

No Chance!

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No Chance!

by [princesscas](#)

Summary

Shane is failing statistics. Enter Ilya, his new study group partner who seems to know everything about the class.

Notes

i look at two perfectly good jocks. i make them into college nerds. i smile

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

It's only after fifteen minutes of pure silence that their stalemate is broken. They've been having a silent-treatment contest—or at least, Shane's been having a silent-treatment contest with him—and, appallingly, the other guy is winning. They're both saying nothing, but the other guy seems to be saying *more* nothing. Shane doesn't think he even knows there's a contest going on. But eventually one of them has to admit defeat, and Shane doesn't think they can sit in silence for any longer than fifteen minutes without it becoming weird, so.

At last Shane swallows his pride and says, very casually, like they haven't been ignoring each other for the last quarter of an hour, "Hey."

The other guy looks up at last. He stares at Shane for a moment, his eyes sweeping from his nose bridge to his eyes to his mouth. "Oh," he says. He does not elaborate.

Shane stares at him, perplexed. Maybe he's just a really big introvert? Clearly he's going to have to do the social heavy lifting here. "I'm Shane," he offers, holding out his hand.

The other guy blinks. "I do not know you."

"Well, yeah," Shane says, pulling out his phone. That's a given. He doesn't know anyone here. Not yet, at least. "You're here for the stats study group, right? We're supposed to partner up. And you're sitting right here."

His eyes widen, just slightly. "Statistics," he says slowly. "Yes. The study group."

Shane frowns slightly. His fingers slip on his phone keyboard, and he clicks the wrong app entirely. "You okay?"

"Fine." He glances at Shane's phone. "Why are you shopping for... purple glitter cat ears?"

Shane looks down at his phone. Sure enough, it's on a product page, proudly advertising *Cute Cat Ears With Glitter For Birthday Party, Halloween, Costume Party, Etc!* All the blood drains from Shane's face. Fucking Rose...! He *knew* he shouldn't have given her his phone when she was looking for costume materials. "I'm not," he says loudly. Everyone in the library turns and looks at him. (Really only about four people turn, but that's still too many.)

"Mm," says the other guy, not sounding convinced. His mouth tugs up at the corner. It's a nice mouth, and it's attached to a nice face; he's quite handsome.

Shane coughs awkwardly. "Never mind." He shoves his phone, this time displaying his contacts app, into his face. "Anyway, put your number in. We're supposed to have a partner in the study group."

The other guy obediently types. He hands the phone back. *Ilya*, the contact reads, with no last name. His phone number is marked *Business* instead of *Mobile*. Shane's mouth quirks up. "Econ major?"

Ilya looks at him blankly.

Shane suddenly feels a little stupid. “Because you put ‘Business’ on the number. I thought it was a pun. Or, like, aspirational. You know.”

“No,” says Ilya.

Shane takes his phone back and gives up. Whatever. They don’t need to be friends. They just need to get this damn statistics problem set done. “I’m staying for an hour today. Want to work through the first probability set together?”

“Probability is not too hard,” says Ilya, which sounds like a glowing agreement compared to his past demeanor. “I know probability theory.”

Shane perks up. “You do? I keep struggling with that. I’m more of a political science guy. You know what they say about gay people and math.”

Ilya nods sagely. “Yes,” he says. “I am good at math.”

“O...kay,” Shane says, a little lost. Is this his way of emphasizing that he’s straight, or something? “Anyway, first problem: you roll two dice; what’s the probability you roll exactly one even number?”

Ilya drags his chair closer and leans over Shane’s shoulder to read the question. He makes a vague noise of acknowledgement. Then he says, “One half.”

Shane frowns. “That’s the probability of rolling an even number on *one* die. Shouldn’t it be more complicated with two? Like, if the first one’s even, then the second one has to be odd, and...”

Ilya shakes his head. He pulls out a notebook, an honest-to-god physical paper notebook bound in rich brown leather, from his shoulder bag. He takes a pen out of his pocket and starts writing something. Shane hadn’t noticed during their one-sided contest, but he’s wearing a sweet cream-white jacket with a breast pocket. A breast pocket with a *pen* in it. Shane looks down at his sweatpants and black compression shirt and feels a little underdressed. This is one of his nicer outfits, even. What the hell?

“These are outcomes,” says Ilya. Shane blinks himself out of it and looks at the paper. He’s drawn a table of thirty-six dice rolls, each one labeled with the two dice numbers. “So you count which ones have one even number. Eighteen. This is half of thirty-six. One-half probability.”

Shane stares at the paper. He moves his finger along the results. One-two, one-four, one-six. Sure enough, there are eighteen results with one even number. Half of the outcomes. “Huh,” he says, a little baffled. “Thanks. I didn’t think to draw it out.”

“Mm,” says Ilya. “In the future you will draw the dice in your mind.”

Shane stares at him.

“Like me. I draw the dice in my mind. Then I count.”

“Oh,” Shane says. He looks at the paper again, at all thirty-six results. Ilya drew them so fast that he must have had a clear mental image. “I think I’ll just draw the outcomes. You just make a table with all of the dice combinations and add them together?”

“Mm.”

Wow. This is way easier than Shane expected. “That works for everything?”

Ilya nods. “Like the lottery.” He picks up the pen again and draws a simple chart: two boxes. “You only have two options: win or lose. Probability of winning: one out of two. Fifty percent.” He circles the WIN option. Then he circles it twice more.

Shane raises an eyebrow.

“Try it,” Ilya says, pushing the paper towards him.

“Try... the lottery?” Shane asks, baffled. “The hell? I’m not buying a lottery ticket. The odds clearly aren’t one in two.”

Ilya shrugs. “How do you know?”

“I just—I just do!” Shane says, incredulous. “It’s common knowledge. Like, no one wins the lottery. That’s why the pool of money is so big. Everyone thinks they’ll win it, and no one ever actually does.”

Ilya’s mouth quirks up. “You might get lucky.”

“Luck,” Shane says sharply, “isn’t *real*. I’m talking about *numbers*.”

“Luck is real,” Ilya says. “You need proof? I am lucky right now, because you’re still talking to me.”

Shane blinks. He blinks again. His face suddenly feels too hot. “You know what,” he says sharply, picking up his laptop and the notebook on the table all in one swoop. “I think I’ll do the rest of this problem set on my own.”

For the first time, Ilya smiles. He gives Shane a little one-handed wave, wiggling his fingers. “Have fun, Shane.”

He says his name sharply, maybe like an insult, maybe like an endearment. Two options, Shane thinks, and he draws the table in his mind: insult-endearment, fifty-fifty. It pisses him off.

Shane likes to think he’s the bigger person in most situations. He bites his tongue and, admirably, doesn’t flip him off. Instead he grips the laptop and the notebook harder and finds himself another table. He doesn’t notice until he’s on the final problem in the set that he’s been tracing his fingers over Ilya’s hand-drawn dice chart the whole time.

Fuck. He took Ilya’s notebook.

Shane Hollander: *I have your notebook.*

ilya: *Ok*

Shane Hollander: *Do you want it back?*

ilya: *Yes*

Shane Hollander: *I can bring it to the next stats study session. Next week on Monday?*

ilya: *No*

ilya: *Cafe next to big med student lecture hall*

ilya: *Tomorrow afternoon*

Shane Hollander: *Fine.*

The café. Quarter to four. Shane arrives carrying the notebook. He's dressed up a little: brown jacket, brown scarf, pants without holes in them. Rose had whistled when he left their apartment. "Who's the lucky guy?" she had asked, ogling his ass. Shane had thrown his sock at her.

He sits at a table for two by the window. He's a little early; they said four. But he's punctual. He's... just a punctual guy. You know. On-Time Shane. That's what they call him in the streets.

But Ilya doesn't arrive.

Shane starts tapping his foot. He glances at the menu, then at the door again, then stares out the window for a while. Ilya doesn't walk through the door. He waits ten minutes past their meeting time. Still nothing.

Finally he gets fed up. If he's getting stood up—and he doesn't know why he's thinking of it like that, it's not like this is an *important* meeting, or like a *date* or anything—if he's getting stood up, he thinks firmly, he's at least going to get himself a damn coffee out of it. A big coffee. An oat milk latte with two shots of hazelnut syrup. "And a chocolate croissant," he adds, fuming a little at the poor, undeserving barista.

"Okay," says the barista. The... barista... who sounds exactly like...

Shane blinks. Sure enough, the person standing behind the register is— "You *work here?*"

From behind the register, Ilya nods. "Free coffee for you," he says, writing something on the cup. "Visitors during work hours get coffee. Put that away."

Slowly, Shane puts away his wallet. "Thanks," he says, still a little flustered. He was so worked up over being stood up, and the whole time he could have just *turned around* and

seen Ilya at the counter? “You don’t have to get me the chocolate croissant, then. Forget that. I don’t want to make you pay for it.”

Ilya nods. He turns around to make the coffee. Shane sits back down at his two-person window table, this time in the opposite seat, and watches him work. He does something at the espresso machine with his hands and then he goes to the steamer, and Shane gets distracted watching his focused expression and doesn’t even register what he’s actually doing.

“Shane,” Ilya calls from the other end of the counter.

Shane smiles a little and walks up. He could have sworn there was a second barista on duty whose job it was to call out the orders. And another whose job it was to *make* the orders. But Ilya did it all anyway. He doesn’t know how to feel about that.

When he takes the coffee, Ilya’s mouth quirks up. He hands Shane a bag. A warmed chocolate croissant.

Shane’s hand hesitates. “I said—?”

“You wanted it,” Ilya says simply. Then he hands the bag over.

When Shane takes it, their fingertips touch. Ilya’s are warm. Shane takes the bag and opens his mouth to say something, he doesn’t quite know what. Maybe he means to say *Thank you*, or *At least let me pay you back*. What he says instead is, “You should take your break.”

Ilya blinks.

“With me,” Shane continues, because he’s in too deep now. Might as well commit. “I, um, have your notebook.”

“Okay,” says Ilya. “I will take it back now.”

Shane’s hand tightens on the coffee. “Yeah,” he says, suddenly feeling stood up again. Never mind. He hates men. He’s going to go crawling back to Rose and beg her to reconsider her lesbianism for a poor, unfortunate man like him.

“You did not read the coffee,” Ilya says.

Shane loosens his death grip on the cup. “Isn’t it just my name?”

Ilya nods at it. Shane tilts the cup in his hand. *Shane*, it says. Then, right beneath his name, in bold black marker: *I would write my number, but you already have it.*

Shane nearly spills the whole drink on the ground.

“Do not spill,” Ilya says. His smile is angular, like it was drawn on with a crayon in two broad strokes. “I would make you pay for replacement.”

The smile isn’t quite mocking, but it makes Shane’s face feel hot anyway. He thinks about staring at him for a while longer. Instead he throws the notebook at his chest.

Ilya is at the next study group meeting too. He gets there two minutes late and sits right next to Shane like it's his reserved seat. Then he pulls out the notebook and looks expectantly at Shane.

Shane raises an eyebrow at him. "What happened to *Hello? How are you?*"

"You like efficiency," Ilya says, like he knows it to be fact. He gestures at his notebook, and then at himself. "I am efficient."

He's gesturing mostly at his chest, which, Shane notices, is quite generous. He blinks at it a few times. "I like that. Um, efficiency. Yeah, I like efficiency." He coughs. "Okay, so this week we have a problem set about conditional stuff, and it makes absolutely no sense to me."

Ilya nods sagely. "Conditional probability. I do not like formulas."

"Ah, shit," Shane mutters, pulling up the problem set on his laptop. "I hate formulas too. We're both fucked here, I guess." He stares at one of the formulas he went over during lecture. It makes his brain spin; he's never liked memorization. "Like, what is this? Why does it have eight million terms?"

Ilya peers over at his laptop. His hair looks different today, like he'd put more effort into it. More tame, with no flyaways. "Bayes' Theorem," he says, nodding. "This one is not too hard. Top and bottom have the same term. It is easier to memorize."

Shane looks at him flatly. "I once forgot my own birthday. I don't think I can do that."

"May tenth," Ilya says, seemingly without thinking.

Shane blinks.

"Your birthday. It is on your social media."

"...It is, yeah." Shane looks over at him, then away again. "My mom made me put it there after I forgot my birthday. That was my nineteenth. Had it there ever since."

Ilya hums. "I will not forget."

Shane's chest feels strange. He clears his throat, but the feeling doesn't go away. "When's yours?"

"June fifteenth."

"Oh, that's easy to remember! It's like the song. You know, *Late nights in the middle of June*. Everyone knows that."

Ilya raises an eyebrow. "I do not."

“I swear everyone knows it,” Shane says, suddenly feeling a little unsure. He gestures at the two women sitting opposite them in the study group. “Hey, you know that song that's like, *Sometimes all I think about is you, late nights in the middle of June...?*”

Both of them look entirely lost.

Well, whatever. Shane sighs. “I’ll remember, at least. Even if no one else will.”

Ilya looks very pleased by this.

Hastily, Shane looks away again. “Anyway, I’m never gonna memorize this. Why do they switch the variable from B to T for this term? And why do they even repeat the same term in the top and bottom half? What does it *do*?”

Ilya looks at him strangely. “You cannot memorize?”

Shane shakes his head.

“Then you do not need to,” says Ilya, already taking out the pen from his breast pocket. “Will you understand if you derive the theorem?”

So together they derive Bayes’ Theorem together, and Shane works through the problem set of medical cases and false positives and all that, and surprisingly, by the end of their session, it kind of makes sense. It’s also been almost three hours. Everyone else in the study group is gone. It’s just the two of them, sitting there with the complete problem set, sitting a little closer together than they started.

“I don’t like him,” Shane says, looking at the ceiling.

“Uh huh,” Rose says from the kitchen counter. She’s eating something; Shane can’t quite tell what from the sound alone.

“It’s just that he’s really fucking good at stats.”

“Uh huh.”

“And I need this class to graduate.”

“Uh huh.”

“I *don’t* like him,” Shane says, this time with passion. “I’m going to throw a TI-84 graphing calculator at his beautiful head.”

Rose crunches quite loudly. “Uh huh,” she says through a mouthful of whatever it is.

Shane lifts his head from the couch. “What are you even eating?”

“Souls of the damned,” Rose says, entirely deadpan. She’s eating cubes of watermelon. She’s also wearing electric blue lipstick. The watermelon cube has a blue stain on it where she bites into it.

Shane drops his head back down and looks at the unsympathetic beige ceiling. He doesn’t know why he bothers.

“There is very specific wording,” Ilya says, scribbling something on Shane’s paper. “You cannot say there is a ninety-five percent chance. This is false. It is ‘ninety-five percent confident.’”

Who the fuck cares, Shane thinks, but wisely doesn’t say. He writes the correct wording beneath Ilya’s. He just has to pass this class. Besides, changing it isn’t that hard for him—he’s taken so many political science classes that he knows the intricacies of wording. He can just pretend every confidence interval is a legal document, and that his mother is reading it, making sure everything is exactly correct.

“But all of this…” Ilya runs his fingers across the work below it, the pencil marks from Shane’s equations. The graphite brushes off on his fingertip, leaving a silver impression on his hand. “This is correct.”

Shane is so busy staring at the mark he’s left on his skin that it takes him several moments to process that. “You mean the math?” he asks, incredulous. “I did the math right?”

Ilya’s mouth slants. “Mm.”

Shane gapes at the paper. What the hell! That’s every single problem in this set! He’s *never* done that well on a math test before, not in any discipline. He’s always had mistakes, always had something that caught him off guard. And now he’s done an entire practice set with no math mistakes.

“It is not perfect yet,” says Ilya, looking at him. “You will keep practicing.”

“Well, obviously,” Shane says absently, still losing his mind over the perfect set. *Perfect!* (Well, except for the phrasing of the confidence interval part, but really, who gives a shit?) He’s going to celebrate this for years to come.

Ilya doesn’t look away. “Shane,” he says. “With me. You will practice with me.”

His eyes are intense. Shane kind of forgets that breathing is a thing. “Yeah,” he says. “Yeah, with you.”

Ilya smiles.

“Rose, I’m going to *die*.”

Rose doesn't even look up from her laptop.

"I think he's in love with me or something."

"Must be your dashing good looks and incredible smarts," says Rose, still typing. "So do you want Thai food or Vietnamese?"

Shane lifts his head from the pillow. "I thought you were cooking tonight?"

"I burnt the cabbage," Rose says cheerfully.

Ah. That explains the smell. "We have more cabbage. I chopped up half of it; you can just cut the other half and use that."

"Oh! I burnt that too."

Shane sighs. Someday one of them has to learn to cook; all he can do is use the steamer and boil stuff, and eventually they're both going to get tired of egg drop soup and steamed shrimp with vegetables. "You decide. I'm gonna go have a crisis for a while."

"Sure thing," Rose says. "Want me to put on *Bridgerton* or something?"

"I fucking hate *Bridgerton*," Shane protests, and then she puts it on anyway and they watch it together and eat Thai food out of the takeout containers using the matching chopsticks Rose bought for them when they moved in together last year, the ones with the little flowers painted on the ends.

On Saturday night Rose makes him go to a party. She likes to bring him along so that she can use him as an excuse to leave early by pretending that he's too drunk to walk and that she has to take him home because she's such a good roommate and loves him so much. Unfortunately now everyone in the theater department thinks Shane is the world's worst lightweight.

Anyway, it's a house party, organized by someone adjacent to the theater department, and he's doing the usual routine, leaning against her arm and making vaguely pitiful noises, when he sees him.

Fuck.

Shane looks at him. His eyes glaze over. It's Ilya. Why is it Ilya? He's not even in the theater department. He's in... actually, Shane doesn't know. He's not an econ major, at least. Maybe he should ask. He takes out his phone and starts typing out a text to Ilya: *Hey, what's your major?*

"History," Ilya says from next to him.

Shane looks up. "Oh," he says, a little flustered. Ilya must have come over while he was typing. It's not his fault the M and A keys are so far apart. He closes his phone without sending the text. "History?"

Ilya's mouth moves up. "Study of interpreting the past. War and society and things like that."

"I know what history is, dipshit," Shane mutters, glaring at him. Maybe glaring at his shoulder. He can't quite tell.

"Ah," says Ilya. He makes an odd shape with his mouth, then says, "He is... sloshed?"

Something rumbles beneath him. It's Rose, laughing. "Yeah," she says, sounding amused. "I mean, just look at him." She gestures vaguely to Shane.

"I am perfectly fine," Shane says through his not-cottony mouth. It comes out more like *I'm perffinely*.

Neither of them speak for a second. Shane sniffs. He's had maybe two drinks. That's not even that many. He's like, barely even flushed or anything. He's fine. He's *so* fine.

"You know," says Rose, heaving his arm over her shoulder with a grunt. "I think I'll take him home now."

"Ah." A pause. "You are Shane's girlfriend?"

Rose barks out a laugh. "This guy's so into dudes that he once helped me buy a strap based on how good it would feel for the bottom."

Ilya makes a noise.

"Yeah," Rose says. "Anyway, taking him home now. This bastard's gonna make me shower with him again. And not even in the fun frisky way."

She hauls him up on her shoulder again. Shane groans. "Can I quit pretending to be drunk now?"

"You're not pretending," Rose informs him, patting his head reassuringly. "You are blackout drunk and I'm putting the idea of showering together into this nice man's head so you can get laid and forget about that stats guy you're into."

"What?" says Ilya.

"What?" says Shane.

Rose sighs. "No one appreciates me around here." She straightens up and smiles again. "Never mind! Just come with me."

So they walk home together, and Shane makes her wash his hair as payment for going to the party with her. He dreams about showering with Ilya and wakes up a strange combination of nauseous and warm, and also a little bit hungover. The theater department has it right: he really *is* a lightweight.

“You are into me,” says Ilya for the whole study group section of the library to hear. It isn’t a question.

Shane flushes bright red. He walks right back out.

ilya: I am sorry

ilya: You do not want other people to know

Shane Hollander: *It’s fine. Just caught me off guard.*

ilya: I should not have said it in public

ilya: You will return next week?

Shane Hollander: *No.*

ilya: Shane

ilya: I will not tell people. It will be fine

Shane Hollander: *You misunderstand. I mean we’ll see each other this week.*

Shane Hollander: *You’ve helped me a lot, and I need to pass this class.*

ilya: Ah

ilya: Of course. Cafe tomorrow?

Shane Hollander: *Come to my apartment.*

Shane Hollander: *Tonight.*

“You know,” says Shane, when they’re done having mind-blowing sex that has absolutely nothing to do with the math he invited him over to do. He looks over at Ilya and turns to prop himself against the pillow. “I actually do need to work on stats.”

Ilya huffs a sound halfway to a laugh. “Fuck statistics,” he says, his shoulders heaving with the effort of his heavy breathing. “I am done. No more. My brain is melted.”

Shane feels great, actually, like he could do about ten thousand stats problems right this minute, but he’s more than willing to lay here and do nothing for a while. “It can wait until tomorrow.” He stretches out his spine and curls further into the pillow. “We’re in the same study group, but somehow you’re always the one helping me. It’s never the other way around.”

Ilya stiffens.

Shane looks down at him. “Ilya?”

Ilya sighs and pushes his face petulantly into the pillow.

“Ilya.”

“Mm,” Ilya hums into the pillow.

Shane smiles down at him, strangely endeared. “You’re not in the study group, are you?”

Ilya shakes his head.

“You’ve already taken the class.”

“I am a dual major. History and data science.”

Shane blinks. He’d been imagining that Ilya took the same course last semester or something. But a whole *data science major*? Shane’s taking introductory stats, too; it’s supposed to be an entry-level course, and yet here he is, letting Ilya tutor him through it. He’s probably taken classes five times harder than this. He probably does this stuff in his *sleep*.

“It’s no trouble,” Ilya says quickly. “I like helping you. You are a good student.”

“Oh thank god,” Shane blurts, before he can think better of it. “I might actually fail if you quit on me. Wait—that’s not the point. I was going to ask, if you’re not in the study group, why did you join me anyway? Did you just, like, sit at the wrong table? Were you going to an advanced level study group?”

“No,” says Ilya. “I thought you were hot. So I sat with you.”

Shane stares at him. “*Excuse me?*”

“It worked,” says Ilya smugly. He motions vaguely at Shane’s bed, which he is in.

“You sat with me in a study group for a class that’s about two hundred levels below your major because you wanted to get in my pants. My shitty sweatpants with holes in the ankles.”

Ilya nods.

“Okay,” Shane says, a little lightheaded. He’s kind of flattered, actually. His stats grade is thankful for it, and Ilya’s actually pretty nice and patient and very attractive, now that he thinks about it. “Great.”

“Ah. Not just your pants,” Ilya says. “I also want to be your boyfriend.”

Shane looks at him flatly.

“I have good qualities,” Ilya says hopefully, through his sleepy lashes. “Good boyfriend qualities. I make drinks. I am smart. I can argue well. You will not be bored with me. If you are sad I will show you photos of my niece in little blue shoes.”

Shane sighs, more than a little endeared. “Go to sleep, Ilya.”

“But I am not your boyfriend yet.”

“Augh,” says Shane, throwing his head back into the pillow. “Fine. You’re my boyfriend. I’m your boyfriend. We’re boyfriends. Whatever. Now cuddle me, I’m cold.”

Ilya closes his eyes petulantly and holds onto his waist. “No, you are not.”

Shane contemplates punching him in the face. Instead he shuffles closer in the bed and pulls the covers up over their shoulders. “Cuddle me anyway.”

Because he’s a good boyfriend, Ilya does.

End Notes

world's biggest shoutout to [bringingglory](#), who tied me up and forced me to watch this show!
i enjoyed it! (visibly sweating) can you please loosen the rope i'm losing feeling in my fingers

please drop a comment / kudos if you enjoyed! this fic is so silly. every time i write a dumb
comedy a frog sings in a puddle

find me on [tumblr \(princesscas-ao3\)](#)!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!