Meet Cute

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Meet Cute

by manyfandomsmember

Summary

Shane has a meet-cute in the produce aisle. Ilya briefly contemplates murder via shopping cart.

Notes

As my name says, I am a writer of many fandoms.

Heated rivalry has completely taken over my thoughts, feelings, emotions, life and they're all I want to write about so here is my first of (hopefully) many Hollanov fics as we navigate the tv show drought together (2027 please come quick)

This is not beta read, I'm a college student who doesn't have time for that, so if you see a mistake...pretend you didn't. Also, I use very little Russian words, but Google Translate produces the spelling for me, so if it's wrong blame Google.

Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

The grocery list starts an argument before they've even left the house.

Not a real argument, just one of their ordinary married ones. The kind that sounds like bickering but feels like comfort. Like the slow knocking of waves against the dock they tied themselves to.

The list is sitting on the kitchen counter, written in Shane's careful print. It has small neat checkboxes and categories – because of course it does. There are arrows where he's revised something, and a few question marks in spaces where he's still deciding.

Ilya is leaning on the opposite end of the counter, chin in his hand, reading the list upside down as if it were personally offending him.

"You are writing essay," he says finally. "For *store*."

"It's a list," Shane says, without looking up. "It's organized."

"It is article," Ilya says, tapping the paper with one finger. "Headings, categories. You will add sources?"

Shane huffs a laugh. "You're such an asshole."

"I am truthful," Ilya says, which of course, he believes amounts to the same thing.

The kitchen smells like coffee and toast. It's late morning, the kind of slow day that only exists between games and travel, wrapping around them like something precious. Light spills in through the window and paints the tile floor, catching on the metal bowl by the sink, the Ottawa magnet stuck to the fridge door. The house is lived-in, comfortable, filled with the lazy evidence of two people who stopped pretending they didn't share everything a long time ago.

Shane reaches for the list, smoothing it reflexively even though it isn't wrinkled. He picks up the pen while he's at it and adds something in small print on the top corner.

Ilya squints, "What's that?"

"Granola," Shane says.

"We already have granola."

"We have the kind *you* like," Shane says mildly. "I want the kind that doesn't taste like punishment."

"There is no punishment in granola," Ilya says, offended on behalf of the grains.

Shane finally looks up from the paper and levels him with the slightly squinty, baffled look he gets when he can't understand how they're even on opposing sides of something. "You eat the ones with the chocolate and raisins."

“Yes,” Ilya says proudly. “*Flavor*.”

Shane just smiles again and begins tying the laces of his shoes. The list gets tucked into his back pocket.

Ilya watches him do it, eyes caught not on the sliver of paper peeking over the denim of his pocket, but on the easy curve of Shane’s back. The familiar fall of his dark hair across his forehead. The wedding ring on Shane’s hand flashes briefly – not for the first time, still not quite for the ten-thousandth time. It sends that familiarly strange warmth through Ilya’s ribs, as if he’s still slightly stunned that life somehow chose this for him.

“Do we need ice cream in the newspaper article-list?” Ilya asks, casual and wondering, like one does when thinking about love and dairy.

“No,” Shane says, eyes still soft and smiling. “We don’t need ice cream.”

“So we buy,” Ilya concludes.

Shane just shakes his head, but doesn’t erase his grin. “Get your jacket.”

“I have jacket,” Ilya gestures vaguely at the back of a chair where his lump of a jacket has lived for the last three days. “I am always ready. Like boy scout.”

“You have never been a boy scout.”

“I would be excellent boy scout,” Ilya says. “They would give me all badges at once so I would not have to share.”

“That’s not–” Shane starts, then stops himself before he starts to educate the concepts of scouting ethics. “Keys. Jacket. Let’s go.”

He taps the counter twice – gently – before he leaves the room, a habit he doesn’t realize he does, something like punctuation at the end of a sentence. Ilya watches, watches it, watches *him*, thinks very briefly and wildly and stupidly, *“mine.”*

He doesn’t say it out loud, doesn’t have to.

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The grocery store is too bright.

Ilya announces this by squinting like he’s walked into a nuclear blast. The automatic doors hiss open and the gust of cold air-conditioning hits them in the face. Fluorescent lights hum overhead with the insistence of a headache. Everything smells faintly like citrus cleaner and strawberries.

“This lighting is a crime,” Ilya says, rolling the word around. “I look like corpse.”

“You look great,” Shane says automatically, because it is always true and because he’s half-distracted wrestling with the cart that seems determined to go left no matter what *Shane*

wants. He gives it up and shoves it along diagonally. “Help me with this?”

“For this I came,” Ilya says, seizing the handle with a theatrical flourish. He gives it a testing shove. It squeaks. He glares at it.

He pushes it anyway. The wheel screams its objections down the aisle one.

“I think they heard us arrive,” Shane mutters.

“Good,” Ilya says. “They should tremble.”

Shane laughs lightly.

They don’t wear hats or sunglasses or anything that would constitute a disguise, they don’t need one today. They exist in the comfortable middle ground where they’re known enough to be recognized, but not so much that every grocery trip turns into an impromptu press conference. They get a few glances, a double-take by the bakery, but that’s it. It doesn’t feel intrusive, not really. It’s simply a part of their life they built. The squeak of the card and the paper list in Shane’s pocket.

Shane walks near Ilya, their shoulders brushing, without even thinking about it. Sometimes he catches the fabric of Ilya’s sleeve when he stops too suddenly. Sometimes Ilya nudges the cart into Shane’s hip with a purposeful bump because he is, at heart, twelve years old.

Their hands never quite hold, but their fingers brush, and their rings click together once. Briefly, when they both reach for the same small stack of produce bags they’d need for later. Shane’s eyes meet Ilya’s, both of them nearly surprised by the soft metallic sound.

“We are sync,” Ilya smirks.

“Yeah,” Shane says, something pleased warming his words. “Syncronized,” he whispers the correction so Ilya can’t hear.

They do the bread and eggs part first because Shane likes the order. He checks each item off on the list, a neat check running through his neatly-drawn boxes. He meticulously reads labels. He compares sodium content as if he’s solving puzzles. Every now and again he’ll say, “Oh, they’ve changed the package,” with a level of fascination that makes Ilyan want to kiss him senseless in aisle five.

Ilya complains loudly about capitalism after discovering the price of cheese.

“I could purchase small car for this,” he whines.

“You cannot buy a small car for ten dollars,” Shane says, deadpan, studying two different two different containers of yogurt.

“In Russia…” Ilya says vaguely, though he hasn’t lived in Russia in years and could not have purchased a small, functioning car for ten dollars either. It doesn’t matter. It’s part of the script now, part of how they talk, part of how they orbit each other.

They go to produce last, like always.

The displays are crowded with color, bell peppers and tomatoes and leafy greens that look slightly overconfident. Misters hiss softly, sprinkling a curtain of water over the lettuce like stage fog over a dramatic entrance. The air is cooler here, tinged green and crisp.

Shane pauses in front of the bell peppers.

He gazes at them with the contemplative seriousness of someone evaluating long-term investments instead of vegetables. He picks one up, weighs it in his hand, presses lightly at its skin to test for firmness. He puts it down and picks up another.

Ilya watches this for exactly eleven seconds before his attention spans fractures.

“I go find something,” he declares suddenly, dragging the cart with a decisive swing. “I go get ice cream, you forgot to write it on the list. Maybe chocolate and those small pickles.”

Shane glances up, a pepper in each hand. “No ice cream. And get the pickles without the gelatin stuff in them this time.”

“Okay so get ice cream. And there’s *never* gelatin in them.” Ilya lies automatically.

“There was last time.”

“Fake news,” Ilya says briskly, already halfway gone, cart wheel crying out as he shoves it away. He leans back at the end of the aisle and adds, jokingly, “Don’t talk to strangers.”

Shane laughs and shakes his head. “I won’t.”

He absolutely will. Or rather – he will talk to anyone who talks to him, because that is how he is built. He is politeness with legs, kindness with skates, enthusiasm in a hoodie and jeans. He doesn’t even think of it as flirting when he smiles, he thinks he’s simply being human.

He turns back to the shelves of peppers, his brows furrowed in gentle concentration. A small crease appears between them. He reads the tiny sign about price per pound as though it too deserves his full, generous attention.

That’s when someone reaches for the same pepper.

It’s almost comedic, the choreography of it. His fingers and theirs land at the same exact moment on the bright red curve of the vegetable.

“Sorry,” the voice says. “Go ahead.”

Shane’s reflex is to smile, of course it is. It touches his whole face like sun hitting stained glass. “No you’re fine. I was just–” he gestures helplessly with the pepper, “Comparing.”

“Important work,” the stranger says playfully.

“I know,” Shane says, dead serious for a beat before realizing it. He laughs at himself, brushing his hair away from his forehead. “Uh..yeah. I’m picky, I guess.”

“You should be. You’ve got good taste,” the stranger replies in a deep voice.

It’s such a little line – nothing really – tossed into the air like a coin. Shane catches it without noticing its shine. He makes a polite noise in response, the sort that could be agreement or gratitude, and sets two peppers into the shallow plastic produce bag he’s been holding open.

The stranger stands near him, not too close, but just within the invisible bubble where people become slightly complicit with one another's presence. They both look at cucumbers next. A few roll forward like escape attempts. One bumps into Shane’s wrist and he steadies it automatically.

Shane’s posture, everything about him, sends the wrong message entirely by accident. An open stance, a gentle smile, the unguardedness. He is pretty without knowing it. He is approachable without trying to be. He is wearing his ring – visible and solid – but rings don’t always register with strangers until they’re looking for reasons to leave.

He instead explains something about how to tell an avocado is ripe. He demonstrates by exerting a gentle pressure with his thumb. It’s innocent, kind, informative, and entirely the kind of thing he would do for anyone in the grocery store in any city. The stranger leans in slightly to see. Their shoulders brush.

The stranger breaks the silence, “This is like…cute, right? Like you see in a rom-com. A meet-cute in the produce aisle?”

Shane balks. “Sorry what?” He shifts away, breaking contact.

“I mean we just totally had a meet-cute,” he repeats.

And that is what Ilya walks back into.

He’s in the middle of grumbling to himself about the absence of ice cream in his shopping cart – because when Shane says no, Ilya *will* listen. Then turns the corner and sees it. Shane standing in a gentle drift of mister fog, smiling that stupidly precious smile at someone who is *not* Ilya. the other person leaning in. Shane’s hand is mid-demonstration on an avocado. Their shoulders brushing as the stranger leans closer, hanging onto Shane’s every word. The stranger saying something Ilya cannot hear. Shane breaking the shoulder contact with an uncomfortable look on his face.

Everything in Ilya goes very still.

Then it goes loud.

Not outside – outwardly he doesn’t move yet. But inside, the place behind his ribs, he becomes all sharp corners and ancient, instinctive claws. The buzzing of those *stupid* fluorescent lights turns into a low, angry insect sound. Something hot and unpleasant and probably entirely unreasonable rushes up his spine.

He knows Shane loves him. He knows Shane is married to him. He knows this is nothing. He knows all of that and none of it matters in the first electric stab of reaction.

He pushes the cart forward like guiding a tank. The wheel screams its own battle cry. It's *almost* satisfying.

Shane turns at the sound, relief and fondness and sunshine flickering across his face when he sees Ilya. It's an unconscious, automatic, *"there you are."*

"Hi!," he beams quietly. "I got peppers."

Ilya smiles softly, "Of course you did." His voice is low and smooth.

He moves into Shane's space without asking, the way you do when you're invited for the rest of your life. One of Ilya's hands lands on the small of Shane's back, wide and sure, resting gently on the thin cotton of his t-shirt, feeling the heat of his smooth skin radiating from underneath. He slips his fingers under the hem of the shirt, pressing the tips into the skin of his back, before returning them to the outside of his clothes once more.

Only then does Ilya look at the stranger.

"Hello," he says, and the smile that arrives on his lips is the opposite of friendly. "I am husband."

Ilya says nothing else, just lays the word down like a card on a table.

The stranger blinks, thrown off by the firm certainty in Ilya's words. His eyes flick briefly to the ring on Ilya's hand, and the matching one on Shane's finger. "I–" he starts, then stops. "I didn't mean to–"

"Shop for vegetables?" Ilya offers, his tone light, absolutely false. "Yes. Tragic seduction in produce aisle. Very dangerous environment."

Shane elbows him, scandalized and delighted and exasperated all at once. "*Ilya*."

"What?" Ilya says innocently. "I come back, my husband is starring in romantic comedy with zucchini. I am sharing my feelings."

"We were talking about avocados," Shane mutters, even though he's glad Ilya came to rescue him.

"Even worse," Ilya says, making a face.

The stranger mumbles something that could be an apology or may have just been a noise and retreats quickly into the next aisle, his cheeks pink and hands full of vegetables he didn't even want now. The man hadn't been dismissed, but something in the Russian's posture has made the message clear enough.

Shane watches the man retreat, with mild horror painted across his features. "He was just being nice..."

“I am also nice,” Ilya says, and because he absolutely isn’t right now, he leans down and presses a slow, deliberate kiss to Shane’s temple.

It’s not performative as much as it is necessary. He does it because the need to do so rose within him like a wave. Because there is nowhere else for the fierce rush of protectiveness to go. He lingers for a moment longer, breathing in the clean-shampoo scent of Shane’s hair, before straightening.

Shane’s cheeks are painted a soft shade of pink, weaving between his freckles. It’s unfairly endearing. He makes a small helpless noise and swats vaguely at Ilya’s chest. “You’re an asshole.”

“Yes,” Ilya agrees, wholeheartedly unbothered. He slides a hand from Shane’s lower back to his hip and says, “But I’m *your* asshole, yes?”

Shane looks up at him, his face going soft. The affection there is so bright he could outshine the sun.

“Yeah,” he says quietly, mouth tipping into a smile. “You are.”

The cart squeaks again as Ilya starts pushing it. The sound of the miss hissing fades into the background. “So what did stranger say to you?”

“Nothing, Ilya!”

“Mm, I think he was looking for meet-cute,” Ilya smirks.

Shane blushes and pretends to be interested in an endcap near the register as Ilya unloads their food onto the belt.

They wander into the parking lot, paper bags piled haphazardly into the cart. Ilya spies the stranger a few parking spots away loading the same awkward paper bags into the trunk of his car. At the sound of the squeaking wheel, the stranger looks up, gaze lingering on Shane for just a moment before looking away, as if remembering the embarrassment of the produce aisle.

Ilya notices. Shane doesn’t.

That feeling rises in Ilya again, that low, warm surge of *mine*. It’s not sharp this time, there’s no panic gnawing at the edges. Just full. Full to the brim with the ordinary miracle that is his life, his person, his grocery cart with the squeaky wheel.

He stops walking at Shane’s boring car and opens the trunk. Shane pulls a bag from the cart, supporting the bottom, and loads it into the car before stopping, noticing the lack of motion from Ilya at his side. He turns, his brows lifting. “What?”

“Nothing,” Ilya says, and it’s the truth.

He reaches out, two fingers hooking lightly in the collar of Shane’s shirt, and tugs.

Shane's surprise is brief, more relaxation than confusion. His hands find Ilya's chest automatically, his familiar warmth and solidness under a layer of fabric. He opens his mouth as if he's going to ask something but Ilya doesn't let him.

He kisses him.

Not a quick, polite, thanks for grocery shopping with me kiss. A real one. Slow and purposeful. He tilts his head just enough, presses in just enough, lets it linger just enough that Shane melts, a soft sound escaping between them.

The parking lot keeps being a parking lot. A car door slams. A child cries. A cart bumps into a curb. The stranger looks away entirely, flustered.

Shane blinks slowly when Ilya finally pulls back, dazed and smiling.

"*Ya tebya lyublyu*," Ilya murmurs.

"*Ya tebya lyublyu,*" Shane replies, tongue fumbling over the unfamiliar syllables. "I love you."

Ilya steals another brief kiss then helps Shane unload their bags before pushing the cart away. The wheel still squeaks, the sky is enormous and blue, and the stranger becomes no one more than someone else who went grocery shopping on the same day as Ilya and Shane.

Ilya returns to Shane's side. "C'mon, *solnyshko*, let's go home."

End Notes

Okay, there it is, my first Hollanov fic! I hope you guys liked it (please let me know if you did, if you didn't I don't want to hear it). I'm hoping to write a few more before classes get too hectic so stay tuned :)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!