner next to the fridge. Her cute mask wasn't enough to hide the fact that she was directly involved with this mess.

"Meeka! Did... did you do this?"

She hid her muzzle between her knees.

"Lucy is going to be so angry. What am I going to do now?"

My best guess was that she had tried to help me by gathering the food bottles for her friends, but with those cushy paws, things didn't go as planned. She must have dropped a bottle, and while trying to catch it back, she had tripped or something and made the entire shelf fall on the cakes. It was a disaster.

With my anxiety through the roof and the need to get some control back, I grabbed Meeka's wrist and pulled her back to the lounge.

"Come Meeka! You... you can't help. You have to stay in the lounge."

Once I had reunited the raccoon girl with her friends, I went back to the kitchen to clean up the mess... or try to. The first thing I did was to put all the food bottles on the countertop, but my shaky hands made an open one tip over, which nicely coated the cabinet doors and the floor with blended food.

"Aaaah! Nooo! I made it worse!"

What else could go wrong? That was something I would have to clean later before Lucy came back.

Next, I stacked the cake boxes on the other countertop. I knew some of those were expensive and would only know which ones got damaged until I inspected them all one by one. A couple of them fell on their side during the fridge accident, so I was pretty sure they were crushed inside the box.



But just as I was about to place the last box on the countertop, its bottom failed, and the cake it contained made an Olympic dive straight down and splattered all over the floor... Of course, it had to be the triple chocolate one with the most icing.

"Noooo! Whyyyy!?"

My eyes immediately welled up, and I couldn't think straight anymore. What was happening to me? How did I end up in this situation, and why was I unable to handle this by myself. I was ruining Lucy's café at an alarming rate.

Oreo... Oreo must help me. She has been working at the café for a lot longer than I did, so even if she said she didn't know how, she should at least be able to help me a little. Where was she?

"Oreo? OREO? Where are you?"

I walked out of the kitchen and looked up the staircase.

"Oreo? Are you upstairs?"

Before I went looking for her, I noticed that I had dragged cake purée and blended food all over the hallway with my dirty shoes, which enhanced my panic. And then, my wet eyes landed on the wall clock, making my heart skip a beat. The café was supposed to open in ten minutes, but there was not a chance in the world for me to be ready to serve customers so quickly.

I rushed upstairs to find my friend, not conscious enough to understand that I was making things worse with my food-coated shoes.

"Oreo?"

The pod room was empty, and all the capsule doors were open, so Oreo probably wasn't hiding in there. I then went to the costume room, and that was where I found her, but what I saw stirred mixed feelings inside my belly. Oreo had undressed and was now trying to put her cat costume on by herself. When she noticed me, she just froze, probably because of the strange way I was looking at her.

"O... Oreo? What... what are you doing?"

"I'm... putting my costume on..."

"But... I was calling your name. I... I need your help."

"I know, but I wanted to wear my costume first."

"Is... Is that what you do... when your friends are in trouble? You prefer to play?"

A feeling I never expected to experience around the pets invaded my fast-beating heart; anger. For the first time, I fully experienced what Lucy must have felt regularly around her girls when they reached her limits or hit a nerve. Whenever I saw her scolding the pets, I always thought she was too severe, but what was happening to her then seemed to happen to me now.

How could Oreo do this to me? She knew that I didn't know how to run a café. She should have heard the loud noise coming from the kitchen when Meeka broke the shelf. She should have heard me calling for help.

Yet, she had decided to come here to put on her cat costume instead. Could it be possible that she was THAT selfish?

"Clara... I... I just wanted to help..."

"NO! You preferred to play!"

"Nooo... Trixie is at the hospital... I need to replace her... Four pets are not enough to take care of the clients..."

"Oreo! Stop lying! Leaving me alone was mean!"

"But... I'm not lying. Claraaa... Don't be angry! You... you are scaring me!"

As Oreo's eyes became all wet, a little voice inside me felt like this was well-deserved and that she should feel guilty. At the same time, I felt horrible for having talked to her in that tone.

Not being able to handle my mixed emotions any longer, I turned around and left the room. Anyway, my throat had clamped shut, and talking was no longer possible.

I ran downstairs, walked around the reception desk, and sat on the floor to hide from the world. Hugging my knees and sobbing seemed like the only good thing to do at the moment. I also reached in my pocket for my phone. If I could just calm down enough to call Lucy and ask her what to do, things would get better. Lucy always knew what to do.

But as I woke up my device, it beeped a few times and turned off in front of my reddened eyes. There was no doubt anymore; this day was cursed. I had not recharged my phone last night, and the battery stupidly died in front of my face at the worst possible moment. Once more, a familiar question popped into my mind; what else could go wrong? More than ever, I felt lonely and isolated.

Lucy had entrusted me with her café and her pets, something I had partially done in the past when she took a day off, but this time, I had quickly lost control and failed her on all levels. I now had a bunch of starving pets in the lounge, the pet food was half gone, the expensive cakes were ruined, the café had never been this dirty, and above all else, I got angry at a pet who was very special to me, and she would probably never talk to me again. Perhaps I would even have to leave the café.

"Bwaaaahaaa!"

Crying was all I had left. I pressed my face against my knees and broke down like a defective human being. Terrible fictional scenarios spun inside my brain, and there was no escape for me anymore. Everybody would be angry at me for having failed them, and I would never be able to look at them in the eyes again.

What else could go wrong? What else could go wrong?

*Dingdong! Dingdong!*

"..."

NO!

It couldn't be!

The café's door chime rang, alerting me that the front door had opened... My lungs ceased to function at the realization of what had just happened.

I had not locked the front door after we arrived... and someone had just entered the café. I heard their footsteps approaching the reception desk, my hiding place, and then there was a long silence.

"HELLO? Lucy?"

"Where is everybody?"

"She runs the café by herself. Give her a minute. Don't be so impatient, cathead."

"Only Mark can call me cathead. You must not! Come on, Syr. I want to see the animals. That shy girl said there was a raccoon... I never petted a raccoon before. I must pet the raccoon!"

"Kitty. Stop bouncing like that and relax a bit, would you, or else we are leaving. HELLO?"

No way! Those voices... It couldn't be. Those nicknames... Syr, Kitty... Was my brain so distressed that I started hallucinating things?

Unable to hide any longer, I wiped my tears with my long sleeve and slowly rose from behind the desk, exposing my miserable state to the two women who were puzzled by the technique I had chosen to reveal myself.

"Oh? Clara? What were you doing behind that desk? Is Lucy around?"

"... N... No."

Definitely not a hallucination. In front of me was the very beautiful Elizabeth, the artist who had created the pet costumes. This time, she was not wearing a maid uniform. Next to her, the scary girl named Kitty, the one who had asked tons of questions about the café when Misti and I had visited their place a while ago.

Somehow, I was happy to see Elizabeth, which had given me a very good vibe when Misti and I first met her. She was sweet, intelligent, beautiful, caring. But on the other hand, her friend Kitty was terrifying, and now she was about to learn that I had lied to her and that our animals were not real animals. What were they even doing here?

Trembling was my best option.

"Wait... Clara? Are you crying? Are you alright?"

"... No. I... I messed up... everything."

"Where is Lucy?"

"At... at the hospital..."

"WHAT? Is she okay?"

"Yes... yes... A pet got hurt... and... I messed up. I don't know how to take care of the café..."

"Aaah. Okay. Well, it seems we've picked the right day to visit then."

"Meow! Yes. Syr is our slave! She does everything around our house."

"Kitty, I'm not your slave! Why would you say such a thing?"

"..."

What was Elizabeth saying? What was she suggesting? That she would help me run the café? Why would she do that? And would Lucy even be okay with it too? I had no idea what kind of relationship those two had with each other. The only thing I knew was that Elizabeth knew about the pet girls, and Kitty presumably didn't.

Elizabeth confirmed my assumption.

"Kitty and I will help you. Kitty, do you want to go take care of the pets while I'm talking to Clara and figure out what needs to be done?"

"WHAT? SERIOUSLY? CAN I?"

"Yes... But I tell you... It might not be exactly what you expect."

"Stop being mysterious, Syr! I've taken care of cats and dogs before. I'm super good with small furry critters."

"Right... You are in for a shock. Clara, could you let Kitty in the lounge? While she is meeting with your friends, we will see what we can do for you. I suppose the amount of icing on the floor has something to do with your bad day."

"Y...yes... O... okay."

Was I about to be saved? Just like that? Would Elizabeth, calm as ever, be able to fix all my mistakes with a snap of a finger? I didn't have many other options at the moment, so I obeyed her request. I carefully walked around the reception desk with an access card in hand, making sure not to get too close to Kitty, as her over-happiness was still scaring me.

I swiped my card on the reader and pulled the lounge door open. Kitty was already crouching down, probably hoping to see a small animal squeeze out. Clearly, she wasn't expecting the right thing. Syr grabbed Kitty's red leather collar and pushed her, not so gently, inside the lounge.

"Close the door, Clara! Quick! Quick!"

"She... she doesn't know... about the pets?"

"Nope. Kitty had no clue about them. But she will adapt quickly. Trust me."

"..."

"Alright, Clara. Now, tell me what happened, and we will fix it together. I'm sure it can't be that bad."

Have the Gods blessed me with a guardian angel? I had no firm answer to that question, but it sure felt like it at the moment.

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