

drop the guillotine

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drop the guillotine

by [Corvid404](#)

Summary

“Uh, hi?”

Whatever was holding Ren’s tongue snapped. “*Who the fuck’re you?!*” he yelled, bracing himself against the doorframe. “I’ll let you know the police response times in this town are *very* fast you—you—”

The stranger held up their hands placatingly. “Woah, woah, woah, no need for cops.” They rubbed the back of their neck. “Did, uh, Bdubs not tell you I was coming?”

Drop the guillotine. Rip the bandaid off. Other such phrases for surprising someone with news—whether it's *good news* or not? Ren couldn't tell you.

Notes

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

“And all *I’m sayin’* is the world would be a better place if that book on Hamilton was never written!”

Ren had some choice thoughts for Bdubs on that one. He growled, the movie they’d been watching long forgotten. “Love him or hate him, Lin Manuel Miranda brought fresh blood to the musical theater sphere at a time when it was desperately needed.”

Being roommates with a random stranger he’d met through the university’s roommate search

forum was going much better than Ren had expected. Bdubs was a charming, but odd, fellow. He was asleep in his bed by ten every night, which was incredibly impressive for the average college student. He had wasted no time in decorating their apartment with little potted plants—he'd asked if Ren had any allergies first, though, thankfully. Any time both of them had a free two or three hours, he'd drag Ren onto the couch to watch some movie or other.

“Yeah, but that guy is a freakin’ parasite! A-An *infection* to the musical industry! He’s in *everything* and when he’s not *in it*, he’s *writin’* it, and his style ain’t even that good!”

Bdubs had gone all red in the face. For not being interested in theater at all, he had some of the strongest opinions on Lin Manuel Miranda he'd ever heard. Ren huffed as Bdubs stood up, not letting him get another word in.

“I’m going to bed. This argument is stupid.”

He vanished down the hall and into his room, and like that, he was gone. Ren sighed. He still had shit to do tonight. He started a new pot of coffee in the kitchen before making his way back to his room, trying to remember what order all his assignments were due by.

There was one oddity about the situation that had been in the back of his head for the last month, though. He thought there was supposed to be someone else in the apartment. The original advertisement only said looking for one roommate, but Bdubs said someone else would be joining them. It must’ve been a month by now, and this supposed third person had yet to show up. He had a hunch that they wouldn’t.

One moment, Ren was sitting at his desk, alternating between practicing a monologue and stumbling through *Beowulf*—he was sure it was a beautiful story, he just wasn’t the target audience—and the next moment it was two in the morning and he was three Wikipedia pages deep, his original reason for opening it lost as he read about the mafia’s involvement with gay bars.

The words on the screen wavered and pulsed in his vision, smearing into different words as his head tilted forward, his eyes fluttering shut. He jolted himself back up as his stomach grumbled and cramped. He stumbled to his feet and shuffled to the kitchen, bracing himself against the wall as the world spun; he needed to get better at feeding himself before he was so tired he could fall asleep on his feet.

He fumbled against the wall for what was a definitely normal amount of time in search of the lightswitch; as soon as the lights turned on, he groaned and squished his eyes shut against the harsh light. He thought he heard someone else do the same, but his brain could also have been playing tricks on him as it liked to do when he was barely awake.

When he peeled his eyes open, there was another person in the kitchen, staring back at him. He blinked, and the person was still there. A stranger was in his apartment, with a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter behind him.

“Uh, hi?”

Whatever was holding Ren’s tongue snapped. “*Who the fuck’re you?!*” he yelled, bracing himself against the doorframe. “I’ll let you know the police response times in this town are *very* fast you—you—”

The stranger held up their hands placatingly. “Woah, woah, woah, no need for cops.” They rubbed the back of their neck. “Did, uh, Bdubs not tell you I was coming?”

Ren's fight-or-flight response was working far faster than the rest of his brain. "I don't know *who you are* or *how you know Bdubs*, but I need you to get the fuck out before I call the police."

The stranger gaped at him, fumbling over his words. Ren's heart was pounding in his chest, and his head was throbbing as he continued to stare into the kitchen.

The stranger finally managed to push out half a sentence, "I'm your room—"

"What's all this ruckus about?" Bdubs grumbled, shoving past Ren and into the kitchen. He looked like he'd dragged his whole bed with him, his comforter trailing behind him like a cape. As soon as he saw the stranger, he froze. "*Etho!*" he yelled, "You piece of shit! Why didn't you tell me you were coming tonight?!"

The stranger blinked. "Sorry? I guess I for— *oof*—"

He was once again cut off as Bdubs swallowed him in a hug, blanket and all. Etho chuckled, awkwardly returning it. Bdubs was mumbling *something* at him that Ren couldn't hear; whatever it was, it made the stranger smile the tiniest bit. Ren, of course, was left standing in the doorway, awkwardly glancing between his new roommate and Bdubs.

"Uh, I think I'm missing something...?"

Bdubs stepped back and punched Etho's shoulder. "*This* asshole is Etho. He's our other roommate. Etho, Ren. Ren, Etho."

Etho stuck his tongue out at Bdubs—who stuck his tongue out back at him—and gave him a half-hearted wave. "Nice to meet you."

Ren tilted his head, as if the situation would make more sense at an angle. It did not, and if anything it made less sense since a strand of hair fell into his eyes. "Nice to meet you, I guess?"

"Well, um, I guess I'll just... go get myself set up," Etho mumbled, slipping past him and Bdubs and disappearing down the hall.

Bdubs cast him a sour look, wrapping his blanket tighter around himself. "Look what you've done! You've scared him shitless."

Ren groaned, dragging a hand over his face. "*Sorry* for seeing a stranger in the apartment and freaking out. How'd he even get a key?"

Bdubs waved him off. "Not important!"

Before Ren could throw any more questions at him, Bdubs shuffled out of the kitchen, mumbled a goodnight to him as he passed, and vanished back into his room down the hall. As quickly as all this had happened, it was over. He didn't even remember why he'd come to the kitchen in the first place, eyes still locked on where Etho had been standing.

"What the hell," he grumbled, flicking the lights off and going back to his room. He'd figure it out in the morning.

Ren groaned, blindly groping for his phone to shut his alarm off. *Eugh*. Why did he sign up for that 8 a.m. class again? He stayed in bed, listening to the hum of traffic outside, for maybe a few more minutes than he should have, but his bed was so *warm*.

Finally, he threw the covers off and shuffled out of bed. He threw on clothing that was more presentable than his pajamas, double-checked that he had everything for his class in his bag, and B-lined it out of the apartment, only to trip over something in the hallway.

“What the—” he grumbled, looking down to see a half-empty duffle bag sitting in front of the door to the previously empty bedroom; said door was slightly ajar, and he could hear faint humming from inside.

Oh. Right. That... *guy* showed up last night.

His new roommate poked his head out of the door, a pair of headphones draped around his neck. “Oh, sorry Ren,” he said, dragging the bag behind the door.

Ren sighed. “I’d give you a lecture on being a courteous roommate, but I have a class to get to.”

Etho chuckled. “I’ll get an earful from Bdubs later, don’t worry about it.”

With that, Etho closed his door. Ren didn’t waste any extra time staring at the blank white door, returning to his mission of getting to his class on time.

For the most part, life did not change. Sure, he couldn’t just toss things he didn’t know what to do with into the spare room anymore, but he viewed that more as a net positive. He learned to move around Etho in much the same way he moved around Bdubs, although at starkly different times of day. While Bdubs was asleep by ten, Etho was often still awake when he was getting up for class. At least Ren wasn’t alone when he was up a little too late anymore.

Most of the time, Ren didn’t even see Etho, with him sleeping most of the morning and his classes being at night and working the graveyard shift *somewhere*. The most he saw of his new roommate were the occasional bump-ins in the wee hours of the morning when Etho reeked of mary jane, and when he had cooked and left some leftovers for the rest of them. Not that he minded, really. He stayed out of Etho’s way, and Etho stayed out of his.

“Y’know, you don’t have to be a stranger,” Etho mumbled as Ren walked into the kitchen. It was quarter past eleven at night, and he was babysitting a pot of something on the stove.

Ren paused mid-opening the fridge door, but said nothing.

Etho kept his gaze on the pot, shifting from foot to foot. “I mean, we’re gonna be living together for a few years, at least. We don’t have to ignore or—or avoid each other.”

Had Ren been ignoring him? He didn’t *think* he was ignoring and-or avoiding Etho. “Sorry,” he replied, “Uh, I didn’t mean to? You kind of operate at odd hours, my dude.”

Etho snorted. “Not *that* odd.”

Ren closed the fridge door with purpose—maybe a bit too much, as he heard something rattle inside—and stood up straight. He’d do better, then! What kind of roommate made their roommate feel unwelcome in their shared home? At least, that was the impression Ren got. Etho turned his head back to look at him, an eyebrow raised. Oh, right. Ren should say something.

He cleared his throat. “Well, let’s start simple. What’s your major?”

Etho rolled his eyes, before turning them back to his pot as steam started leaking from beneath the lid. “Computer science with a focus on game design. You?”

Ren puffed up his chest. "I'm double majoring in theater and english."

He could feel Etho's judgment radiate off him in waves as he rolled his shoulders, setting the pot's lid on the counter. "Oh, that makes sense. You seem like the type."

He sputtered, planting a hand on his hip. "What's that mean?!"

Etho snickered. "Nothing, nothing, it just makes sense given... Uh, your vibes, I guess."

Ren huffed and grabbed his water bottle off the counter. "I have no clue what you're talking about."

Before Etho could impart any more questionable judgments on his character, Ren turned and went back to his room. It wasn't until he sat down and went to take a drink that he realized he hadn't even filled the dang bottle, and he had to do an unfortunate walk of shame back into the kitchen.

Etho cast him a smug glance, and this ignorance of him was very purposeful.

End Notes

woah, etho's not high as balls? ooc for this au smh. ANYWAY
this series has an official starting point now ig!! it's being written very out of order but that's just how i roll. i go where the inspiration takes me. i still have a lot of ideas for this au and im feeling quite inspired so more is definitely still coming :)

leave a comment if u feel so inclined, and have a good rest of ur day/night <3

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