

# The Cat Lady

By: Peggy Barnell

*(Elaine is preparing for company, putters around, to straightening up. She holds a stuffed cat in the crook of her arm as she goes, occasionally talking to the cat)*

Elaine:

Ok now, Miss Whiskers, you need to be on your best behavior today. It's been such a long time since we've had company, right... My oh my, I have missed live, human interaction! Listen, don't you make me get the spray bottle out!

*(doorbell or knock on the door)*

Elaine:

*(going to the door)* OK, ok – here we go! *(opens the door to her friend, Rebecca)* Rebecca!! Oh, it is sooo good to see you! *(brief awkward moment as they decide if they can touch, hug, then go ahead with a quick embrace)*

Becca:

I know, right? It's good to see you, too. Oh, you have a cat... I didn't know. You didn't have a cat before, right?

Elaine:

Oh right, right. This is Whiskers. I've always been fond of cats, but I've never really had time for pets – until the pandemic hit, you know? I'll tell you what though, I am so glad I've had Miss Whiskers here to keep me company the last several months – I think she's kept me from going crazy! And please - do tell me if she's annoying to you in any way – I know not everyone is a cat-person, like me.

Becca:

Ok, but no worries. I like cats. *(reaches out to pet Whiskers)*

**Elaine:**

Great. Oh, I am so glad you're here. Please, sit down. Make yourself comfortable.

*(they settle in on the couch)*

**Elaine:**

Well, how are you, I mean really? Tell me everything, because I really want to know. I've missed you! How is work? Is everyone else back to the office, or are there still some working remotely, like me?

**Becca:**

I've missed you too, Elaine. I have to say, it does feel really good to be back in the office. I really missed people, too – real human contact, you know? Most everyone is back, though there are still a few working from home. Janine has that condition, you know? She's not coming back until she absolutely has to. Like you – not that I blame you, at all.

*(As Becca talks, she absently searches through her bag, pulling out a lip balm or lipstick, and/or pen and lays them on the couch beside her bag. Elaine eyes these items then 'bats' at them, eventually swatting one off the couch. Becca looks at this quizzically then to Elaine. And awkward moment)*

Let's see, Ryan is separated now. We all saw that coming though, right? His 'friend' apparently moved in with him right after we all went to remote work – and right after his wife went to stay with her elderly parents. What a low-life! Always thought he was a creeper anyway. Oh, and Lauren gave her official notice. She announced it at the first in-person meeting we had. Did you dial in for that one? Can you believe it? She said if there's one thing Covid has taught her, it's that life has no guarantees for tomorrow – she joined the women's PGA circuit – and she's going for her dream! You have to admire that, right?

*(Elaine has 'umhmm'd'... and 'I know, right' to most of Becca's comments – though she has gradually gotten closer to Becca to sniff in her direction, and has gone from sniffing to butting/rubbing her head against her arm or shoulder – in a very cat-like fashion)*

**Becca:**

Elaine, are you alright?

**Elaine:**

*(stops her rubbing and sits upright)* Oh, I am so sorry! *(she turns to Whiskers who she still holds in the crook of her arm)* Bad kitty! Whiskers, I told you you were going to have to behave! Forgive me, Becca, Whiskers is not used to having company. She has to learn manners. *(Elaine suddenly starts/jumps and looks away, staring, frozen for a moment toward another part of the room, then relaxes)*

Silly me. I thought I saw something. I **am** proud of Lauren! That's wonderful. I hope she does great things. What about her boyfriend?

**Becca:**

He's totally on board - gonna go with her on tour and continue his work from wherever she travels.

**Elaine:**

That is awesome. I love to hear about a man supporting his woman that way. *(She starts, stares briefly again in another direction)*

**Becca:**

Elaine, are you... alright? Have you been feeling Ok?

**Elaine:**

*(relaxed again now)* I'm fine, fine. *(reaches out her free hand and seems to flex/release her claws on Becca's arm/shoulder as she speaks)* Just so glad to be with a human, right?

**Becca:**

Well it's been a long time since we've all had to isolate. It can wear on a person's nerves, I know-

*(Elaine jumps, then bolts across the room to stare out the window, frozen except for her waving behind. She's transfixed on something she sees outside)*

**Elaine:**

Did you see that? Ughhhh... it's that stupid dog, next door... *(suddenly diverts her gaze)* Oh- oh, oh, oh!! Look! That robin is back! I would so loooove to be able to...

**Becca:**

Elaine? *(no immediate response. Becca stands up)*. Elaine, I... I'm not sure what's going...

**Elaine:**

*(suddenly relaxes, turns, responds to Becca as she comes back to the couch)* Cooper the boxer from next door, makes Whiskers so nervous. I have to be on guard for her all the time. Don't I, sweet thing? *(petting, murmuring to the cat)*

It's Ok baby, that dog is not gonna hurt you. No, mama won't let that happen. What is Angela gonna do without Lauren? She may actually have to work for a change, right?

**Becca:**

*(she cautiously settles back on the couch as she speaks, though squeezing against the opposite end)* Yeah, it's a whole new world for Angela already...

Elaine, are you... Are you feeling ok?

**Elaine:**

Huh? Yes, what do you mean?

**Becca:**

It seems kind of, I mean you... I just wondered if everything is alright...

**Elaine:**

I am so sorry, Rebecca - I've made you anxious! It's just I'm not used to seeing people. It may take me a little time, I guess, to have human interaction again. Please, forgive me.

**Becca:**

I don't know. Have you been...? I mean, do you feel well? Have you been feeling well, Elaine? Can I call someone for you? A doctor? Do you have a doctor?

**Elaine:**

***(jumps up)*** Where are my manners? Let me get you a drink. Some wine, maybe? We could both use that, right? It's just everything seems so new to me, that's all. I'm not accustomed to entertaining. How about a little rose?

**Becca:**

Ah, well... ok. Thank you.

**Elaine:**

***(scurries about and returns with a bowl of wine, placing it on the end table or couch)*** Here you go.

**Becca:**

Um, ah... ***(staring at the wine bowl)*** On second thought, I should go. Miles is meeting me for dinner in just a little bit.

**Elaine:**

I see. Ok. I understand.

***(A moment of awkward silence while Elaine glares at Becca)***

**Becca:**

I'm sorry Elaine. I was only going to visit for a few minutes anyway.

***(Elaine responds by arching her back and hissing at Becca)***

**Becca:**

And that's my cue. ***(she gets up quickly and begins to move toward the door, never turning her back on Elaine)*** Nice to see you Elaine, Let's do this again. ***(as Elaine begins to stalk Becca, Becca pulls a spray bottle out of her purse and aims it at Elaine's face, then sprays her)*** But not real soon. ***(exits)***

**Elaine:**

***(stunned silence for a beat as she stares at the closed door, then she turns back to the wine and talks to Whiskers as she laps at the wine in the saucer)*** Well, we can't let a perfectly good bowl of wine go to waste, now can we, Miss Whiskers?

***Lights out/the end***