

prickles.

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prickles.

by [Corvid404](#)

Summary

Ren huffed and crossed his arms. “How are you gonna be motivated to take care of it if it doesn’t even have a name?”

He glared across the room at him. “Ren, it’s gonna die either way, named or unnamed. I’m bad at taking care of things.”

“Not with that attitude!” Ren chirped. “C’mon, just come up with something silly.”

He sighed, taking another drag of his joint. He stared at the little cactus. Why was he entertaining this idea? It was just going to die. “Prickles,” he said.

Ren beamed. “See? That wasn’t hard.”

He sighed. “‘Prickles’ is gonna be dead within the week.”

Bdubs wants his roommates to take part in his favorite, most joyous of hobbies: plant care. Unfortunately, the only plant Etho knows how to take care of is marijuana, and that's after it's dried.

Notes

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

“I really don’t think this is a good idea—”

“Nonsense!” Bdubs cut Etho off. “Cacti are as good as *decorations*. You don’t need to do anything most of the time, maybe water it once a month at most.”

Etho sighed, letting Bdubs drag him around this little plant store they’d walked past the other day. They were looking for a cactus, any cactus really, because Bdubs thought it’d be a wonderful idea to try getting him and Ren into taking care of plants. Etho had tried before, he really had, but everything just died the second he got his hands on it. Or his dog ate it—but he wasn’t living at home anymore, so he couldn’t spout concern for Chester’s health as an excuse. He didn’t think it was his fault, maybe he was just cursed.

Once Bdubs had picked out everything Etho would need, they went home a few dollars poorer, with Etho clutching the little thing between his hands. It wasn’t more than a few inches tall, and had a yellow *thing* on top of it. Bdubs had bought a matching yellow pot and a green coaster to put it on. Ren’s plant would be bought at a different date—Bdubs needed more time to think what might be best for him.

It was nice, he guessed, that Bdubs was so insistent on getting Etho into indoor gardening. He was just terrible at it.

The cactus sat on his desk, taunting him as he did his school work. He’d nearly knocked it over quite a few times already, forgetting it was there. His room was a mess, and he didn’t always know what he’d placed where, but the cactus was definitely an odd addition to his disaster. He tugged on his mouse’s cord, and once again the cactus threatened to topple over.

He didn’t really know what to do with it. It was supposed to be a long-term thing, to watch it grow and thrive under his care. It also cleaned the air or something. He wasn’t sure; it was green with a yellow hat, and it sat on his desk, and he kept elbowing the damn pot. He awkwardly craned his head down to look at his elbow, and he was honestly surprised there wasn’t a bruise there yet.

Whatever. It was a little past midnight, he had quite a few hours to kill. He decided to get high and watch some gardening YouTubers—being high didn’t make any of the information stick any better, but it *did* make it less awful. They all had very bland voices, or maybe he was watching the wrong people. It didn’t really matter, because he got bored after an hour and decided to turn on his Spotify and let himself zone out.

Etho’s brain kept circling one question: What did you even *do* with a plant? Bdubs said a cactus was as good as a decoration, but then what was the point? Why not get a fake plant? He didn’t get it. He had this silly, round little cactus that had a yellow hat on his desk that he kept elbowing and almost knocking over that he didn’t even really want. He had it because his best friend thought it’d be good for him, or something.

Hayley Williams belted that all she wanted was “you,” and he decided to put the thought away for the night.

Ren’s plant was a tiny little panda plant—big leaves, covered in a velvety fuzz. He named it Bambi.

“Like bamboo? Pandas? Get it?”

Etho rolled his eyes. “Yes, it’s just not that funny.”

Ren huffed, crossing his arms. “Well, what’re you naming yours?”

He shrugged, hovering a lighter over his joint. “I uh, haven’t named it.”

It'd gotten too cold to sit out on the fire escape, so Etho was leaning out of his window while Ren took up his desk chair. He didn't really invite Ren in so much as he had come to brag about what a good plant dad he was going to be for his little panda plant and never left.

Ren gasped. "Dude, why not?"

He shrugged, taking a drag and breathing the smoke out the window. Once upon a time, the smell bothered him, but he'd grown numb to it. He cared about his roommates' opinions, though.

"Just haven't."

If he named it, he'd feel bad for killing it. If he didn't, well, it was just an experiment that went wrong, and he could bring the rotten thing to Bdubs and say, "*See, everything I touch dies. Can we stop doing this now?*"

Ren huffed and crossed his arms. "How are you gonna be motivated to take care of it if it doesn't even have a *name*?"

He glared across the room at him. "Ren, it's gonna die either way, named or unnamed. I'm bad at taking care of things."

"Not with that attitude!" Ren chirped. "C'mon, just come up with something silly."

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Giving the cactus a name was the worst idea Etho ever had. The next time he bumped it with his elbow, he mumbled an apology to the stupid little thing. Which was a silly thing to do—here he was, an adult, mumbling an apology to a cactus for hitting its pot. Even if it had feelings, he didn't think it cared.

He fished around his desk for a sharpie, and scribbled its name on the pot as neatly as he could. *PRICKLES*. It was incredibly stupid and incredibly silly, and he couldn't help laughing. This was so stupid.

He picked it up and set it on his nightstand, next to the window. Cacti were desert plants, and he didn't think it'd be getting enough sun on his desk. Besides, he wouldn't bump into it nearly as often with it over there! An overall win for both parties. He sat back at his desk, going back to rereading his code for the umpteenth time, looking for what was probably a missing semicolon or bracket that was preventing the whole thing from running.

He heard a knock on his door, and he had barely looked up from his laptop before Bdubs let himself in.

"Hey Etho!" he chirped, navigating the trash and clothes strewn around the floor to sit on his bed. "Whatcha up to?"

He spun around to face him. "Oh, y'know. School stuff."

Bdubs tilted his head at Prickles in the window, but didn't say anything. Instead, he went on about

the local terror of the biology class: Grian. Apparently, his latest bit was using oversized pens and pencils to write his assignments.

“As soon as I’m done with my gen ed, I hope I never see that guy again.”

Etho hummed. “I think he *gave me* one of those when I needed a pen, actually.”

Bdubs snorted. “No way! He *did not*.”

He nodded. “He did.”

Bdubs lit up, leaning forward. “Did you use it?”

“I mean, I had no choice. It was that or ask someone else for their notes after the lecture, and you know me.”

He tilted over himself laughing. “Oh my god, that is—that is *such* a funny image.”

Etho grinned. “Tall guy needs a tall pen. I think Grian should get ones that are comically small so ___”

“No, absolutely not,” Bdubs interrupted him. “I know where this is going.”

He snickered, picking a crumpled piece of paper up off the floor and chucking it at him. “I’m gonna replace all your pens and pencils with comically tiny ones.”

Bdubs growled. “No, you’re gonna get *big ones* because I’m *not short*.”

“Uh-huh. And that’s why you used to steal my hoodies when you thought I was too stoned to notice?”

He huffed and crossed his arms. “It’s not *my fault* you’re *freakishly tall*. I’m perfectly average height!”

“Dude, you’re shorter than everyone I know.”

Bdubs abruptly stood up, pointing at him. “Not true! I’m not shorter than—than—I’m *taller* than ___”

Etho chucked another piece of paper at him off the floor.

He sighed in exasperation. “Listen, *everyone* just looks short to you because your head’s all up in the ceiling. I’m *average height*.”

Etho hummed. “Yeah, sure.”

Bdubs left his room with an annoyed groan, slamming the door shut on his way out.

He cast another glance to Prickles in his window, and... something seemed off. He walked over, and—

“*Fuck you, Bdubs!*” he shouted, picking up the stupid pink amogus and chucking it at his mess of a bed.

He heard Bdubs cackling from his room.

Etho glanced out his window—he'd opened it earlier to smoke, despite the cold breeze blowing in on him, and he had forgotten to close it. It wasn't normally an issue, though Ren *was* starting to insist Etho contributed more to their heating bill if he was going to keep doing it, but beneath the hum of his headphones he *definitely* heard rain. He glanced outside, and sure enough, rain was starting to stick itself to his window screen and splash inside onto his nightstand.

He quickly shuffled over and slammed it shut, not thinking too hard about why it didn't shut all the way; he was in the middle of an online lecture, he was missing things just standing there.

It wasn't until his classes for the day were done, and Etho was fully intending on getting high and bothering Bdubs, that he returned to the window and found it almost shut.

Odd. He pushed the slide back up and flicked his bedside light on, and—

Oh.

Prickles.

Or, what was left of Prickles, he guessed. He hadn't even remembered putting it in the window, yet here it was, crushed beyond recognition, its yellow hat melded with its green guts. Spikes were scattered through its tiny corpse, surely a factor in how easily it had torn itself apart. Poor thing. His heart sank.

He brought the pot out to the kitchen counter and unceremoniously dropped it next to the garbage can. *See? Everything I touch dies.*

Bdubs interrupted his session, although this time he had the courtesy to knock before barging in, holding up the yellow pot with the very dead cactus in it.

"Etho," he started, "What'd you do?"

He held some smoke in his throat for a moment, blinking and staring. He didn't really *do* anything, he hadn't even meant for it to happen.

He blew the smoke out the window.

"*Etho*. I know you can answer me."

He sighed. "I forgot it was in my window and slammed it down on it."

Bdubs frowned, clutching the pot to his chest. Like he expected anything better of him. *Can we stop doing this now?*

He took another hit, focusing on how the smoke made his insides feel warm instead of incredibly heavy. "I dunno what else you expected of me," he offered.

Bdubs set the pot down on his desk, then set himself next to him. "Failures happen all the time!" he chirped, far too cheery for the utter disappointment in his gaze. "We've just gotta get you a new one when spring comes and try again."

He groaned, leaning away. "Can we *stop doing this?* Every plant you give me dies a new, terrible death. First it was the sweet peas I overwatered into rot, then the kalanchoe I accidentally knocked out of my window, then the mint that my dog ate—it doesn't *work*, Bdubs."

Bdubs was frozen, and Etho felt like he'd been the one crushed beneath his window. Bdubs loved

his plants, he loved indoor gardening, and Etho thought it was so sweet that he kept trying to get him into it despite every single attempt failing. He kept trying, and Etho kept failing, and he didn't know *why* he felt so guilty about it. They were just plants, they didn't have emotions, they didn't feel pain.

But Bdubs did. Etho awkwardly set his joint down on his ashtray and wrapped an arm Bdubs' shoulders.

“Believe me, I really tried.”

Bdubs was quiet, leaning into Etho's side.

“If, um, it makes you feel any better, I thought it was gonna die a lot sooner? It's pretty impressive I kept it alive for almost a week.”

Bdubs exhaled through his nose in amusement. “Wow, your standards for success are impressive.”

Etho rolled his eyes. “Oh come on, you *know me*.”

They were quiet for another second, then Bdubs hummed and looked up at him. “I think I know *exactly* what plant you could keep alive, actually.”

He tilted his head, half-way to asking what it was, when Bdubs answered the question preemptively.

“A fake one.”

He leaned away, cackling. At least Bdubs knew him.

“Yeah, I think I could manage that.”

A few weeks later, Etho peeked into Ren's room, and found his beloved Bambi plant missing.

Apparently, he'd accidentally knocked it onto the floor while dramatically monologuing and couldn't bring himself to let Bdubs know, so he just threw the whole thing into the dumpster after he'd fallen asleep.

Etho snorted. At least he wasn't the only brown thumb in the apartment.

End Notes

aaand we're back to the roomies!! (for now.) i thought the idea was very fun n silly then ended up being... weirdly not silly? idk! its just how it went!

hope you enjoyed, leave a comment if u feel so inclined, and have a good day/night <3

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