

Shane's Annoying Neighbor

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Shane's Annoying Neighbor

by [jsMika2](#)

Summary

With his face contorted into a scowl that Rose warned him would become permanent one day, Shane opened the door to reveal one of the hottest men he had ever seen, shirtless, holding his long-lost cat.

Instead of being suave or even just normal about the combination strippergram/pet deliveryman on his doorstep, Shane opted to blow it immediately.

“Where the fuck have you been?” Shane yelled.

A Neighbors AU in which Ilya is the annoying guy next door and Shane tries to deal with it.

Notes

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

Ilya's shift at work had ended late, so by the time he dragged himself back to his new apartment he was damn near ready to pass out. He slumped to his bedroom without bothering to turn on any of the lights, yanking his shirt off and throwing it in the general direction of the hamper.

Ilya was looking forward to sleep the way only someone who had just spent upwards of 12 hours on his feet can crave unconsciousness. At this moment, however, the universe was not interested in Ilya's immediate wants and needs, because there was a cat that definitely did not belong to him curled up on his bed.

It was gray and furry, with large green eyes. Normally Ilya would think it was adorable, but right now he wanted to turn his brain off so badly he was considering sleeping next to this random animal.

Ilya was up-to-date on all his vaccines, so was getting rabies that much of a risk? And the cat seemed pretty chill. It just watched Ilya decide its future with a bored look on its face. Ilya could vibe with that level of nonchalance.

His eyes caught on a collar around the cat's neck. HAYDEN, it read in big letters.

Fuck me, Ilya thought. There was some short guy named Hayden who lived a few floors down, and he sucked. Like really hard. If this little furball was his, Ilya might just keep it for a day or two. Do the cat a favor.

Ilya looked a little closer. The cat tilted its head so Ilya could rub its ears, which he did. The address printed on the collar was for the unit next door.

Ilya groaned inwardly, talked himself into being a good neighbor, and scooped the cat up in his arms. The cat, surprised by the sudden motion, flailed a little bit, catching Ilya's cheek with its claws.

Ilya swore in Russian and jerked the cat away from his face. He frowned at him.

"I am trying to help you. Be good," he scolded the cat, who stared back at him with unblinking eyes.

"Ungrateful," Ilya muttered as he walked out his front door.

**

Shane was about five minutes away from hyperventilating into a paper bag. Hayden – the cat, not his human friend who lived on the third floor – had disappeared earlier that day without a trace. Rose, who was lying upside down on the couch, tried to talk him down from a panic attack.

"We'll find him, Shane," she said. "The shelter warned us he liked to explore, so maybe he just went out."

“WENT OUT?” Shane felt his throat constrict. “He’s a cat, not a teenager breaking curfew! He’s the size of a squirrel, he can’t survive on the streets!”

Shane liked to be excellent at all things, and that included pet ownership. So his new cat making a break for it was troubling, to say the least. Hayden the Cat was a recent acquisition from the local shelter. All the kittens in his litter had been named alphabetically and given to families in that order. As the H-kitten and the runt of the litter, Hayden the Cat had been the last to find a home. Shane and his roommate Rose had adopted him last week and enthusiastically assumed joint custody.

Before Shane could chastise Rose about her lackluster parenting, his phone buzzed with a text from Hayden the Person.

Hayden: *at least now you can get a cat with a different name*

Hayden: *sorry if that was too soon or whatever*

Hayden the Person, Shane’s longtime friend, was less than thrilled about the latest addition to the Hollander-Landry household. He would never admit it, but he felt like he had to compete with the cat because they had the same name, and to be fair, it was really hard to beat out a kitten. Hayden the Cat was just really fucking cute, and there was nothing to be done about it.

Shane closed the text chain with a sigh. He did not have the emotional capacity to answer that right now.

As he was about to suggest that they start printing missing posters, there was a knock at the door.

Shane, his face contorted into a scowl that Rose warned him would one day become permanent, opened the door to reveal one of the hottest men he had ever seen, shirtless, holding his long-lost cat.

Instead of being suave or even just normal about the strippergram/pet deliveryman on his doorstep, Shane opted to blow it immediately.

“Where the fuck have you been?” Shane yelled at Hayden the Cat, who was being cradled like a baby, with his little kitten head resting against the very handsome stranger’s chest, which had a bear tattoo on it.

The man raised his eyebrows, surprised at being told off by the guy whose pet he was very kindly returning. Shane realized he should apologize, or at least make it clear he had been talking to his truant cat, but he was struggling to form sentences.

“This is yours, yes?” Hallway Man’s voice was deep and rumble and heavily accented. It did not help with Shane’s critical thinking.

“Oh, fuck yes,” Shane heard Rose call from behind him. “Hayden!”

Rose reached around Shane’s inert form to pull the cat into her arms.

“We missed you, my little baby boy,” she assured Hayden the Cat, rubbing her cheek against his head.

Mr. Half-Naked-Stranger cleared his throat pointedly.

Rose’s head shot up. “Thank you so much,” she said to the Abercrombie model in their doorway.

Shane took a closer look at him and noticed a fresh cut about an inch above his stubble.

“What’s wrong with your face?” Shane blurted out, cringing at himself.

Why am I allowed to talk?

“Your cat is not a very good house guest.” The man frowned.

“He’s not declawed,” Shane said. Which obviously this hot Russian guy knew, because he had the scratch on his cheek to prove it.

Rose chose to do the socially acceptable thing, which was to apologize for her cat sneaking into someone’s home and hurting them.

“We’re sorry about that,” Rose said. “We owe you big time, and so does Hayden.”

Hayden the Cat gazed calmly at Ilya, his giant eyes impassive. He didn’t seem appreciative.

The man smiled, much friendlier with Rose. Probably because she hadn’t shouted at him and then implied he was ugly.

“Finding a cat is not the most exciting thing to happen in my bed,” the guy said with a crooked grin that made Shane’s heart kick in his chest.

“I know this is like the worst first impression ever, but I’m Rose and this is Shane.” Rose stuck her hand out, still holding Hayden the Cat with the other.

“I am Ilya.” He shook her hand and nodded over his shoulder at the open door across the hall. “And that is where I live.”

Ilya’s eyes were a bright green-gold-brown color Shane didn’t know the word for, and below them were some pretty serious bags that made it clear this man needed to get horizontal ASAP.

Shane blushed at the innuendo and went back to desperately trying to act normal, which he again fucked up instantly.

“You look like you could use some sleep,” Shane said, like an idiot.

Don’t tell the hot guy he looks exhausted, Shane berated himself.

Ilya's sparkly eyes narrowed, and he crossed his arms. Never before had body language more obviously screamed, *Oh, so I did you a massive favor and now you're going to insult my appearance at 2 a.m.?*

Shane tried to fix it and then made it worse.

"Not, um, not to say you aren't attractive – I'm sure a lot of people think you are!" Shane stuttered. "It's just that nobody would expect you to look good in the middle of the night – No, fuck, that came out wrong. What I meant was –"

Before Shane could choke to death on his tongue, Rose intervened.

"What Shane is trying to say is thank you," Rose said diplomatically.

"Next time I will make sure to dress up when I bring your lost cat back," Ilya said. His lips turned down.

"There won't be a next time," Shane snapped, both embarrassed at himself and insulted at Ilya's insinuation that Hayden the Cat would run away again.

"We will see, won't we?" Ilya walked back to his unit. Shane tried and failed not to stare at his very muscular back.

Seconds after Ilya had closed his door, Rose turned to Shane and said, "Someone in this apartment is going to have sex with him. It can either be you or me."

Shane frowned and blushed.

"I think it should be you, though," Rose said. "You did see him first, so you have dibs."

Both the frown and the blush deepened.

"You also need to get laid," Rose continued, undeterred. "You are way too uptight for a yoga instructor."

"I am not uptight," Shane insisted.

"He says uptight-ily," Rose teased.

"That's not a word," Shane said.

"And only someone who is uptight would point that out," Rose said. She set Hayden the Cat on the ground, and he scurried off to inspect his food bowl.

"I'm going to bed, so I'll leave you here to freak out about the hot neighbor," she called as she walked away.

"I'm not freaking out!" Shane wasn't even sure why he was arguing. Neither of them believed it anyway.

Shane rapidly brainstormed ways to deal with the fact that he was developing a humiliating crush on the guy next door. So far, his choices were:

1. Never leave the apartment ever again.
2. Move out.
3. Get Ilya evicted.
4. Pretend this never happened and ignore Ilya forever.

Shane decided he liked option 4 the best.

**

Ilya, unfortunately, was really hard to ignore. He had to be doing it on purpose.

He was everywhere all the time, getting his mail or doing laundry or chatting with the doorman. Shane valiantly refused to pay attention to him, and he made it about a week before he hit his breaking point.

Shane had turned on the TV to watch the Ottawa Centaurs game and just as he went to grab a beer from his fridge, he very clearly heard a dog bark from across the hall. The building had strict rules on pets: only cats, and they had to be approved by management on a case-by-case basis. Hayden the Cat, of course, had passed with flying colors, because Shane's son had excellent manners.

But Ilya having a dog – and what sounded like a large dog given the volume of the bark and the banging noises from Ilya's apartment – could threaten every pet in the building. Their landlord was an asshole named Crowell, and he ruled over the complex like a tyrant. If someone was caught breaking the small pets only rule, he could decide to ban all pets.

Shane focused on the game and made an effort to tune out the barking. Hayden the Cat observed him from the top of his cat tree, unbothered by the illegal dog next door.

Shane was trying so hard to be chill about it. Like, really deeply trying not to care. But he couldn't help it. He walked across the hall and knocked on Ilya's door.

When Ilya opened up, he was wearing a white hoodie covered in black fur and had a roughly horse-sized dog prancing around at his feet.

"This apartment building doesn't let tenants own dogs."

Ilya nodded. "Okay."

"So you can't have a dog here."

"I don't have a dog." Ilya nudged the giant black mutt behind him with one foot.

Is this guy serious? Shane felt his eye twitch and ground his teeth together in a way his dentist would not be pleased about.

"You have to follow the apartment rules."

“Mm.” Ilya looked bored.

“I’m not kidding.” Shane was getting frustrated.

The dog squeaked the toy in its mouth, and the sound echoed loudly down the hallway. Ilya’s face stayed totally blank.

“Do I need to repeat myself?” Shane asked.

“No thanks, I ignored you fine the first time,” Ilya flashed him a smile and shut the door in his face.

On the other side of the wall, Shane heard an excited yip and what was probably a tennis ball knock something over as clumsy paws scrambled after it.

**

Shane’s next encounter with Ilya also went poorly. Shane had just gotten home after teaching classes at the yoga studio, so he was sweaty and exhausted. What he found in his living room was the opposite of relaxing. The whole place reeked of weed, and Rose had a joint dangling from her fingers as she watched a rerun of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. Hayden the Cat was curled up in her lap, purring happily.

Crowell had sent a notice to all the tenants complaining about drug use in the building that morning. The landlord had been an absolute terror recently, and smoking weed in the apartment was not going to help anything.

“What is that?” Shane screeched.

“Well, sometimes when the cool kids want to relax – ” Rose started in an overly educational voice.

“Stop, I know what it is.” Shane dragged a hand over his face. “Where did you get it?”

Because all of Shane’s problems seemed to come from a single source, Shane once again found himself knocking on Ilya’s door to yell at him for being a shitty neighbor.

“Have you been selling weed to my roommate?” Shane asked.

Ilya thought about it for a minute.

“... No.”

Shane counted down from 100 until he felt his anger ebb.

“Look, I know it’s you,” Shane said.

“Why?” Ilya put his hands on his hips, feigning outrage. “You think because I am an immigrant, I am a drug dealer? I did not realize you were a bigot.”

“What, no! That is not it at all.” Shane felt his cheeks flush. “I’m not prejudiced!”

“Because I am Russian, I must be in the mob then, yes?” Ilya’s eyes were bright in a way that made Shane suspect he was being made fun of. “I bet I have a bear as a pet, too. Oh wait, pets are not allowed here, are they? Is why you freaked out that I had a dog.”

“I knew that was your dog!”

“Was not my dog.”

“Ugh, it was totally your dog!” Shane felt like stamping his foot like a child. *This fucking guy*. “And I’m not stereotyping you! Rose told me you gave her a joint!”

“Oh,” Ilya’s face lit up. “I forget you are Rose’s friend. Is maybe because she is fun. What is she doing living with you?”

Shane was going to scream. “Rose was there when you brought Hayden home the other night!”

Ilya rolled his eyes, as if he had any right to be the exasperated one right now.

“You can’t bring drugs in here, even if it’s legal,” Shane said, trying to reason with him. “Crowell will evict us if we do anything to piss him off.”

Crowell had been terrorizing the entire building for a while now. Bothering families about their kids leaving toys in common spaces, hounding pet owners to pay an extra fee for their cats, and sending random furious emails about imagined crime sprees. Someone had left a cigarette burning in an ashtray in the designated smoking area a few days ago, and Crowell had sent an email to all the tenants making wild accusations about a possible arsonist.

Ilya shrugged. “If anyone needs a joint, it is Crowell.”

“Shhhh,” Shane shushed him. Crowell lurked around the building, in hallways and stairwells. He could be anywhere, waiting to ruin lives.

“You are cute when you are nervous,” Ilya said with a grin. “But in case you ever want to relax...”

Ilya pulled a new joint out of his pocket and showed it to Shane. Ilya slid it between his lips – *he has nice lips*, Shane’s dumb horny brain noted unhelpfully – and winked at Shane. Then he shut the door in his face. Again.

This was really getting old.

**

Crowell cornered Shane in the lobby the next day to complain about how many people in the building had gotten cats recently. Crowell didn’t like cats, and the number on the premises was beyond what he thought he could handle.

“If every apartment is going to be getting cats, then maybe I should just change the pet policy to ban all animals,” Crowell said, sending a puff of rancid breath into Shane’s face.

Shane flinched and felt his teeth click together. *You aren’t going to make me get rid of Hayden the Cat. I’m his dad.*

“And I also think someone has been smoking in their apartment, so keep an eye for anyone who looks like they’re breaking the rules, won’t you, Shane?” Crowell asked, leering at him.

Shane wanted to vomit at hearing his name in his scummy landlord’s mouth, but instead, he just nodded and hauled ass out of there.

Shane was trying to repress his anger until he was back in his apartment, where he could safely throw a temper tantrum in the company of Rose and their cat. He walked into the elevator and saw Hayden the Person, holding a hamper of dirty laundry. That, at least, was something to be glad about. Someone had stolen some of Hayden the Person’s clothes out of the laundry room last month and he had refused to do any laundry since. His clothes were starting to get a little rank.

“Hey,” Hayden greeted him. “You doing okay, dude?”

Shane was sure his face was pinched and grim, and this realization probably only made it more pinched and grim.

“Crowell wants to ban all pets! Because he’s sick of families and kids and everyone enjoying having pets!” Shane tried to keep his voice down but almost definitely failed. He was incensed. “How can he do that?! He’s the fucking worst landlord ever, in the whole history of awful landlords!”

Hayden the Person didn’t seem all that bothered.

“Maybe it’s for the best —” he started to say.

“For the WHAT?!” Shane was about to start shaking from all the rage in his body.

“I mean, if you have to get rid of your cat, then you can stop calling me Hayden the Person, so there could be some positives.”

Shane’s jaw dropped open. Hayden the Person wanted to get rid of Shane’s child so he could win the unhinged rivalry he had with a cat?

The elevator dinged and the doors opened onto the laundry room, and Hayden stepped out. Because he wasn’t actually a horrible friend, Hayden the Person said, “Look, I know that cat means a lot to you, so if you do need help, I’m around. Just let me know.”

The doors slid closed, and Shane stabbed at the button to the building’s basement gym. He needed to burn off some anger. He immediately went to work, throwing right hooks at the punching bag hanging from the ceiling.

The music playing over the speakers was a loud mindless pop playlist, and Shane's breathing was heavy enough that he could barely hear it anyway. He landed punch after punch, distracting himself from his gross landlord and his campaign against the building's pets.

Shane felt something brush his shoulder and pivoted on his heel with a yelp. Before his mind could catch up with his body, he was throwing a quick jab at whatever was behind him.

Shane's fist connected squarely with Ilya's face, sending him sprawling on the floor of the gym. Shane had felt a distinct and disconcerting crack where his knuckles had hit Ilya's nose.

"Oh my god, I'm so sorry," Shane said in a rush. "Are you okay? Oh, fuck. I didn't mean to, I swear. Shit, you scared me, sneaking up on me like that. Not to victim blame or anything, but you really shouldn't come up behind someone when they're..." Shane trailed off, gesturing vaguely at the gym equipment and himself.

This is bad, this is bad, this is bad.

"I swear to god I didn't just assault you," Shane added, alarm bells blaring in his head. He grabbed a towel from a rack nearby and handed it to Ilya.

Ilya, who was trying to staunch the flow of blood out of his nose, gave Shane a look that said *Really?*

"Okay, well maybe I did. But it was an accident. I am so sorry. Like, so so sorry. Oh, fuck, that's a lot of blood."

Ilya leveled him with another *Really?* face.

"I'll drive you to the hospital. Let me grab my keys." Shane snagged his gym bag and looped the strap over his head. He helped Ilya get to his feet and lead him toward the parking garage.

Standing in the elevator, Shane watched Ilya carefully adjust the hand towel he had pressed to his nose. Shane caught a glimpse of himself in the mirrored walls and flinched. He looked as bad as he felt: sweaty and flustered and straight up having a bad time.

Ilya followed the direction of Shane's gaze and smirked. "Is good my nose is broken so I can't smell you right now."

Shane, horrifyingly, felt a smile tug at his lips. "You want to take a detour so I can shower before we go to the hospital?"

"Depends. Can I shower with you?"

"Oh my god." Shane thunked his head back against the wall of the elevator. "How many of your bones do I have to break before you stop teasing me?"

"At least two more," Ilya shot him a grin from behind the towel. "And I am not teasing you. Was a serious question."

Now it was Shane's turn to send Ilya the *Really?* face. The elevator doors opened to reveal the parking garage and Shane started walking toward his car.

He heard Ilya murmur something that sounded suspiciously like "of fucking course" as they approached Shane's beige Jeep Cherokee. Ilya managed to be quiet until Shane had turned onto the highway, at which point Ilya said completely deadpan, "Riding in this car is the worst thing that has happened to me today."

"Shut up or I'll tell Hayden that you stole his Suns Out Guns Out tank top from the laundry room and burned it."

"That was a public service," Ilya grumbled.

They sat in silence the rest of the ride. When Shane pulled up to the hospital, Ilya grinned wickedly and his eyes sparkled. He looked far too merry for someone whose face was essentially one giant bruise.

"Interesting choice for a hospital," Ilya said.

"You're going to be picky about hospitals right now? When your face is broken and bleeding on my car seat?" Shane asked. Also, this was a good hospital. One of the best in the area, actually, so like fuck Ilya for being judgmental.

Ilya shrugged. He got out of the car and walked to the entrance, leaving Shane to trot after him to catch up.

The nurse at the emergency room desk glanced up from her computer screen when the automatic doors swept open. She did a double-take when she saw Ilya.

"Dr. Rozanov," she gasped. "What happened?"

What the fuck, Shane thought. Panic surged through his veins.

"A little accident," Ilya offered her as playful a grin as he could manage with a broken nose. "Is Wyatt working tonight? He's done this for me before."

"Dr. Hayes is out tonight, but I think Dr. Drover just started his shift," the woman answered. Her nametag said Gen. "I'm sure whichever one of your colleagues is on call tonight will be thrilled to take care of you, so they can lord it over you for the rest of your professional career."

Ilya nodded and strolled past the reception desk. "I'll let myself in." He tried to wink and then flinched when it made his nose twitch in a way that was probably painful.

Shane's world tilted sideways. His annoyingly hot idiot stoner neighbor was a doctor, and Shane had punched him in the face and then driven him to work.

Ilya led them back to a row of beds where a short man with a beard was looking over a clipboard. The man did the same double-take as Gen and let out a startlingly loud laugh.

“Never a dull moment with you, huh, Ilya?” The doctor asked with a friendly smile. He nodded to Shane. “I’m Harris. Or Dr. Drover.”

“Shane. I’m Ilya’s neighbor,” Shane said. Then because the knot in his chest was filling him with guilt at the sight of Ilya’s bloody face, he added, “And the guy who punched him.”

Harris offered him another belly laugh in response.

“I can’t tell you how many people have probably wanted to hit Ilya over the years,” he said. “You’re just the first to actually do it.”

“It was an accident!” Shane insisted.

“Are you going to fix me or are you going to keep making jokes?” Ilya asked Harris. “Doctors here are terrible.”

“I can do both,” Harris promised him. “And just be glad the usual emergency room doctor isn’t working tonight. We get lots of complaints about him. He’s kind of an asshole.”

Ilya rolled his eyes. “The kids I treat love me.”

“I’m talking about the dads who complain when you flirt with their wives.”

“They flirt with *me*,” Ilya said.

“Sure, they do, buddy,” Harris said, giving Ilya a condescending pat on the shoulder.

Ilya mumbled something that could have been “The dads flirt with me, too,” which Harris very maturely opted to ignore.

“I’ll set your nose and we can call it even because you so generously dog-sat for me last week. Chiron was exhausted when he got home.”

“I am a good uncle,” Ilya said, grinning. He flicked his eyes toward Shane. “I told you I didn’t have a dog.”

“Do you think if I had broken your jaw instead you would be quiet right now?” Shane wondered.

“We will never know, will we?” Ilya said.

“Imagine what would happen if you couldn’t flirt with someone for like 20 minutes.”

“Do not always need words to flirt,” Ilya waggled his eyebrows.

“Don’t do that either.” Shane could feel a blush creeping across his cheeks.

“Don’t pretend you don’t want me to.”

“I don’t. I just want a neighbor who isn’t annoying.”

“Aw,” Ilya cooed in mock sympathy. “Then who will you stare at if I am not there to get my mail without a shirt on?”

“That happened once, and I was *not* staring. You were just in my line of sight.”

Harris, who was carefully peeling the bloodied towel away from Ilya’s face, cut in. “As much as I love listening to your weird arguing-as-foreplay dynamic, I do need to focus right now.”

Shane tried to will his blush away. His phone buzzed as Harris was pulling out anti-septic wipes to clean the blood off of Ilya’s face.

Rose: *Where are you?? You said you would be back from the gym in an hour*

Rose: *You better not have gotten kidnapped I don't think I'm ready to be a single parent*

Rose: *I'm going to keep texting til you answer*

Shane interrupted Rose’s text spiral before it could get out of hand.

Shane: *I'm fine. I'm with Ilya.*

Rose: *oh my god are you having sex with Ilya right now??? good for you !!!*

Rose: *but also why are you texting while you're hooking up with the hot neighbor*

Rose: *we are SO talking about this when you get home and also getting drunk to celebrate*

Shane: *Stop it. I'm not having sex with him.*

Rose: *likely story*

Rose: *if you're not hooking up with him then what are you doing hmmm ??*

Taking a deep breath, Shane prepared himself to send one of the most humiliating texts of his life.

Shane: *I accidentally punched him in the face and then I took him to the hospital, but it turns out he works here because apparently he's a doctor and the universe thinks me being miserable is funny.*

Shane: *The worst part is that he still looks sexy with a broken nose.*

He saw the little bubbles pop up to indicate Rose was typing a response and sighed. It was going to be a long night.

**

Shane helped Ilya into the front seat of his Jeep. Ilya had bandages affixed to his nose and a black eye now, too. Shane’s guilt sat like a rock in his stomach.

Shane carefully pulled out of the hospital parking lot and drove back to the apartment building.

“I really am so sorry,” Shane said for perhaps the twentieth time that night.

“I will make you a deal,” Ilya said. “For accepting your apology. Because I want you to stop saying sorry and also I need your help with something.”

Shane sat up straighter. “Of course. Anything.”

Ilya smiled in a predatory way that made Shane feel immediate regret.

“I want to take Crowell down.”

“You want to WHAT?!” Shane smashed his foot down on the brake, sending the car skidding to a halt. Ilya’s seatbelt, which Shane had insisted he wear, choked him as he jerked back.

“Ouch, shit.” Ilya rubbed at the spot on his chest where the strap had pulled tight, mumbling Russian swear words. “Calm down. I have a plan.”

Ilya spent the rest of the car ride laying out his idea. And then he spent the rest of the night in Shane’s living room, convincing Shane and Rose to help out.

At one point, Shane pulled Rose into the kitchen to discuss it.

“Are we really going to do this?”

“Why not?” Rose asked, intentionally ignoring all the reasons that they really shouldn’t. “This is just what the doctor ordered.”

Shane groaned. “How long have you been waiting to use that?”

“Since immediately after you told me Ilya was a doctor and you assaulted him.” Rose smiled gleefully. “Besides, you already agreed.”

Shane glared at Hayden the Cat, who was lounging on one of the kitchen chairs.

“This is your fault,” he hissed. Hayden the Cat tilted his head, observed Shane neutrally, then coughed up a hairball and scampered out of the room.

Parenting sucks, Shane thought morosely.

**

Ilya’s plan was just as childish as he was. His idea, essentially, was to sabotage showings of new apartments until Crowell agreed to stop acting like a prison warden with his heinous rules.

“No one can be more annoying than me,” Ilya had said with absolute confidence, reclining on Shane’s couch. Shane certainly wasn’t going to argue with that.

“I still don’t think this has even a remote chance of working,” Shane said.

“Of course it will,” Ilya said. “I read it in a book.”

Ilya had gotten the idea from a novel he picked up at the airport bookstore the last time he had flown to Moscow. It was about a bank robbery – “WE ARE NOT ROBBING ANYONE,” Shane had shrieked – and a bunch of people at an apartment showing who are held hostage.

“Fucking relax, Hollander,” Ilya had soothed him. Ilya explained that in the book, one of the characters wears an insane costume and acts like a lunatic at a real estate viewing to ruin the showing and bring down the price.

“We will do the same here,” Ilya said.

Almost everyone in the building would be deciding whether to renew their leases in the next month, so the timing was perfect. Which Rose pointed out, like a dirty traitor.

“Where are we going to get a costume?” Shane asked. “And who is going to wear it? And how will they get in? And how will we – ”

“Fucking relax, Hollander,” Rose intoned in a frighteningly accurate imitation of Ilya.

Ilya nodded approvingly. “Exactly.”

**

A little more than 24 hours before they were set to execute the plan, Shane knocked on Ilya’s apartment door, mentally reciting all the reasons this was a bad idea in alphabetical order.

The door swung open to reveal Ilya in a set of scrubs — *of course now you wear them*, Shane thought bitterly — and rubbing sleep out of his eyes.

“Did you just wake up?” Shane asked, trying to keep the judgment out of his voice. “And did you sleep in your scrubs?”

That was so gross. Shane’s skin crawled at the thought of all the hospital germs on Ilya’s clothes.

Ilya rolled his eyes and yawned. “I have to cover for Harris, so I was taking a nap before going back to work.”

“But you worked until the middle of the night yesterday,” Shane blurted out.

Shane had just coincidentally been awake when Ilya had stumbled down the hallway last night at an ungodly hour that was closer to dawn than dusk. It was definitely, 100 percent not because he had stayed up hoping to talk Ilya out of this insane plan. No, Shane would be cool and go through with it, because he was a laidback, up-for-anything type of guy. And also because Rose had bet him \$50 he would chicken out.

“You know my work schedule?” Ilya looked obnoxiously happy about this.

Shane absolutely did know his work schedule, but he would never admit this, not even under pain of death.

Ilya winked at him, and Shane’s heart flipped at the same time he felt a headache forming just behind his temple. Ilya seemed to have that effect on him pretty consistently.

“It was part of the deal to get the costume,” Ilya shrugged.

Ilya, it turned out, knew people. Not in a Russian mob way, but in a my-coworker-has-a-boyfriend-who-plays-for-the-Centaurs-so-we-can-borrow-their-mascot-costume way.

Standing in Ilya’s living room, as Shane held the dissembled pieces of the Chuck the Beaver mascot uniform, he looked at Ilya with a combination of awe, bewilderment, and irritation.

“So that’s how you get your hands on this? You said you would cover shifts for Harris?”

“Not exactly.” Ilya shrugged. “I just promised him a favor.”

Shane raised an eyebrow.

“Not the sex kind,” Ilya said, smirking. “Those are only for you.”

Shane threw the disembodied beaver head at Ilya, who caught it with a laugh. Since Shane had broken Ilya’s nose, they had reached a weird stalemate where Ilya would flirt with Shane and Shane would blush and squirm uncomfortably.

Rose insisted Shane needed to make a move, but Shane felt he had already humiliated himself enough in front of Ilya for one lifetime. The last thing he wanted to do was hit on Ilya and be rejected by the hot doctor he had never properly thanked for finding his lost cat and then punched in the face.

But the way Ilya was looking at him made him wonder. Ilya was doing something stupid and brave to help Shane, so maybe Shane could do something stupid and brave to help them both.

“If this – if the beaver thing doesn’t – I mean, when we do this –” Shane stammered.

Get it together, Hollander, he chastised himself.

“After we do this,” Shane said, gesturing between them and the beaver costume, “would you want to get dinner with me? So I can thank you, and also apologize for punching you?”

Shane felt his face heat, but he forced himself to maintain eye contact with Ilya. To Shane’s absolute shock and delight, Ilya’s cheeks turned pink, too.

Ilya shot him a slow, crooked smile. “Are you asking me out?” He sounded unbelievably pleased.

“Assuming we don’t go to jail for this, of course,” Shane said.

“I will make sure of it,” Ilya said. “I have a date I do not want to miss.”

**

The plan, shockingly, went off without a hitch. It took a total of two days to get Crowell to call it quits, which was much sooner than Shane had been expecting, given that he hadn’t thought it would work at all.

They sabotaged four different viewings in one weekend. Ilya, Rose, Shane, and even Hayden the Person – he had promised Shane he would help him out, and it was his fault for not being more specific – all took turns wearing the costume, while the other three would make sure they were very publicly hanging out in other parts of the building. Because they all had alibis, they couldn’t reasonably be accused of wandering the halls and banging on apartment doors in a giant beaver costume, scaring the shit out of potential tenants.

Ilya left a note with their demands for Crowell: if he wanted the beavers to go away, he better loosen up on the building’s pets. Crowell later sent an email assuring residents any pets living in the complex were safe from eviction, but Ilya decided to up the ante.

“I want a dog,” he said with a shrug, scribbling out another note calling for an end to the ban on large animals.

“Wow, doctors really do have awful handwriting,” Rose had observed.

And Ilya, because he was insufferable, got his way. Crowell caved easily after the giant beaver chased a middle-aged couple out of the building the next morning. And given the giant grin Ilya wore for the rest of the week, maybe Crowell suspected it was them, but there was absolutely nothing he could do to prove it.

Shane had a smile of his own, as he pulled out his phone and started making dinner reservations.

**

Ilya was working another weekend shift a few weeks later when he got a text from his boyfriend. Well, he hasn’t officially asked Shane that yet, but it had been over a month, and they spent more nights in each other’s beds than they did apart, even with Ilya’s late nights on call and Shane’s early mornings at the yoga studio.

That first dinner after Operation Beaver had been really good, and the nighttime activities that followed it had been even better. Shane was very flexible – one of the benefits of hooking up with a yoga instructor.

Ilya unlocked his phone and opened the message.

Shane: *You forgot your lunch.*

Shane: *I brought it over for you, just let me know when you have a break. I’m outside.*

Ilya had a long day ahead of him: he was still paying back his favor to Harris. Borrowing a professional hockey team's mascot costume for several days to terrorize a landlord apparently translated to covering multiple weekend shifts, but Ilya would do it happily. He'd needed to show Shane he wasn't a jerk, and creating problems for Crowell was its own reward.

Ilya told Shane he'd meet him and walked out of the hospital.

Shane was leaning against his terrible suburban dad car, holding a bag of food for Ilya.

"Hello, sweetheart," Ilya greeted him, slipping his arms around Shane's waist and kissing him on the cheek. He slid his hand down and squeezed his ass quickly.

"Behave," Shane scolded him playfully, biting back a smile.

Ilya beamed at Shane, grinning stupidly. He liked him so, so much. More than liked him, really.

"Barf," Rose said, getting out of the passenger seat. "Shane, stop acting like a human heart eyes emoji and show him the surprise."

"Surprise?" Ilya loved surprises.

Shane grabbed Ilya's hand and tugged him to the back of the car. He gave Rose the food to hold.

"Close your eyes," he said, reaching to open the trunk.

Ilya obeyed, and Shane nervously chattered on.

"I know we didn't talk about it and I wanted it to be a surprise, so obviously talking about it would ruin it, but I know you wanted one and Hayden the Cat gets lonely sometimes so I figured –"

Ilya's eyes popped open, totally ignoring Shane's previous instructions. In Shane's arms was a wiggling puppy, its tail beating back and forth happily.

"Oh my fucking god," Ilya breathed.

"Hayden the Person found her wandering around behind the apartment complex, so he got to name her," Rose informed him, rolling her eyes. Because she had good opinions, she, like Ilya, thought Hayden the Person kind of sucked.

Shane's nose scrunched. He got defensive when people (rightfully) made fun of his friend.

"Ilya the Person, meet Ilya the Dog." Shane handed him the ball of fluff.

"Oh my fucking god," Ilya said again. His whole body felt like it was made out of joy.

"If you don't like her, we can find a different family for her, but I thought we would be a good family. Uh, I mean, you and I could take good care of her, not that we're a family yet –"

fuck, no, not ‘yet,’ I mean maybe, but that’s weird to say because we only just started dating _”

“Shane, stop talking, honey,” Rose said, patting his arm. “I call dibs on being the godmother, by the way.”

Shane rubbed at the back of his neck, embarrassed and awkward.

“I love her,” Ilya said, nuzzling the puppy’s head. He slid a finger into Shane’s belt loop and yanked Shane toward him. Ilya kissed his temple. “And you.”

“Oh,” Shane’s ears turned red, and a deep blush nearly made his freckles disappear.

Rose, who was rifling through the bag for a snack, bit into the tuna melt Shane had made for Ilya and snorted. “Say it back, moron,” she said with her mouth full.

Shane glared at Rose. Ilya just laughed and kissed him on the lips.

“I love you, too,” Shane said against his mouth.

The puppy, smushed in between them, yipped in agreement.

Rose took another bite of Ilya’s lunch and shook her head.

“Idiots,” she said fondly.

End Notes

so so close to the long game coming out ... will I keep writing random AUs until it's released?
tbd

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