

ALICE GABBRIELLI

Veterinary assistant - 30 years old

If there's one thing you're certain of, it's that one needs luck to succeed at life. Some people have an excess of it, some are somewhat lacking. You have none at all. People are masters of their own fate? All bullshit. One can try to do things right, but some pitfalls are just inevitable.

Like the serious form of diabetes you were diagnosed with in your teenage years, and your consequent insulin dependence. Or the horrible bout of acute appendicitis that threatened your life a few years later and left you with a nasty scar. Or, more recently, the eye pressure problems that your disease causes and the constant visits to the hospital you are forced to endure to avoid permanent damage. What a nice, shitty picture! No wonder you suffer from panic attacks.

Luck hasn't been any kinder on you on the social or emotional fronts, either. Yes, you can count on a loving family, but your parents have always treated you like a porcelain doll: no school trips, no adventurous vacations, and a painstakingly attentive gaze over everything you did, even when it had nothing to do with your illness. You have crystal-clear memories of your mother drowning you in sunscreen for fear of skin diseases when you went to the beach, or of the endless hours

of physical therapy and swimming lessons garnered by your little scoliosis problem, when you would have much rather played in the volley team with your classmates. Ah, of course, your classmates... Teenagers never worry about understanding the reasons behind things: To them, someone different is just that. And the issue is that you really are "different".

A life in contact with pain, hospitals and obsessive prevention turned into a lifestyle has brought you to see the world in a slanted light. You think that everyone is alone and that people's personal paths make it impossible to understand one another, so it's useless to try to please others at any cost: You might as well be who you like to be. So you've never cared about what other people think: Let them laugh at the skirts you make for yourself while barely knowing how to sew, or at the colourful socks that make you feel lighter just by being wrapped around your feet, or at the vast collection of cat-shaped baubles you still love to wear at thirty!

Oh, cats. Your friends, the only creatures you protect instead of being protected from, your faithful life companions.

You perfectly remember how it began. You were in the hospital, a few days after a surgery: Your mother was going home and you really felt like crying. You went to the window as she got out of the building and you saw that mangy old tomcat sitting in the courtyard. So you began throwing

out scraps of the disgusting boiled chicken you'd been given for dinner, thinking he'd enjoy it more than you. Word rapidly spread around the neighbourhood, because after that first cat, many more joined in.

When they released you from the hospital, an army of grateful felines came out to greet you. And you have never left them. Since that day, each week you go to the hospital to bring leftovers and dole out cuddles. In those moments, nothing matters: Their purring is your sole reality.

You studied to become a veterinary assistant, and after years of volunteering in feline colonies you started one in the courtyard of your building. You feed them, you have them neutered and vaccinated, you worry about their health and hygiene, you shelter them from the cold, you let them into your house to sleep on your bed. There are eight of them now, although a few summers ago you found yourself caring for as many as fifteen furry friends. To you, it's a way of doing something meaningful for the world.

You're positive you don't want any children: You don't just fear they would inherit your disease, you wonder about the morality of exposing a new living being to the whims of fate, when you yourself are tired of being its plaything. Not to mention that nobody has ever really wanted you. Too weird, or childish, or aloof, or ill. Or simply invisible?

You have no faith in humanity: You'd love to, but too often have people fallen short of your expectations, starting with your neighbours.

Take Dario Ristori, your landlord. His grandmother was a good friend to your mother and you have never missed a single rent deadline,

yet out of the blue he decided to throw you out and sell the apartment, even though he already has more money than he knows what to do with. You asked him to wait until the end of the year and his only answer was getting his lawyer to send you an eviction notice. Now you're about to get kicked out into the streets, and... What will your cats do in the hands of your evil neighbours?

Like Ria Santos, the nitpicking little mommy who spends all her time talking about how cute and clever and healthy her son is. How could she start a petition to have your poor colony moved? One day, after ensuring you were within earshot, she called you a slob and your yard a cesspool. She was talking to her fellow witch, Camilla Lanzi, who thinks herself a big shot. And what did she answer? That one shouldn't expect any decorum from someone who would rather be with beasts than with people!

You were seething with rage and, in the end, you couldn't help yourself: On that same night, when nobody could see you, you went out and keyed their cars. You had fun doing it, it was like etching all your anger into their glossy car doors. That gesture filled you with indescribable joy. Unfortunately, you weren't alone. Giada saw you. You almost died from fear, but she just wandered closer and winked at you.

Ever since then, she's become your best friend: You hang out and talk about everything, though now you mostly gossip about those two hags. And about Rosa. Yes, Giada has fallen for her head over heels and her feelings would maybe even be requited, were she not already a wife and a mother.

During meetings

Being on rent, you have no voice in the matter of expenses. You only weigh in to keep your neighbours from being mean to your cat colony... And to yourself!

Relationships

Luciano Avellini: The building manager, he's in his thirties and always inexplicably kind towards you. You're positive that he's a good person, and that his job is making him miserable.

Alice Gabbrielli: (Your turn to speak)

Vincenzo Salemi: In his forties, married to that unbearable witch, Camilla.

Camilla Lanzi: Just because she's a doctor and her job involves saving lives, it doesn't mean she has any right to be such a monster to the rest of humanity! She's snobbish beyond all redemption, always with something to complain about: Besides supporting Ria on your colony's displacement, she has never missed one chance to show her contempt towards you. You keyed her car.

Gioele Zacchei: He's a sullen, reclusive forty-year-old who works as an illustrator. Married to Rosa Mistretta.

Rosa Mistretta: Kind, sensible and much younger than her husband Gioele. She currently works part-time in a travel agency. Giada has confessed to you that she's in love with her.

Giada Fadda: She's a student, only a few years younger than you. She saw you key the witches' cars, and instead of ratting you out she befriended you over it. You clearly share a few enemies! She recently moved here from Sardinia: She's homosexual and harassment drove her out of her hometown. She's in love with Rosa, she told you that they've even kissed, but Rosa has grown distant over the last few days. Giada asked you to keep quiet about it.

Ria Santos: A young woman from Santo Domingo living off her husband's wallet. She loves to go on and on about her son: Being a vapid goose, she doesn't have any other conversation topic. You have been hating her ever since she started a petition to call for your cats' displacement, without even knowing that a legally protected feline colony can't be removed like that. You keyed her car.

Dario Ristori: Your landlord. Your mother and his grandmother were close friends. He evicted you out of the blue, without the slightest explanation.

Attilio Daddioli: Young and fresh out of law school, Dario Ristori's attorney.

