

## Daron and Miles

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Daron slowly brushed his hair in the mirror. His young, fresh-shaven face bent slightly as he examined his age and began brushing his teeth. The routine prep for work next consisted of checking for uni-brow hairs and shaving his neck. His roommate, Miles, was on the couch like he had passed out there, which was more than likely true. If only Daron could afford to go into work with a hangover, but working as a phone salesman required a fake personality equipped with plenty of sleep. Miles was also a salesman, a comic book salesman.

"Get up, Miles. We have to leave in the next ten minutes."

Miles stretched and rubbed his face. His long arm reached for the nearest shirt on the floor and he put it on. "I've been ready, just waiting for you."

"You're not going to brush your teeth or anything?" asked Daron.

"Do I have to?"

"Yeah, you're right, attractive women never go to your workplace," Daron said sarcastically as he grabbed a granola bar from the cabinet.

Miles shrugged. "Let's take the way to work by McDonald's. We can get some breakfast on the way."

"This is my breakfast. You can have one, too."

"Neh, I don't have a vagina," said Miles.

Daron glared at Miles and grabbed his coat. "Go and see if Mrs. Beagle has her door open." Ever since Daron and Miles moved into the apartment, Mrs. Beagle was known for letting stray cats in through her first-story window. Most times, she would leave her door cracked and cats would roam the hallway.

"You go check. It's too risky for me," said Miles.

"I'm severely allergic. I'll check when it's not a matter of life or death to step out in the hallway. At least I'm not terrified of them," said Daron.

"You try walking by a cat and have it ferociously attack your leg. What if one of them is out there?" Miles was once attacked by a cat while walking home from work. The cat severed an artery and put Miles in the hospital. He vowed never to walk home or to work again. He never looked at a feline the same.

"Just go check, and close the door," added Daron impatiently.

Miles stepped outside and looked down the hall. No noise stirred from the hallway, except for the door two rooms down from them. A fair-skinned brunette stepped out of her apartment and locked her door. Miles' heart sank as the girl walked by him. Her name was Clare, and she smelled like vanilla and fruit. She never said much to Miles, but she smiled every time she walked by. This time, she waved. Miles breathed in heavily and tried to wave back, but instead watched her walk around the end of the hallway.

Daron knocked on the door from the inside.

"The cat lady's door is shut," Miles answered. Miles was suddenly pushed aside as Daron

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bumped into him turning around to lock the door. Daron's face was wrinkled and his neck tight.

"Why are you holding your breath? What if a hot chick comes by and sees you like that?"

Daron didn't answer, but beckoned Miles as he raced down the hall. Miles followed behind to get by Mrs. Beagle's door quickly, but they were too late. When they got a few strides down the hallway, Mrs. Beagle had just opened her door. Daron gasped a breath of air and spun on a heel nearly shoving Miles into the wall. Seeing the immediate danger, Miles followed red-faced Daron to their apartment door.

"Quick, open it," demanded Miles as a tiger-striped cat slipped between Mrs. Beagle's fat calf and the doorway. Miles slammed the door behind him. "That woman needs to stop bringing those cats in. What if Clare had been out there and I shrieked like a little girl?"

"Don't worry about Clare. She's too hot for you and she's probably got a boyfriend," said Daron as he paced rooms thinking what he should do.

Miles shook his head, and went into the kitchen. "If I meet that guy, I'll punch him in the face for talking to my future girlfriend," he said as he reached for the gallon of milk in the refrigerator.

Daron rolled his eyes as he entered the room. "I'm just going to have to take a sick day," he said to change the subject to something he found more important. "I can't go out there with a cat running around."

"Don't sweat it, maybe you can get one of those girlfriends of yours to get rid of the cats in the hallway. I know, maybe that girl with the stretch-marked love handles falling out of her tube top. Did you know that they can make those that big?"

Daron stepped up to Miles and pushed his shoulder. "Why don't you grow some balls and talk to Clare for once?"

"Back off, Daron, or I'll hit you with this jug and let a cat lick the milk off your forehead. Let's make use of this day off. Wasn't there something you wanted to clean around here?" Miles opened the jug and slammed down a couple gulps before instantly regurgitating sour milk on the floor. White splatters hit over most of the floor, the counters, and the chairs.

"Oh my god, you can't be serious," Daron yelped with his hands on the top of his head.

"What the hell, Miles?"

Miles tossed the jug into the sink and wiped the milk from his mouth. "That was terrible," he said with red eyes. "Daron, I'm—"

A knock came from the door. Daron turned to the door and peered through the eyehole.

"Miles, it's Clare."

Miles had grabbed the paper towels but threw the roll into the sink when he heard. "Get back, let me get the door," he hissed as he leapt over the mass spill.

Daron stepped away and Miles cracked the door enough to see Clare's face, then opened it enough to see the rest of her slender body. Suddenly, he found himself mute and couldn't even ask her what she needed.

"Miles, right?" she said in a puzzled tone.

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He stared at her green eyes. The only thing he could think of was what those pink lips tasted like. He hoped that she was asking him on a date. Of course he would go. She would be

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wearing those tight jeans that she always wore, and Miles would make her laugh as she downed more drinks at the bar. She would be his that evening.

Clare was holding something to her side, but Miles couldn't see.

"I have a question if you're still in there, Miles," she said. After a few more moments of silence, she shook her head and asked, "Mrs. Beagle was wondering if this is your cat."

Miles' eyes dropped down to the cat that Clare held level to his chest. He shrieked as he fell back and filled the hallway with terrified screams of a twelve year-old girl. The cat appropriately freaked out and clawed Clare's arms causing her to yelp and drop it. The door flung open and the cat darted into the room searching for somewhere to get away from the three of them. Daron noticed the commotion and ran into the living room. Other cats that were at Clare's feet had scurried into the apartment. Miles ran into the kitchen and jumped onto the countertop like he was running from mice. Daron, on the other hand, had grabbed a cat in each arm and tossed them out, but the cat invasion continued and they all flocked to the milk on the kitchen floor. Daron dropped to his knees and grasped his throat not taking in air.

"Miles, get the cats out!" he pleaded.

"I'll get help," gasped Clare when Daron lay down and his face turned red.

Miles breathed heavily and stayed perched over the sink. "What should I do?" he shouted.

"Grab them! Push them! Kick the cats!" he squealed.

Miles shook his head and rubbed his hands. He couldn't muster the strength, but seeing Daron laying face down on the floor made Miles feel like a coward. Seven cats were lapping the sour milk. All seven of them could rip his throat and eat his heart out through his stomach.

Slowly, Miles put a foot to the floor and stepped towards the cats. "I've just got to kick the cats." He extended his toes towards a tiger-striped cat and it hissed at him. He withdrew and saw that Clare had returned to the doorway. She clenched onto a man's arm. A big, fearless man had come to the rescue.

Jealousy overcame Miles. It had to be her boyfriend. Miles gritted his teeth and began kicking his legs in mayhem as wild as a Hungry Hungry Hippos game. Cats cried and yelled as Miles punted two of them over Daron and towards the door. All the others ran out to avoid Miles' feet of fury. The man Clare had brought dodged the flying felines and rushed to Daron.

"He's breathing," he said as he looked up at the raging Miles. "Does he think he's allergic? I think he's just fine."

Daron looked up and inhaled. "I'm not allergic," he said with a smile. "Miles, I'm not allergic!" Miles punched the man in the face.

Daron got to his feet and grabbed Miles by the shoulders. "What the hell, dude?"

Clare ran to Miles and slapped him. "How dare you?"

"You didn't tell me you had a boyfriend," shouted Miles.

"What does it matter? Of course I have a boyfriend, jackass! I'm not some fat bitch in a tube top. Get a life." Clare left in fury.

Her boyfriend rubbed his jaw and gave Miles the finger. He lurched outside the apartment and slammed the door.

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Daron let go of Miles and looked at what was left of the milk on the kitchen floor. Ignoring it, the two walked into the living room and flopped onto the couch. For a while, they sat there thinking about what had just happened. After a few moments of silence, Daron finally spoke.

“I can’t believe it. You really would punch him in the face.”