



World Organisation
for Animal Health

SKETCHING CHANGE

TALES FROM VETERINARIANS ACROSS ASIA-PACIFIC



GENTLE HANDS



Scan the QR code to access the comic stories in this publication in digital format, and to read several others.

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ABOUT THIS VOLUME

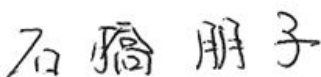
The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) is committed to strengthening gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) within the veterinary sector. Our recent work in Asia and the Pacific has shown that, while there is a growing number of qualified women and diverse professionals in the sector, many still face barriers shaped by longstanding norms, insufficient adjustments and unequal opportunities.

As noted in regional studies conducted by WOA in Asia-Pacific, gender stereotypes influence perceptions within the veterinary sector, and the absence of reasonable accommodations reinforces the exclusion of persons with disabilities. These findings highlight the need for continued awareness and action across institutions, training systems, and professional communities.

To foster this change, WOA has expanded its GEDSI initiatives, including awareness raising events and partnerships with veterinary associations and networks in Asia and the Pacific region, in particular the Federation of Asian Veterinary Associations (FAVA), the Asian Association of Veterinary Schools (AAVS) and the International Veterinary Students' Association (IVSA). The Comics Competition Promoting GEDSI in the Veterinary Sector, organised between December 2025 and January 2026, invited veterinary students and professionals to reflect creatively on what an inclusive profession looks like.

The competition aimed to celebrate storytelling, artistic talent, veterinary commitment and GEDSI values, and to inspire dialogue through accessible and engaging narratives. Among the winning submissions, the comic presented here captures the imagination, concerns, and aspirations of veterinarians in different parts of the Asia and the Pacific region. The story reminds us that inclusion is not only a policy goal—it is a shared cultural commitment that strengthens the profession and the communities it serves. While we could not award all participants with prizes, we appreciated all entries and will be sharing additional comic stories of note on our website (see QR code on the cover inner page).

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the winners of this competition, and thank all participants for adding their voices to this important conversation. This comic enriches WOA's ongoing efforts to promote a veterinary sector where everyone can thrive, advancing our mission to improve animal health and welfare globally and ensure a better future for all.



Dr Tomoko Ishibashi
WOAH Regional Representative
for Asia and the Pacific



Dr Naree Ketusing
WOAH Sub-Regional Representative
for South-East Asia

GENTLE HANDS

— story of —
Gentle Man & Gentle Woman

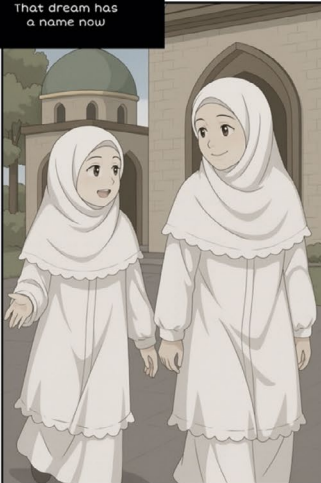


Today is the day I'm leaving home

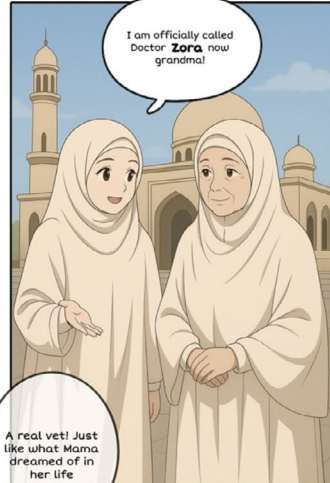


I graduated in 2024. Last month, I took my oath as a veterinarian. Today, I step forward, finally living the dream of the little girl I once was

That dream has a name now



I am officially called Doctor **Zora**, now grandma!



A real vet! Just like what Mama dreamed of in her life

My mom passed away when she brought me into this world.
Becoming a Veterinarian is a dream
Mama carried her whole life

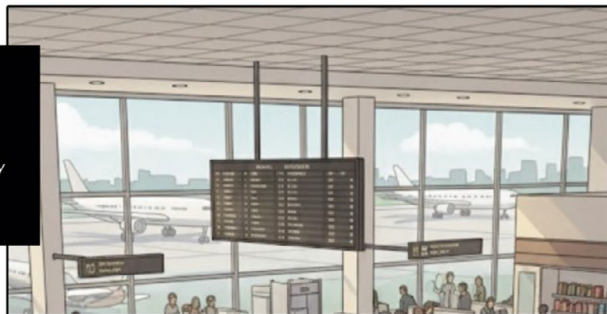


I'll remember my last meal at home



.. the bakery Grandma made

But I'm excited about my new journey





I've arrived ...

My steps are a little shaky. I hope this is the right room



Good morning, excuse me. Is the vet's office here?



Oh, you must be the new vet!

Hi, I'm doc. Tory from the animal clinic

This must be Prof. Mori... the famous internal medicine vet

Whoaa. this doctor is kind... but this one seems different



Yes, you're

Well, at least he replied to my question





As you know, I'm the fastest and most intelligent here, so I don't require a companion

I don't need a female assistant either

HUHI?
So you think a female is different?

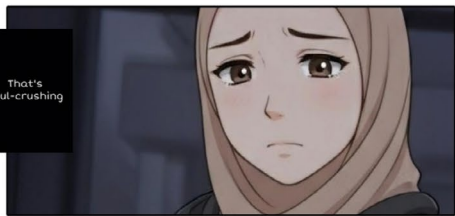
Zora? A woman?
I pictured Doctor Zora as a man

No



Not as I expected

Maybe I got my hopes up too high



That's soul-crushing

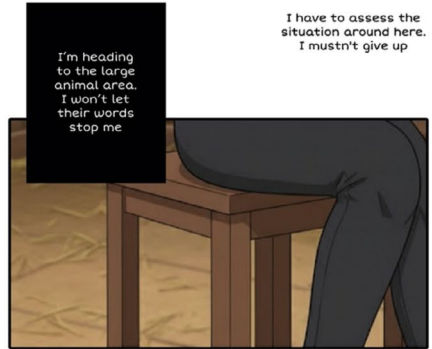


Go find a career that suits your gender

We need real doctors, not women playing with animals.

Oh Mom, I feel so lost... especially after I told you so proudly about all of this





He's actually giving me a shot



Hurry up and get ready! We're going to visit Angrymama



be careful

She's a pregnant orangutan, the one that almost broke the cage door yesterday



Wait, we have an orangutan in gestation right now? That's incredible!

GASP

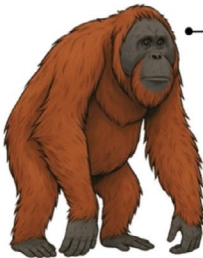


Orangutans almost always bear only one infant at a time.

Did you know?

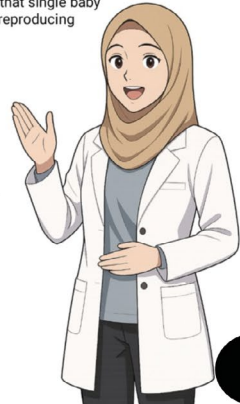
Orangutan births are extremely rare. In this field, every single life counts for the survival of the species.

They also spend up to 9 years raising that single baby before reproducing again.



With the longest interbirth interval of any non-human primate (6-9 years) and intense maternal care, a female orangutan may only produce 3-4 offspring in her lifetime. This slow reproductive rate makes the species highly vulnerable to extinction.

97% DNA genetic similarity with human, their physiological response to pregnancy is almost identical to a human's. Their medical treatment, pregnancy risks so remarkably similar to our own.

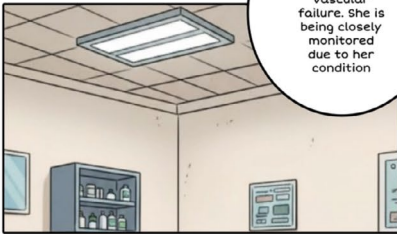


Keep a safe distance until I say so



Terminate is needed because continuing this gestation poses a critical risk to her health

Uterine Torsion leading to vascular failure. She is being closely monitored due to her condition



She hasn't touched her food



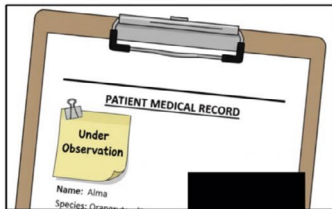
Angrymama looks so lethargic ..

She's actually much calmer than I expected, almost too quiet



Due to her listlessness, medical intervention is required. Get the meds ready!

Pain from the uterine vessel must be draining her energy

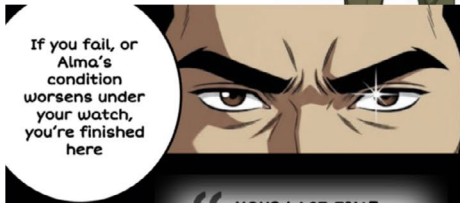
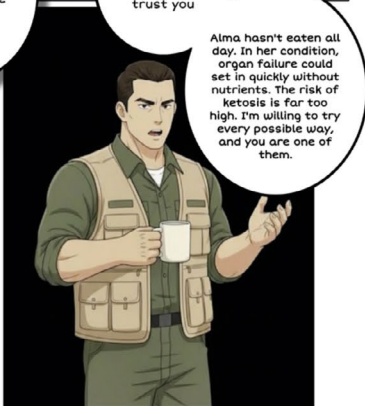


Right after Angrymama's treatment, I went straight to find her medical record



An orangutan infant is priceless.. but the mother might have a better chance of a safe pregnancy later if we terminate this one to save her life





“ YOUR LAST TIME BEING HERE ”

MISSION START



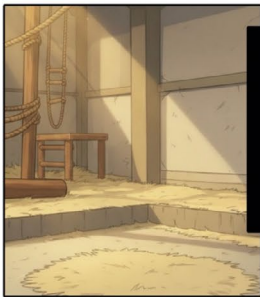
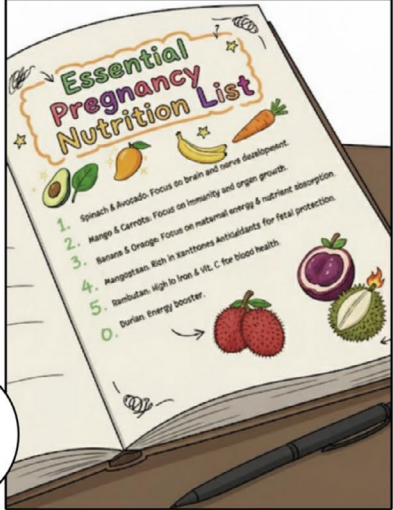
Watch and learn. I'll find a way



Sir, I need to build a new enclosure for Alma. It needs to be kept at a steady room temperature around 72°F - 77°F. We also need to plan the relocation as soon as possible. Since Alma is in late-stage pregnancy, we must avoid clutter to prevent her from engaging in high intensity activities that could be risky.



Preparing for relocation

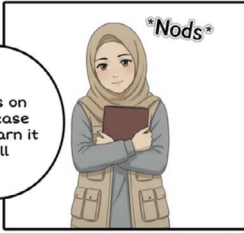




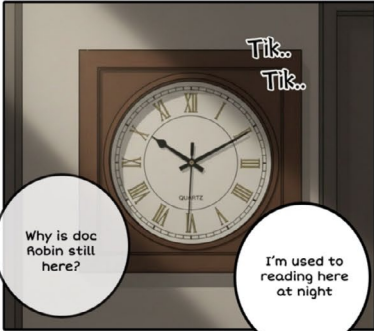


doc Robbin?

Focus on this case and learn it well



Nods



Tik..
Tik..

Why is doc Robin still here?

I'm used to reading here at night



I will research further and collect relevant journals for Alma's case, especially if surgery is needed



I'll be right here. If you need anything, just let me know



I didn't realize how supportive he is.



Reliable sources are limited because the case is rare



Studying through the night, I didn't even realize morning had come

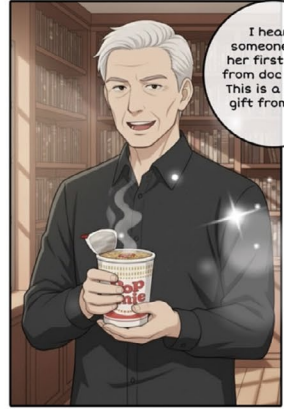


Good morning doc Zora



Syuuut..

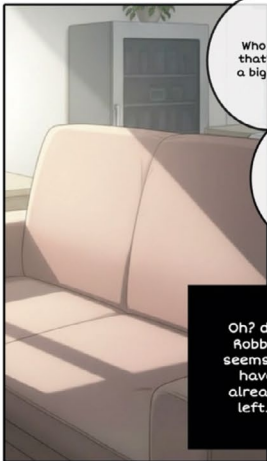
Oh! Good morning Professor. I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to fall asleep



I heard someone got her first case from doc Robbin. This is a small gift from me.



Thank you, Professor. I really appreciate this. But that's not a big deal.



Who says that's not a big deal?

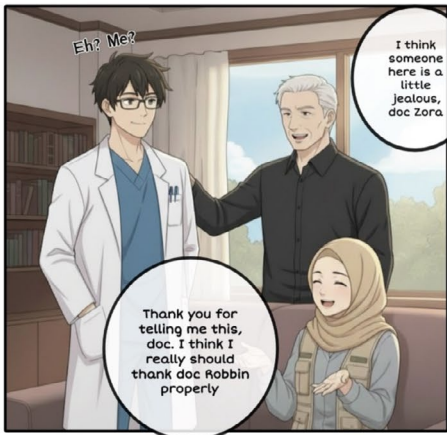
doc Robbin stood up for you and took responsibility

Oh? doc Robbin seems to have already left...



Morning btw

Becoming Dr. Robbin's partner is very difficult! He's the one we listen to the most here, so one dares to challenge his decisions.



Eh? Me?

I think someone here is a little jealous, doc Zora

Thank you for telling me this, doc. I think I really should thank doc Robbin properly



After leaving the reading room, I went straight to Alma's enclosure to assess her condition.

Her pregnancy had entered the late gestational stage, around week 32 now and contractions had already begun.

Alma! Guess who's here. How are you?

Silence?

Tuk!

ALMA!?

Initially, the contractions appeared irregular, but Alma's pain response was disproportionate.

She became restless, guarded her abdomen, and showed signs of acute discomfort, an abnormal finding for late gestation.

Alma you'll need immediately go to the clinic for further evaluation!

RUANG POLI KLINIK

Cklak!

Doc Tony! I need an urgent ultrasonographic examination! Indicated to assess uterine position, fetal viability, and placental blood flow.

At this stage, delaying diagnostic imaging could significantly increase the risk of vascular compromise, fetal distress, and maternal collapse.



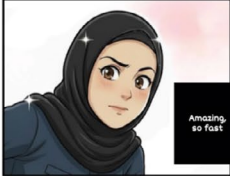
Oh...

don't clear signs of active uterine contractions



This doesn't feel right. Normal contractions shouldn't look like this

Something isn't right. Her abdominal pain is worsening. This isn't normal pregnancy discomfort.



Amazing, so fast



Oh! Anamnesis. Alma curls inward, clenching her abdomen. Her breathing is shallow. What to do?

Uterine torsion causes vascular compromise. Oxygen supply is cut off. The fetus is already in distress.

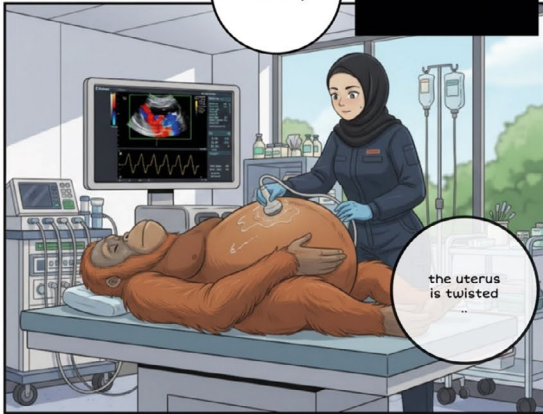


I'll get her ready for ultrasonograph, you prepare to lead the diagnostic

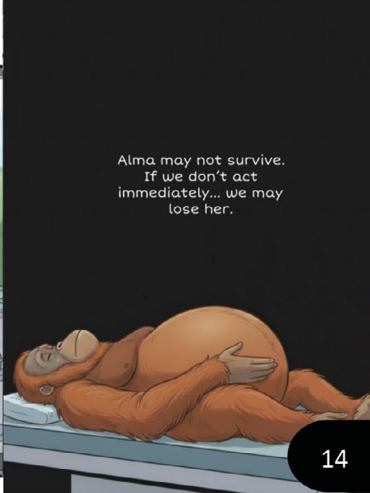
Blood flow markers appear abnormal

Heart rate unstable,

Her abdominal wall was tense, and palpation triggered distress. This raised concern for a pathological condition rather than normal prelabor contractions.



the uterus is twisted



Alma may not survive. If we don't act immediately... we may lose her.

Acute uterine strain led to bleeding!



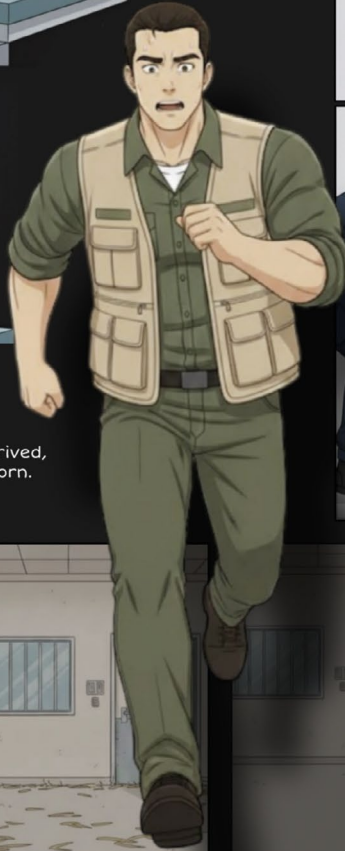
During the ultrasound, Alma suddenly began contracting. Confused by the pain, she pushed forcefully.

I did everything I could to save Alma. But the labor progressed precipitously.

Prepare the cardiac resuscitation immediately



As Doc Robbin arrived, the baby was born.



It was all over. Even the delivery room I had prepared for Alma's spontaneous labor now had to be cleaned. Unused, as if it had never been needed.



Alma didn't survive.

She took her last breath
with a peaceful smile



I failed Alma,
Doc Robbin. You
were right... I
should leave.



You didn't fail.
From now on,
you will be the
doctor
responsible for
her baby.



Tomorrow, go
see her at the
observation
center.

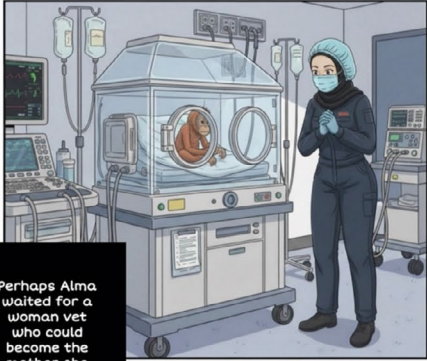
I wonder how
I will look
into the eyes
of the baby
Alma gave
birth to.





Observation Center

When I saw
the baby...
We looked
at each
other.
It's as if she
recognizes
me.



Perhaps Alma
waited for a
woman vet
who could
become the
mother she
could no
longer be.



The End



The four of us continued intensive care for Alma's newborn, a new life that brought hope for the survival of the species.



Dear Human with
Gentle Hands,

From the forests losing their trees,
from oceans growing silent,
from skies where fewer wings return
each year, we speak together now.

We are the ones counted on lists,
labeled endangered,
measured in numbers that grow
smaller.

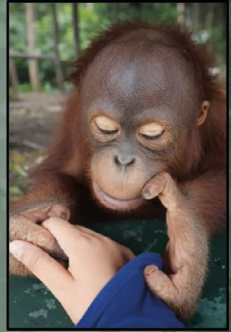
But to you, we were never numbers.

You watched our hearts beat.
Please protect us. Care for us,
even when we cannot ask.

If one day I grow strong, climb high,
and the forest hears my breath again,
it will be because you once whispered:
"Live."

Thank you, keepers of life, guardians of
hope.

For every paw, fin, wing, and trembling
hand thank you, our veterinarian.
With all the life you saved, us



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alfathitamara Timmy

From the halls of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Airlangga University Indonesia to the heart of wildlife conservation, my name is Alfathitamara. I am a veterinarian with a Master's in Reproductive Biology, a mother, and a believer in the power of women. This comic explores the beauty of gender equality in a profession that demands both strength and compassion.

'Gentle Hands' is the story of Dr Zora, a woman carrying the unfinished dreams of her mother into the rugged world of veterinary medicine. But as a woman, Zora faces a different kind of wilderness: the doubts of colleagues who underestimate her strength. This comic presents the journey of how she turns that prejudice into power, proving that gender equality isn't just a concept, but the very force that makes this profession whole.

This narrative is deeply personal. Like Zora, I want my child to witness the survival of our rarest species. The final page features a personal documentary photo of a baby orangutan from my own collection, a symbol of the innocence we must safeguard.

To all my fellow veterinarians worldwide: thank you for your tireless service. I present this short comic for you.

World Organisation for Animal Health

Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific
Food Science Building 5F
The University of Tokyo
1-1-1 Yayoi, Bunkyo-ku
Tokyo 113-0032
Japan

World Organisation for Animal Health

Sub-Regional Representation for South-East Asia
c/o Department of Livestock Development
69/1 Phaya Thai Road
Ratchathewi 10400 Bangkok
Thailand



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