Hollanov & Company

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Hollanov & Company

by PorcelainMortal

Summary

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> “What is it?”
>
> Shane laughs, his smile bright. “Oh my god, he’s so cute.”
>
> “Shane, what did you pick up?” Ilya asks as he finally stands. He starts walking over, and Shane meets him halfway.
>
> “Look.” Shane’s voice has gone soft, his tone full of wonder.
>
> Ilya looks down to see a scruffy orange kitten curled up in Shane’s arms. He’s dirty and seems exhausted, not even fighting Shane as he looks up at them.
>
> OR
> The cat distribution system finds Shane and Ilya.

Notes

> Okay, so this fic has been festering in my brain for well over two years. It was originally going to be a RWRB fic, but I never got around to it, and the idea just fit perfectly with Hollanov. It's canon that Shane wants a cat and Ilya considers himself a dog person, so this dynamic was super fun to play with! If you can't tell, I'm a cat lover through and through. If you think you don't like cats, you just haven't met the right one yet. 😸
>
> Takes place post-The Long Game, so there will be minor spoilers at the start.
>
> Thank you to my beta Ariel for always making time for me!! 💕
> Also thank you to Lena for the translation help. It was minimal this time, but you will be hearing from me again.
>
> Title from... well, you'll see.

See the end of the work for more notes

“Do you hear that?”

Shane’s voice pulls Ilya away from the very edge of sleep.

He looks over to see Shane sitting up on his towel and looking towards the trees at the edge of the yard. They’ve been laying out in the grass drying off in the sun after an afternoon spent splashing in the lake. It’s the most relaxed Ilya has been since their first season together as Centaurs ended.

“Hear what?” Ilya asks. Though a moment later, he hears it, too. A tiny squeaking sound.

Shane scrambles up and makes his way over towards the trees.

“Careful, Shane,” Ilya calls after him. The sound was not particularly threatening, but who knows *what* animals might be out here in the Canadian countryside.

The sound becomes more insistent, prompting Ilya to sit up. He’s about to push himself to standing when Shane bends over, his swim trunks stretched tight across his ass. Ilya pauses, watching.

“Holy shit,” Shane says. He straightens and turns around with something cradled in his arms.

“What is it?”

Shane laughs, his smile bright. “Oh my god, he’s so cute.”

“Shane, what did you pick up?” Ilya asks as he finally stands. He starts walking over, and Shane meets him halfway.

“Look.” Shane’s voice has gone soft, his tone full of wonder.

Ilya looks down to see a scruffy orange kitten curled up in Shane's arms. He's dirty and seems exhausted, not even fighting Shane as he looks up at them.

Ilya rears back. "It could be diseased."

"It's not diseased," Shane scoffs. "At least… probably not. It's a good thing Anya isn't here, though, she might have tried to eat it."

Yuna and David have had Anya for a few weeks, happily playing doting grandparents while Shane and Ilya were in the playoffs. Sadly, their season ended earlier than anyone anticipated. Ilya wanted to bring Anya to the lake house, but Yuna insisted that he and Shane should have at least a few days with no responsibilities.

"We can't keep it," Ilya says.

"I know." Shane shrugs. "We can't just leave it crying in the bushes either, though."

"No, I suppose not," Ilya sighs. He's not exactly a cat person, but he's an animal lover. He's already had a few conversations with Harris about starting a dog rescue when he retires. Not that he has any plans for *that* for a while, but it's nice to think about.

Settling down with Shane post-hockey. Having kids. Filling the house with dogs who need homes.

A thought occurs to Ilya. "Maybe he has a mother somewhere? Cats can survive pretty well on their own."

"Maybe. But wouldn't he be clean, then? I think the mother cat would clean her kittens."

Ilya has no fucking idea. He stares at the tiny kitten, who is already dozing off in Shane's arms.

"We should contact someone."

"Who?" Shane looks back up at him, his brow furrowed behind his sunglasses.

"Maybe Harris? He knows about dog rescue—maybe he knows something about cats, too."

They head inside, where Ilya gets Harris on the phone while Shane tries to get the cat to drink some water. It laps at the bowl Shane holds under its nose, but then settles back down like it's too tired to even drink.

Harris is warm and enthusiastic as always, and they exchange pleasantries before Ilya dives into his questions. He has Harris on speaker so Shane can hear the conversation.

"Harris, do you know anything about cat rescue?"

"Cats? Not really. My mom fostered a few when I was a kid, but I don't remember much. Why, what's up?"

“Shane found a kitten in the yard,” Ilya explains, his eyes darting over to where Shane sits on the floor with the sleeping kitten in his lap. “And we are not sure what to do.”

“No shit. Did you take it in?”

“We took it in,” Ilya replies, rolling his eyes. “Shane insisted.”

Shane smiles fondly at him, because he knows Ilya would never have left a helpless kitten alone in the yard, either.

Harris laughs. “What does it look like? Do you know how old it is?”

Shane shrugs.

“It’s small and orange,” Ilya says. “Maybe a few weeks old? I am not sure.”

“Can you send me a picture?” Harris asks.

“Yes, hold on.” Ilya clicks over to his camera and snaps a photo of the kitten before texting it to Harris. “Did you get it?”

“Yeah. Oh wow, he’s little. I’d guess around six or seven weeks, but it’s hard to tell exactly.”

“He is very dirty.”

“Yeah, I can see that, too,” Harris says. “I have a friend who works in animal rescue and she deals with cats all the time. Do you want me to put you in touch with her?”

Shane’s face lights up.

“Yes, please,” Ilya replies.

After they hang up with Harris, Ilya texts the cat rescuer, Samantha. She calls him within a few minutes and asks a whole bunch of questions. Ilya answers them, grateful for her help even as she tests his patience.

The kitten came out of the woods. Yes, it was alone. No, it doesn’t appear to be injured. No, they don’t know the sex. Yes, they can try to look at the genitals if it’s *that* important. (It’s not.) Yes, it’s quite dirty, but no, they don’t see any fleas. No, it hasn’t eaten. No, they have never taken care of a cat before. No, they do not want to keep it. Yes, it can stay for now.

Samantha—Sam, she insists—tells them that it’s important to keep an eye out for more cats.

“It’s rare to find one alone. Where there is one, there are usually more. It might be prudent to set out a trap and see if we can get the other kittens and possibly even the mom, so they can stay together and get spayed and neutered.”

She advises them to contact their local shelter to borrow a trap. “I’d bring you one myself, but I’m on vacation in Nova Scotia right now.”

“Sorry to interrupt your vacation,” Ilya says, but Sam is quick to dismiss him.

“Cat rescue doesn’t take a holiday, and I’m happy to help whenever I can. Text me and keep me posted, alright?”

Ilya promises to update her when he knows more before hanging up. Shane looks at him, clearly as overwhelmed as Ilya feels.

“So… should we open some tuna?”

An hour later, Shane is feeding tiny shreds of canned tuna to the kitten.

“She said not too much because of the salt,” Ilya reminds him, having just hung up with the woman at the shelter.

“I know,” Shane says, barely glancing at Ilya. The cat doesn’t look over, either, fixated on the feast and eating ravenously. “But he needs to eat.”

Ilya sighs. He needs to get going.

He has to drive to the shelter to get the trap, then to the pet store to get some supplies. He tried to get the shelter to take the kitten, but they are at capacity. They explained that once they have the whole family, they can try to find a foster, but for now, they asked if Ilya and Shane could take care of it.

Shane had agreed eagerly; after all, what else is there for two hockey players with endless resources to do in the off-season? Hockey camp doesn’t start for two more weeks, thankfully.

Ilya rolls his shoulders, missing the feeling of relaxation he had earlier—before they heard the tiny mews from the kitten currently gobbling tuna off Shane’s finger.

“Careful that he doesn’t bite you.”

“We’re fine.” Shane rolls his eyes. “You should get going before the shelter closes.”

“I’m going.” Ilya walks over to where Shane sits with the kitten at the dining table and leans over for a kiss. “Be good while I’m gone.”

“You be good while you’re gone,” Shane grins when Ilya pulls back.

Ilya gets dressed and grabs the keys for Shane’s Jeep. It’s a boring car, but it’s practical for errands. Ilya needs the space for the trap and all the supplies he needs to buy. He’s certainly not going to put a bag of kitty litter in his Lamborghini.

Two hours later, Ilya returns home with bags of supplies and the trap from the shelter. They showed him how to set it up and place the bait. His biggest concern is accidentally catching a

raccoon or a possum or, god forbid, a fucking loon.

He brings the supplies inside, where Shane is hunched over his laptop, watching something on YouTube.

“What is that?”

“It’s this channel where this woman shows how she bathes kittens.”

Ilya pauses to watch. “Seems dangerous.”

“The shelter said he might need a bath, though.”

“Might.”

“I just want to be prepared,” Shane says.

“Where is the cat?”

“Over there.” Shane gestures with his chin and Ilya looks over to see the kitten curled up in Anya’s dog bed, a tiny circle of fur in the middle of the cushion.

“That’s Anya’s bed.” Ilya feels panic rise into his throat. “What if it has fleas, or if Anya smells it and—”

“Ilya, relax. The bed is washable, remember? It’s probably due for a wash, anyway.”

Ilya takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly.

“I just don’t want it to think it’s staying.”

“I don’t think we can control what the kitten thinks,” Shane says, smirking. “But he seems comfortable there, don’t you think?”

“He?”

“Yeah, I, uh… looked up how to tell gender on young kittens. From what I could find, it seems like he’s probably about seven weeks old, like Harris said, and definitely a boy.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah.”

“So…”

“I was thinking Oliver, for a name. Like from the ‘80s movie about the little orange street cat?”

“No. Shane, no. We are not naming him.”

“Come on, we can’t just call him ‘the kitten’ all the time.”

“We can call him кот. Is Russian for ‘cat.’”

“That’s a terrible name,” Shane scoffs.

“He does not need a real name if he is not staying.”

“I know he’s not staying, okay? You’ve made your feelings perfectly clear.”

Shane’s tone makes Ilya feel like shit. He knows Shane has always wanted a cat. He just figured they’d talk about it far in the future, like when they are retired. It’s hard enough with Anya during the hockey season, even with the network of care they’ve set up for her so she doesn’t get stuck at the dog hotel all the time.

Shane stands up and turns to where Ilya is still holding two bags full of stuff from the pet store. His expression lightens when he sees them.

“That’s a lot of stuff for a kitten who’s not staying,” he says with a teasing smile.

“Cats need a lot of stuff. Also, the man at the pet store was very cute and kept flirting with me, so I just bought whatever he told me to,” Ilya explains, winking. He walks past Shane to the dining room table and puts the bags down.

“You’re such an asshole,” Shane tells him. But he’s smiling as he follows him over.

“I got lots of different food, the dry kind and the wet kind. The guy at the store said cats are picky, so if he does not like something, we try something else. I also got a litter box and some litter, plus some toys. He said small kittens need a lot of play, so I figured these would help keep him busy.”

Ilya pulls out a three-tiered toy with rolling balls, a bag of fake mice, and a wand toy that came with different attachments.

“I figured we can just donate these to the shelter or give them to the new owner when the kitten leaves.”

“Oliver,” Shane corrects. Ilya levels a look at him. “Fine. Call him whatever you want, okay?”

Ilya nods and gets back to unpacking the bags.

That night, after Ilya has set up the trap in the yard and they’ve finished cleaning up from dinner, Shane announces that he’s going to bathe the kitten.

“It looked pretty easy in the video. If I just hold him here—” Shane grabs the kitten by the back of its neck “—then he should stay relaxed enough for me to at least get the dirt off him.”

Ilya doesn’t really believe it will be that easy, but he agrees to stay out of the way and ready to help if Shane needs it. Ilya gathers a few towels and stacks them on the counter while

Shane fills up a bowl with warm soapy water in the sink.

He scruffs the kitten and slowly lowers him into the water. For a moment, the cat looks like he's about to freak out—his pupils get huge, and his limbs start to flail. But Shane tightens his grip, and once submerged in the water up to his front legs, the kitten starts to relax.

"Wow," Ilya breathes.

"I know, right?" Shane laughs. Ilya helps him get some dish soap, and Shane starts slowly bathing the kitten, washing away the dirt and grime. "We need to make sure we don't get any water near its ears or eyes."

Ilya watches, amazed at how easily Shane is maneuvering the kitten and getting him all cleaned up. It seems like it was mostly just dirt—Ilya can't see any fleas. The kitten stares up at Shane with wide eyes the entire time, but doesn't fight him again.

When Shane gets the kitten under the faucet to rinse him, he starts crying. His sad, pathetic little mews fill the kitchen, and Ilya tries not to feel anything about how Shane coos softly to him under his breath.

"It's okay, Oliver. Everything will be alright."

He squeezes out the excess water and Ilya holds the towel up. The moment Shane unscruffs the kitten to wrap it in the towel, he climbs up Shane's front. Shane winces, hissing as tiny claws dig into his shoulder.

"Fuck, that hurts."

He manages to dislodge the kitten's death grip and wipes its ears with the towel.

"Now, I don't have a nice dryer like the woman in the video, but I can keep you warm until you get dry, okay?" Shane says softly to the kitten as he grabs a dry towel and swaddles the kitten in it like a little burrito.

"I can't believe that went so well," Ilya muses, amazed.

"I know, right?" Shane's eyes are bright and proud. "Watching like fifteen of those videos really paid off. Can you clean up?" He asks, gesturing towards the mess in and around the sink. Ilya nods, and Shane heads into the living room and settles onto the couch.

Ilya pours out the dirty water from the bowl, amazed at how brown it is. He puts the bowl in the dishwasher and sets about cleaning up the water splattered all around the sink before throwing the used towels in the hamper.

After the day they've had, Ilya thinks he's earned some ice cream.

He gets himself a bowl and heads into the living room. He sits on the other end of the couch, just in case the cat decides to go after his dessert and claw him up, too. Shane has some home makeover show playing, and Ilya laughs to himself. Shane and his boner for real estate.

Ilya eats his ice cream and watches the show, enjoying the peace of the evening. When he looks over again, Shane's eyes are closed, and the kitten is curled up in the towel.

"Shane," Ilya whispers.

Shane's eyes open. So, not asleep, then.

"He's purring," Shane says, a soft smile taking over his face. "It's so peaceful."

"He's not staying," Ilya repeats.

"I know. But it's nice."

Ilya rolls his eyes and puts his empty bowl aside. He can let Shane enjoy it for now.

In the morning, Ilya wakes to an empty bed.

He finds Shane in the living room, asleep on the couch. The kitten is asleep in Anya's bed again. He shakes Shane's shoulder to wake him.

"Did you sleep out here all night?"

Shane rubs the sleep from his eyes. "No. Oliver woke me up during the night making all sorts of noise, so I went to get him. His toys were out here and I didn't want to wake you, so I brought him down and played with him until he got tired. I guess I just fell asleep here."

"Oh," Ilya sighs. This kitten is already messing with their rhythm.

They set him up in the guest room across the hall from theirs, since Sam had advised them not to give it free roam of the house. Ilya hadn't even heard a peep, but then again, he was pretty tired after Shane sucked his soul out through his dick just before bed.

"Coffee?" Ilya asks.

"Please."

He starts up the espresso machine and slips into his sneakers so he can run outside and check the trap. He's not sure whether to be disappointed or not that it's empty, but Sam did say it could take a few days.

He heads back inside to the comforting smell of coffee and Shane walking into the kitchen with the kitten in his arms.

"I think the door woke him."

"Or the smell of coffee," Ilya jokes.

The kitten is actually pretty cute now that he's not so dirty. His fur is paler than it appeared before—more of a muted orange with subtle stripes—and he has one white paw and one white leg. The pads of his little paws are pink.

"He's probably hungry," Shane says, petting the kitten absentmindedly. Ilya can hear him purring and almost reaches a hand up to give him a scratch.

He aborts the movement and makes his way over to the fridge. He is not getting attached to the kitten, no matter how cute he is or how adorable he and Shane look together.

The following afternoon, Ilya and Shane take the kitten to the vet to get checked out.

Dr. Morton estimates Oliver to be around seven or eight weeks old, but says that he is a bit malnourished, so it's important to make sure he's eating regularly. Other than that, the kitten is healthy.

The vet tech draws some blood so they can run some tests, and give him a few vaccines. They hand Shane a schedule for the rest of the vaccines he will need. Ilya assures Dr. Morton that they will make sure to hold onto his records so that the shelter can continue with the boosters as required.

They also ask about introducing the kitten to Anya, since she will be coming home in a few days. The vet hands them a pamphlet with information and stresses the importance of going slowly with introductions.

"So, if we can get the kitten a new home before Anya comes back, that would be best?" Ilya asks, ignoring the way Shane flinches.

"It would be easier for Anya, and probably for you. But, as long as all of Oliver's lab tests come back clear, it should be fine to keep them both together in the house," Dr. Morton explains. "Just make sure to supervise any interactions and keep them separate whenever you can't be there."

"Maybe my parents can keep Anya a little bit longer," Shane says as they are walking back out to the car.

"Don't you miss her?" Ilya asks as he digs out his keys.

"Yeah, of course I do."

But Shane sighs softly as he's climbing into the car, and Ilya gets the feeling he's not being entirely honest.

When they get home, Ilya throws together a quick dinner of salmon, steamed broccoli, and white rice. The kitten seems overly curious about their food, and keeps trying to climb their legs while they eat.

“We just fed you,” Ilya groans as he unsticks the tiny claws from his joggers and puts the kitten back on the floor for the third time. “Shouldn’t you be sleeping?”

Dr. Morton said that cats like to play, then eat, then sleep, to mimic hunting, feeding, and resting. But since gobbling his dinner down so fast it’s a miracle he didn’t choke, this one has just wanted to attack them.

“The salmon smells too good to him,” Shane says, wincing as the kitten starts climbing his leg next.

“We should lock him away.”

“No, it’s fine. This way he’ll learn that we aren’t going to give him any food.”

Ilya thinks that kind of thing takes more time than they’ve got—hopefully, the cat will be gone before Anya gets home—but he keeps it to himself.

After cleaning up, Shane and Ilya head to the couch. The kitten is still in play mode, so Shane gets out the mouse on a string and plays with him. Ilya can’t help laughing at the ferocity with which the little guy attacks the toy, jumping impressively high and growling whenever he manages to catch it.

“He’s got a lot of fight in him,” Ilya comments.

“We should get him on the Centaurs. He could be our enforcer,” Shane says, laughing when Oliver falls off the couch sideways in his attempt to hold onto the mouse.

By the time the kitten is finally worn out and settling down to sleep, Ilya’s face hurts from laughing at his antics and the way he makes Shane smile. He reminds himself it’s not realistic to keep a cat because they are gone so much.

And Ilya doesn’t even like cats, really.

Two days later, the trap is still empty and there has been no sign of other cats on the property, so Ilya loads it back into the car to bring back to the shelter.

When he gets there, he asks the woman at the desk if they’ve found a foster yet. Anya is coming home tomorrow, and Ilya is nervous about having both pets in the house at the same time. Anya could eat Oliver for breakfast.

No, not Oliver. The kitten, he reminds himself.

“We’re so sorry, everybody is at max capacity right now since it’s kitten season. If you can keep him just a little bit longer? One of our fosters is in the process of vetting adopters for a litter right now, so if all goes well, they will have room soon,” the woman says apologetically.

Ilya wonders how no one has room for one tiny kitten.

Then again, with how Oliver has disrupted their lives, he kind of gets it. One kitten is a lot of work.

After the shelter, he stops by the pet store for a few things for Anya, as well as some cat treats, since Oliver won't eat the ones Ilya picked out the other day.

He picks out a few different types of treats, a few more toys, a small jar of fresh catnip —"locally grown," the clerk explains proudly—and some more pet waste bags. They try to sell him something called a Litter Genie, but Ilya looks at the thing and decides he is not making that kind of investment in this kitten. It's not staying.

Ilya takes his purchases home, surprised to find Shane asleep on the couch. Oliver is cradled in the crook of his arm, sleeping soundly. And purring. Ilya puts the bags down and gets closer, allowing the sound to wash over him.

His best friend when he was little had a cat named Feliks, who was a bit temperamental, but purred so loudly. Ilya used to put his hand or his cheek on Feliks's back and feel the vibrations, marvelling at how they reverberated throughout his whole body.

Ilya itches to reach out and take the kitten from Shane's arms, to feel the vibrations of his purring. To see if it feels like Feliks did.

But he resists.

Shane looks adorable with the kitten curled up in his arms. Ilya almost wants to join them. He could slide in next to Shane and pull them both against him for a midday nap.

He shakes the thought off and goes outside to give them more time to sleep.

Anya comes back in a flurry of excitement.

She's barking and jumping, happy to be home and with her people again.

They've locked Oliver safely upstairs in the guest bedroom, but Ilya knows Anya will smell him on her things. They decided not to wash the bed, hoping the chance to get used to the scent will make her less likely to attack the tiny kitten if they end up introducing them.

Ilya and Shane greet her with smiles and plenty of affection before giving her a chance to explore the home. She sniffs around eagerly, clearly sensing that something is different. When she gets to her dog bed, she sticks her nose into the fabric, sniffing curiously. Shane gives her some treats, trying to let her know that the new smell is a good thing. She gobbles them up and keeps sniffing around the living room.

They let her check out the cat toys, which they've left out on purpose, and give her a few more treats as she continues to explore. She follows the scent upstairs to the door of the guest bedroom where Oliver has been quarantined.

“Sorry, you can’t go in there,” Shane says softly. He scratches her ears and tries to lure her back downstairs.

Anya whines and leans down to sniff along the bottom of the door. Shane looks at Ilya, worry etched on his face.

“It will be fine, let’s just go back downstairs,” Ilya says. “She will follow.”

Just then, a tiny paw reaches out from under the door, claws extending. A tiny mew follows.

Anya whines again, her nose meeting the paw as it swipes under the door. She sniffs it for a moment, then sits up and looks at Ilya, as if to say, ‘Why are you hiding the interesting thing from me?’

“Doctor said not to introduce them yet,” Ilya reminds Shane, hoping to ease his worry.

“I know, but…”

“No ‘but,’ we should just go downstairs. They can not open door, it will be fine.”

Shane follows him reluctantly, and they go about their day, making lunch and sitting down to discuss plans for the hockey camps. Not much is changing this year, but they have more coaches than ever, so they have added six more spots for students at each camp. They are also making some tweaks to the way they conduct lessons, to allow each camper time with each coach.

The whole time, they can hear Anya whining from the upstairs hallway.

Shane sighs heavily. “Maybe we should just—”

“Shane,” Ilya starts.

“I know what the vet said, but maybe it will be okay.”

“And what if Anya attacks him?”

“I’ll hold Oliver and protect him. I don’t think Anya will attack me.”

“She chases the bunnies in the yard,” Ilya says.

“Yeah, but she could catch them and she never does. I think she enjoys the hunt more than the idea of the kill.”

Shane has a point there.

Ilya looks into the dark, pleading eyes of his husband. It’s so hard to deny Shane what he wants, and maybe it will be fine. But also…

“Are you hoping that Anya loves the kitten and it will make me want to keep him?” Ilya narrows his eyes.

“Of course not,” Shane says, shrugging defensively. “I just think it will be easier if we get this part out of the way.”

“But if the kitten is not staying—”

“I know he’s not.”

“But if he is not staying,” Ilya repeats. “Then maybe we don’t have to introduce them at all.”

“Ilya, please? Can we just try it and see? She hasn’t freaked out over the scent yet, and if she keeps this up all night with Oliver under the door, we’ll never get any sleep.”

Ilya sighs. “You’re right. Fuck. Okay. Okay, we’ll try it.”

They decide that Ilya will take Anya downstairs while Shane gets Oliver and brings him into their bedroom.

She whines when Ilya picks her up and carries her downstairs, but she doesn’t put up a fight. He grabs treats for both animals and then brings her back up into the empty guest bedroom. She sniffs around, clearly looking for the cat and confused about where it is. Ilya laughs when her entire upper body disappears under the bed in her search.

“He is not under there, silly girl.”

She doesn’t mess with the litter box, though she spends a few minutes sniffing it. Finally, she turns around to look at Ilya, and he’s never seen a dog look so betrayed.

“Come on,” he says, leading her across the hall.

Shane is sitting in the middle of their bed with the kitten in his arms. Oliver is clearly trying to get loose, curious about all the commotion, but Shane has him by the scruff of his neck. Anya goes right to the bed, but doesn’t climb up. She puts her paws up on the edge of the mattress, nose extended, sniffing the air. She looks at Ilya, then back at the kitten, before letting out a long, pathetic whine.

Shane carefully inches closer to the edge of the bed, holding the kitten tightly in his hands.

“Good girl, Anya,” Ilya croons, stroking a gentle hand over her head.

Shane gets close enough for Anya’s nose to almost touch the kitten. Oliver’s pupils are huge, but he doesn’t seem too frightened as he stretches towards Anya.

“I’ll bet Oliver recognizes Anya’s smell, too,” Shane whispers. Ilya can’t help grinning at how calm the scene is. He gives Anya the treat in his hand and soothes his hand over her head again.

Shane extends his hands, and Ilya grabs Anya’s collar, ready to yank her back if he needs to. But she just keeps sniffing, so curious and eager.

“This is Oliver,” Shane says. “He’s really small, so we have to be very careful with him, okay?”

Anya’s eyes shift from the kitten to Shane, like she understands. Ilya wonders if maybe she does.

They give the animals a few more minutes to sniff each other before Ilya takes Anya outside to throw a ball around the yard. She needs some exercise, and Ilya needs the fresh air.

When Shane joins them, he’s all smiles. “I think that went well, don’t you?”

Ilya nods, his heart fluttering at the joy on Shane’s face. He knows that if Shane asked right now to keep the kitten, he’d say yes. Thankfully, he just joins them in playing.

After dinner, Ilya takes Anya for a walk while Shane brings Oliver out to the living room for some play time.

They take the long route around, then double back and do a second loop, hopefully giving Shane plenty of time to tire the kitten out before bed. So far, he has woken one of them up every single night, and Ilya would like to sleep through the night for a change.

When they get back, Anya heads right to her bed in the corner of the living room. It seems like, for now at least, she has forgotten about Oliver.

“Ilya!”

Ilya is jolted out of sleep by Shane’s frantic yelling, sitting up quickly. It’s definitely too fucking early to be awake, he notes from the position of the sun over the lake. He lets his eyes slip closed again as he flops onto his back.

“Chevó?” He asks, realizing a moment too late that he’s spoken in Russian. He translates, even though Shane knows what it means. “What?”

“Oliver, he’s not in his room.”

“What do you mean?” Ilya’s eyes open back up to see Shane leaning over the bed. He still has creases from his pillow on his cheek. “Where is he?”

“I don’t know, I got up to pee and noticed the guest room door was open, and he wasn’t in there.”

“Okay, calm down. Did you search the house yet?”

“No, but what if—” His voice breaks off and his eyes are anguished. “What if Anya got him?”

“Anya is a good dog, I’m sure everything is fine,” Ilya says, but dread coils low in his gut. “Come on, let’s go look.”

Shane starts searching the upstairs rooms while Ilya heads downstairs, still yawning and rubbing his eyes, willing himself to wake up.

It doesn't take him long to find the kitten.

Ilya's mouth curves into a smile, taking in the sweet scene before him. Anya is in her dog bed in the corner of the living room, the tiny kitten curled up in the nook of her neck. They are both sleeping peacefully.

Ilya turns and heads back up the stairs, finding Shane at the top about to head down.

"Any sign of him?"

"Yes, shh," Ilya says, lifting a finger to his lips. "Come on." Shane looks confused, but follows.

"Is he okay?" He whispers as they descend.

"He is fine."

Ilya leads Shane into the living room and points. He hears Shane's breath catch, feels Shane's hand land on his arm. "Ilya…"

"I told you Anya is good girl."

"How did Oliver get out here?"

"Maybe Anya broke him out," Ilya shrugs, smiling at Shane's soft, relieved laughter. "Or maybe you just didn't close the door all the way."

"Holy shit. I wish I had my phone, I want a picture."

"Just take it in, Shane."

The following afternoon, Ilya fills Anya's outdoor bowl with some fresh water from the hose before heading back inside. They've been out in the yard for hours, keeping busy while Shane stayed in to handle some things for the charity.

After a Zoom call and a mountain of paperwork—which Shane insists on managing, mostly because he knows Ilya hates it—Ilya expects to find him still in his office. But he is on the couch with Oliver.

Ilya's heart flips over.

Shane's eyes are closed where he's leaning back against the arm of the couch, the tiny kitten asleep on his chest. One hand is cradled under the cat to keep him in place, the other is flung over his head. Shane looks perfectly relaxed.

Ilya moves closer, but a squeaky floorboard behind the couch betrays him, and Shane's eyes open.

"Hey," he whispers.

"Did I wake you?"

"No. I just came out here to sit for a few minutes, but Oliver saw me and climbed right up. I couldn't say no." Shane's smile is so dreamy and content that Ilya's eyes burn. He blinks.

Ilya leans on the back of the couch and looks down at them. He reaches one hand over and strokes a thumb over the kitten's head. He is very soft.

"He looks peaceful," Ilya says.

"Yeah. He's pretty perfect." Shane yawns, and the kitten lifts his head, yawning in response.

He looks up at Ilya, those wide eyes intent on his face. Ilya pets him again and the kitten presses into it, purring contentedly. The sound makes something warm spread in Ilya's chest, and he feels himself smiling at the tiny creature.

"Are you perfect, Oliver?" Ilya asks as a tiny pink nose reaches up to sniff his hand. The kitten mewls, as if confirming, and Shane and Ilya both laugh.

"He knows he is. Here," Shane says, grabbing Oliver with both hands and lifting him off his chest. "I have to go to the bathroom. You can hold him."

Ilya wants to protest, wants to refuse and put the kitten down somewhere. But his hand wraps around the soft belly, and Oliver yawns again, putting a set of tiny, sharp teeth on display. Shane pats him on the shoulder as he walks by, leaving Ilya alone with the purring kitten.

"What are we going to do with you?" He murmurs in Russian. "I am a dog person."

But he places the kitten on his shoulder and listens to the soft rumble, letting the vibrations run through him. And suddenly, he is seven years old again, with his head on Feliks's chest, waiting for his mother to come pick him up and take him home.

Ilya's heart lurches at the memory, his stomach trembling with emotion. He feels tears prick his eyes again. And Ilya knows he is screwed.

A moment later, Shane comes up behind him. He reaches up to scratch Oliver's ears.

"This is something I never thought I'd see," he says softly. "Ilya Rozanov snuggling an adorable kitten."

Ilya looks over his shoulder, letting his eyes trail from Shane's teasing grin to his eyes, warm with amusement. He smiles back.

"His name is Oliver."

End Notes

Kittens are the best, but get two unless you have other pets at home. TRUST ME on that. (I speak from experience.) I am not opposed to writing more in this world. I think getting to watch Anya and Oliver bond would be so fun! Lmk if that's something anyone else actually wants.

The woman who bathes kittens is real, and her videos are the most wholesome, satisfying thing on the internet. Enjoy.

Oliver & Company is a delightful 80s movie full of cheese and silly cartoon animals. It was a staple of my childhood and is way too fun to skip!

Please feed my muse! She needs comments and kudos to keep coming back to me. 💕
Come find me on Tumblr or Bluesky, I am always ready and willing to yap!

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