Softly you whisper

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Softly you whisper

by centigrade_baby

Summary

“You are the best,” Ilya mumbled as he put his head back down. Shane smiled, ran his fingers through Ilya’s curls, “We’re the best when we’re together,” he responded. It was their truth.

Domestic fluff with Ilya and Shane. A special night at the cottage.

Notes

All the thanks to K and G for doing the beta thing. Y'all rock. To E, for being as big a fan of tatted Ilya as I am. I do not keep track of the tattoos I've given Ilya in previous stories. I just know he has a bunch and I've given him two more. And there'll be future stories where he'll have others. What is plotting and constancy?

Title: Open Arms by Journey

“I’m tipsy,” came the quiet comment. Shane smiled, and quietly responded, “Me too.” He’d developed a taste for the Drover Cider. Who knew there were so many different cider options? So many. They brought some to the cottage, and if they finished it they could always invite Troy and Harris to come visit. Now though, it was time for water.

“Have some water,” Shane offered as he picked up the glass. Ilya’s head was resting on Shane’s lap, but he made the effort to lift his head to drink water.

“You are the best,” Ilya mumbled as he put his head back down. Shane smiled, ran his fingers through Ilya’s curls, “We’re the best when we’re together,” he responded. It was their truth.

“Your lap is so comfortable, I don’t understand how because hockey thighs are not soft,” Ilya lightly thumped his own thigh as if to prove his point. Shane smiled as Ilya resumed talking, his voice slurred mainly from his deep sense of relaxation. “I love when you play with my hair. Just like I love that I’m the only one who has free access to touch your hair, Hollander. Anyway, every time you play with my hair,” which was often, Ilya’s curls were lovely, and Shane’s hands were perpetually drawn to them, “it feels like home.” A quiet sigh. Hand continued stroking curls. Lightly rubbed the scalp for a soothing message. The number of pictures on social media where either of them was touching the other’s hair was a lot. Shane had never noticed until Rose made a comment that they were so touchy feely especially with their hair. His man had great hair, statement of fact. Shane continued gently playing with Ilya’s hair, enjoying the quiet of the evening, filled with the low hum of music and the intermittent snoring of sleeping pets.

“My mom used to rub my curls, and it always made me sleepy,” Ilya’s voice was full of reminiscent wonder. Remembering those moments that in memory can last for a long time, but also feel like fleeting seconds. “She’d rub my head and tell me she was so proud of me and how much she loved me. I miss her, you know. Miss her a lot,” another deep sigh, this one full of sadness and wistfulness. Like he’d said to his therapist, it always hurt, this constant stitch on his side. He wanted Shane to know that Irina was an awesome mother and a great person. It mattered to him. “Hollander, when you rub my hair, I can feel her near too. She’d be happy that I found the perfect person. The person who rubs my hair and tells me they love me, and they show it too,” Ilya imagined his mother smiling, glad there was someone to take over a task that held such tenderness and love for him, for her son.

Shane blinked his eyes and channeled all the love he had for this man, this man who challenged him and loved him fiercely and whom he loved just as fiercely back. He’d fight for Ilya, had fought for Ilya, and would continue to do so. This was his, and fuck anyone who dared to disapprove.

A deep sense of comfort settled on Ilya. He wasn’t quite asleep, just deeply lethargic. Maybe his mom was sitting beside Shane, somehow showing him how Ilya liked his head rubbed, or she was channeling her love through Shane’s hands. Ilya always felt his mom close, but in some cases, it was that much more intense. Ilya knew that when he said *I felt my mom close,* Shane understood. And he believed that Shane had gotten to know Irina through these moments and conversations.

Shane suddenly realized that Diamonds by Rihanna was playing. Perfect. The day they made their public government acknowledged commitment. Silence, hand brushed beloved curls to the perfect song. Shane would stay here as long as necessary. They took care of each other in so many ways. Shane silently sent a message into the night, into the lake, maybe the loons would carry it to the appropriate location. Shane laughed at his fanciful thoughts, but he really wanted Irina to know her son is loved and is being taken care of and was also taking care of himself.

Ilya sighed, and moved a little, “I’m going to sit up. I need more water,” hand was removed from curls to bring the glass of water closer.

“Here, in case,” Shane handed over a hoodie. It was summer but the evenings were always cooler by the lake, and since they were on the deck, there was no fire. They did have a blanket over them, but that was just over their laps now, and it had been over Ilya while he was lying down.

“I like your hoodie,” Ilya said as he gave a slight stretch and reached for the water, he let the hoodie pool on his lap along with the throw Yuna had gifted him. It'd been a *just because* gift. Just because I saw something that I wanted to give to you to show I think of you even when you’re not near and to show I love you all the time. Yuna did not say all that but the hug she gave Ilya, the kiss on the cheek, her actual words of “look how soft it is. I knew it was perfect the minute I saw it. it’ll keep you all warm and cozy because that’s important,” had said it all.

Shane pointed to his chest, “This old thing? I’ve had it for ages, I stole it from an ex-boyfriend. It’s reached the comfortable stage. I’ll be sad when it’s gone as I’m no longer dating him,” it was true. The Boston Bears hoodie had belonged to the ex-boyfriend who was now his husband. Shane no longer remembered when the hoodie had come into his possession, but it never dawned on him to return it, then or now. At different points, the hoodie had been worn, thrown into the bottom of a drawer, snarled at, hugged closely but never ever had even come close to being returned.

“I wonder what that ex-boyfriend is doing now?” Ilya laughed and finished draining the glass of water. When he found out about this hoodie, he’d had a smile for days. He didn’t remember missing the hoodie, but knowing Shane had it for this long, and it was showing its age, was simply perfect. Shane wisely, had brought out a pitcher of water with cucumber slices, and Ilya replenished the glass.

“Hopefully, he’s doing well and is happy,” Shane remarked, “I wonder about him sometimes.”

“He can’t be happier than me, but I’m sure he’s ok,” Ilya responded. A laugh, a hug and a kiss to straight hair, a mumbled I love you.

“You are my everything Shane. My everything.” Emotional conversations on quiet summer nights always felt like they had a deeper resonance to them. Shane leaned his head on Ilya’s shoulder. “You are my choice. I would choose you over and over and over.” This was a truth they knew to their core.

“This evening was so perfect. It really was so fucking great. Parent’s Day Dinner turned out so well,” the satisfaction in Ilya’s voice rang strong. “I’m so glad we started doing this,” Shane had been celebrating mother’s and father’s day his whole life. For all those times that he was unable to take his folks out to dinner on the actual day, they’d get together later. It had not had a formal name until now. Parent’s Day. This had become the day Shane and Ilya celebrated their parents.

“Do you remember the first one we celebrated?” Shane asked, the memory of his parents coming to the cottage for dinner and drinks in celebration clear in his mind.

“Yes, it was such a great surprise. I loved it. Your parents did not expect it,” the memory of Yuna and David’s faces when they realized what this dinner was for remained ingrained in both of their minds. A Parent’s Day Celebration which included cute homemade cards as there were no suitable cards in the stores was a beloved memory to them both. They had also set a place at the dinner table that would remain empty, a place for Irina. She was very much present and part of Parent’s Day, to the point that Yuna and David had started a tradition of telling Yuna’s empty setting how well *their boys* had done that past year.

Ilya gave a happy shrug, “I think mom and dad liked this year's gift,” Yuna and David loved that Ilya called them by those names. It was no secret that both Yuna and David would brag about their sons to any unsuspecting soul. They’ve each started wearing different hockey jerseys to the games. One for each of their sons.

“After they got over their shock, they loved them,” Shane reassured him. It was true though; his parents loved their gifts even though they couldn’t take them home. “Yahtzee dice and a small puzzle tattooed on your forearm is quite the gift,” Shane lifted Ilya’s arm, there was still enough light to see them clearly. They were colourful and really quite glorious. Luca had done a fabulous job yet again. He was Ilya's official artist. “Did you hear my mother’s gasp? My father was just as astounded,” Shane and Ilya had discussed this gift a lot, and they both knew that this would not be expected by either parent. It was a special gift that Ilya had had on the back of his mind since before the wedding. A thing that he knew he’d end up doing, it was just a matter of talking to Luca, deciding where to do it on his body and finding the time.

“What did mom whisper to you after she got over her shock?” Yuna had gently taken Ilya’s face in her hands. Ilya had to bend down to allow her to do it, looked him in the eyes and then went on her tiptoes to whisper something in Ilya’s ear. Shane saw the tears in Yuna’s and Ilya’s eyes.

“She loves me, and she warned me that this did not mean she’d allow me to win from now on,” Ilya’s smile was full of delight. Yuna had indeed said she loved him and told him not to expect to win all future Yahtzee games. She also told him that she was proud of him, of the man he was. And that she believed that Irina would be just as proud and happy of him. She also said she is honoured to call him her son. It was a very special moment.

“She does love you, a lot. So does dad,” David had looked at Ilya’s new tattoo, had cleared his throat and said: *Son, that is a beautiful piece of art. I am so thankful you are a part of our family.* And had reached out for his own hug.

“It really was a great dinner and a perfect time,” Ilya always enjoyed spending time with the in-laws, but tonight was special. He was glad he’d finally made a permanent record of his family on his arm. His mother would understand that she was not commemorated on his body, she was part of his soul. Ilya lovingly touched the necklace that he never removed.

“It really was,” Shane yawned. He was exhausted. Perfect days like these had a way of making him tired. Once the adrenaline receded and what remained was the sweet afterglow, he just wanted to snuggle with Ilya.

“Hollander, let’s get Anya and Jeff settled for the night. I’m ready to go to bed. It was a perfect day. Now let’s get ready for the perfect night,” Ilya rose, he really was ready to go to bed, to feel Shane’s body beside him. Sometimes he needed grounding after very emotional days, and today was one of those days. He wanted to share with Shane a bunch of things, and it was always special when it was just them with no hiding, no artifice. Two people in love and out and open to the universe. Even when they were annoyed at each other, it was still perfect. Well, not perfect but theirs, and that was the perfect part. Theirs.

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