

if devotion is a river, then i'm floatin' away

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if devotion is a river, then i'm floatin' away

by [omis](#)

Summary

When Shane woke up this morning, he felt no different than he did yesterday. He didn't expect to, really. It was a Tuesday, it was May, and the Metros were playing a home game today.

It was also Shane's birthday.

Or: A lesson in loving someone so wholeheartedly that you intentionally make space in your life for their habits and learn to cook their traditional foods, written by Ilya Rozanov

Notes

shane hollander asked if he should take his shoes off at ilya's house and then proceeded to wear shoes in his mother's home. it shook me to my core.

truly, though. hudson williams, your shane hollander has bewitched me, body and soul. so much so that korean-canadian shane has built a home in my head and refused to get the hell out.

if i had the brainpower to write a 100k fic, this would be way more introspective and get into the nitty gritty of how shane's cultural identity informs his actions, but, alas, this specific idea is eating me alive, so. this will just be a series i think.

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

When Shane woke up this morning, he felt no different than he did yesterday. He didn't expect to, really. It was a Tuesday, it was May, and the Metros were playing a home game today.

It was also Shane's birthday.

If this were a perfect day, Shane would have woken up at the cottage in Ilya's arms, well-rested, sated, and ready to go for round three or four. Ilya would have fucked him, slow and steady, morning voice raspy and sexy, and Shane would have come so hard he might have convinced himself he was in another universe. Then, they could have gone for a run, Anya's paws pounding the dirt trail in sync with his and Ilya's sneakers, and returned to the cottage to have breakfast and spend the day relaxing with each other.

Shane groaned, shoving his face into the pillow, fingers gripping the cold sheets to his left. He tried desperately to rid his mind of what he truly wanted for his birthday so that he could forget that Ilya was so fucking far away.

Not as far as he used to be, Shane reminded himself.

That, at least, brought a smile to his face. The distance still sucked, and it was painful having only a day or two together every couple of weeks, but it was far better than what they used to do prior to getting their shit together.

Shane turned towards his nightstand, first to grab his glasses and then his phone. He scrolled through his notifications, already full of birthday wishes, and tapped first into his group chat with his parents, where two messages sent early this morning waited for him.

Eomma

생일 축하해 my baby! ❤️

Dad

Happy birthday, Shane! We love you!

Eomma

We're sorry we can't be there to celebrate with you this year!

He fondly tapped out a thank you to each of their texts and told them not to worry about not being in Montreal, ignoring the ache of missing them. His parents were rarely gone for his birthday, but Shane had given them a vacation package for Christmas and the dates had coincided. Despite his parents' insistence that they reschedule, Shane had made them go. They deserved to have fun. It took a while to convince them, but Shane doesn't regret it, even if he did kind of wish they were here.

Shane spent the next ten minutes tapping out thank you messages to acquaintances from old hockey camps and his teammates, hearting Rose's text full of emojis and responding with an influx of his own, laughing at the video message from Hayden, Jackie, and the girls singing him happy birthday, and making a mental note to reply to the others later.

Only then did Shane scroll to the earliest message, sent exactly at 12am.

Ilya

Happy birthday, my love

Shane grinned at his phone, heart racing. How many years have they been together and Ilya still made him feel like this?

I love you, Shane sent. As soon as the tiny *delivered* appeared below the text, his phone began to vibrate, a picture of Shane smiling and Ilya smacking a solid kiss to his cheek filling his phone's screen, Ilya's name flashing at the top. Shane swiped, stomach fluttering with anticipation.

"*Shane*," Ilya's voice carried over the phone, the exact morning raspiness that Shane craved.

"Hi," Shane replied, knowing that Ilya would hear the smile in his tone.

"*Happy birthday, baby*," his boyfriend said again. Shane wanted him here so badly the longing was gnawing at his bones.

"Thank you," Shane said, feet rubbing against each other and hands clenching. He had accepted long ago that his love for Ilya made him feel so deeply that his body couldn't help but react in some physical way. Ilya told him it was cute, but Shane still found it embarrassing.

"*I got you a present*," Ilya began. "*But it will be late. Delivery tonight. Sorry, sweetheart.*"

"It's okay," Shane replied, voice quiet. "I wish you were here."

Ilya let out a breath. "*Me too, sweetheart. Almost.*"

Shane hummed, thinking of the four days separating the two of them. "Yeah. Almost."

His boyfriend groaned, rustling sheets in the background as Ilya most likely got up. "*Sorry, baby, I have to go. Early practice today. I'll call you after your game, yes? Make fun of Scott Hunter for me.*"

Shane huffed out an amused breath. "I won't. But yeah, I'll call you when I get home later, okay?"

He didn't want to hang up. Neither did Ilya, judging by the way the two of them remained on the line.

"*Agh!*" Ilya whined. "*Fine, I will hang up and go to stupid practice. I love you. I will think about you all day.*"

"Hopefully with your brain and not your dick," Shane teased.

"*Shane*," Ilya deadpanned. "*Impossible. My brain and my dick are always thinking about you.*"

Shane chuckled, then pushed up to start getting out of bed. He should get ready for his morning pre-game practice, too. “Okay, well, tell the two of them to pay attention at practice today. You need to be focused.”

“*Yes, yes, I will be very focused,*” Ilya complained as Shane walked towards his bathroom.

“Okay,” he laughed. “Time to go. Love you.”

“*I love you. Happy birthday, moya lyubov,*” Ilya said, soft and sweet. When Shane hung up the phone, he immediately felt the pangs of missing his boyfriend.

Four days, he thought, and prepared his mind to destroy the Admirals tonight on the ice as a birthday gift to himself.

—

Shane was exhausted to his bones. All he wanted to do was put on his favorite sweats and shirt, collapse in his bed, and call Ilya. He craved the comfort of his soft sheets below him and his boyfriend’s voice in his ear. It wouldn’t be the same as Ilya being there, but Shane knew that he would see Ilya next weekend. It had to be enough.

They had won tonight, of course. It hadn’t been easy, with New York showing up at the top of their game. Unfortunately for the Admirals, Shane and the rest of the Metros were completely in sync tonight, pass after pass connecting, successful power plays, and goals lighting up the arena all night. It was probably one of the best games of hockey they’d played all season.

Shane had even given in to Ilya’s wishes, chirping here and there just to press Scott Hunter’s patience. The scoffs and threats from the Admirals had been worth it, just a bit, because Shane knew Ilya would be watching. Ilya might not have heard exactly what Shane said, but it didn’t matter. Picturing Ilya’s satisfied smirk was all he needed.

After the game, the locker room buzzed, his teammates shouting and clapping Shane on the back, thanking him for the birthday win. Shane had been ecstatic, really, fueled by his teammates’ energy and the joy of a great game of hockey.

But he’d also counted down in his head until he could ditch the locker room celebrations and go home. To shed this version of himself at the door of his house and immediately call Ilya. He had wanted it so badly that he hadn’t even cared that he left the arena earlier than what might have been acceptable. Fuck it, it’s his birthday. He can be slightly selfish for a day.

Shane finally approached his front door, punched in his code, and pushed it open. The lights in the front room greeted him.

Wait, Shane thought to himself. *What the fuck?*

Shane never left any lights on, but the entry room bulb was very clearly on and when he looked down the hallway in front of him, the kitchen light reflected off the floor at the far end. Did he get robbed? *Is he* getting robbed?

Despite the panic building in his chest, Shane tried to remain calm. If he didn't know his parents were away, he would assume it was them. Maybe he was so distracted by missing Ilya he left them on? It would be strange for him to forget the lights, but not completely out of the realm of possibilities. He dropped his bag at the entrance, tentatively closing and locking the door behind him.

It was when he removed his shoes and placed them on the rack that the pieces started to fall into place.

Nikes.

As soon as he noticed them, his heart kickstarted, mind coming up with impossible scenarios. Nikes on the rack, a certain pair of house slippers missing, the smell of cooking meat as he stepped further into the house, the distant sound of a hockey recap on the tv, and—

“Shane?”

He made a strangled noise, mindlessly shoving his feet into his own slippers as he rushed the final steps of the hallway towards the kitchen, feet sliding dangerously on his floor. When he finally turned the corner into the open kitchen, he crashed face first into a chest, his favorite chest, and was pulled into strong arms.

“Ilya!” Shane shouted, muffled into the tank top his boyfriend had on. Safe in Ilya's embrace, Shane pressed his embarrassingly teary face into his neck. Ilya's tank top was wet where Shane's face rested, but he knew Ilya wouldn't mind.

“Sweetheart,” Ilya said, pressing endless kisses anywhere he could reach—Shane's temple, the freckles on his cheek, his flushed ear. “Happy birthday. Your present is here.”

Shane hiccuped out a laugh, finally emerging from the curve of Ilya's neck to look up at his boyfriend. “It's a great present. Exactly what I wanted.”

Ilya smiled at Shane, one hand reaching up to dry Shane's cheeks and caressing what Shane is sure are his freckles. “I hate seeing you cry, baby,” Ilya murmured, hands still stroking Shane's cheek so tenderly.

“I'm happy,” Shane replied, volume matching Ilya's. “I missed you so much.”

They both moved at the same time, mouths connecting magnetically as they pressed kiss after kiss to each other's lips. Ilya detached, biting softly at Shane's bottom lip before pressing a long, lingering kiss to Shane's mouth.

Ilya pulled his face away and yanked Shane back into his embrace, squeezing tight until Shane hit his back in amusement. “I missed you so much,” Ilya began. “Was so hard not telling you I would be coming tonight.”

They finally separated, but Shane was reluctant to lose too much contact. He grasped Ilya's hand as he was led to the small dining table. Ilya had cleared it of its usual stacks of hockey

books and set up two placemats across from each other with a vase of delicate flowers and three red candles framing one side of the table.

On each placemat there was a small bowl of rice, purple and white mounds of grains steaming, and a large empty bowl. A spoon and a fork was set on one side, while the other had Shane's favorite pair of chopsticks and his favorite spoon, long handle and wide bowl, resting next to the rice.

"What's this?" Shane asked, so curious as to what his boyfriend prepared for him. "Did you make the rice?"

Ilya huffed out a laugh. "Yes. Are you surprised I can make rice? You and your mother taught me very well."

Shane beamed at Ilya, so grateful that his boyfriend was so attentive and sweet. It seemed like such a small thing, knowing how to cook a good pot of rice. But Shane knew how uncomfortable people tended to get when confronted with something new, especially food. Shane had been the victim of one too many comments on his *weird looking lunch* to not feel sensitive about it. Sometimes, his teammates would point out some seemingly *strange* pattern of Shane's or a mispronounced word caused by his languages mixing and Shane would get into his own head for the rest of the day.

Being at home with his family was the only time Shane felt like he could take a breath and be himself without constantly thinking about every move he made or every word that came out of his mouth. Ilya, his perceptively kindhearted boyfriend, had taken to it from the start. He never made a big deal out of any of their cultural differences, but he always paid attention to Shane's habits and his eomma's detailed routines, fitting himself so wholeheartedly into their lives.

Shane still remembered the first time he'd noticed how much Ilya was quietly observing and adapting to make Shane and his family more comfortable. When Ilya had bought his apartment in Ottawa, Shane had gone over and been greeted at the front door with four pairs of house slippers in different sizes, the exact brand he and his mom always bought.

He had turned to Ilya, stood right next to him at the entrance, and asked, "Why do you have so many house slippers?"

Shane had known, deep down, but was so in shock at the sheer attentiveness of his boyfriend that he couldn't seem to grasp what Ilya had done. Had done for *him*.

"For you. And Yuna and David. This is the good brand, yes?" Ilya had asked, eyes glancing over to the slippers.

Shane hadn't answered, but he'd dropped to his knees and blown Ilya so thoroughly that he thinks his boyfriend understood.

It hadn't stopped at that. Ilya, the most observant and caring man Shane knew, continued to find ways to learn about Shane and his family, surprising them with his thoughtfulness, both in tangible forms and through his actions.

It was his and his mom's skincare favorites stocked in Ilya's bathrooms, the way he always passed cups to his parents with both hands, his focused eyes as his eomma showed him how to make *doenjang-jjigae*, the sounds of his Korean language app every night, Shane's childhood *boricha* brand always in Ilya's kitchen cabinets—Shane never knew someone like Ilya could exist. Someone who'd recognize things about him, no matter how small, and actively make the effort to provide for him.

His eomma had told Shane countless times that he was never allowed to mess things up with her favorite son Ilya. Shane had scoffed, offended, but he'd promised in his heart that he'd do anything to keep Ilya by his side. He knew that he was so, so lucky to be loved by this man.

"Not surprised," Shane said, glancing appreciatively at the even mounds of rice in each bowl and clutching Ilya's hand tighter so he could lean up to press a grateful kiss to his cheek.

"Good," Ilya said and released Shane to pull out his chair. Once Shane was sitting, Ilya pushed his chair in with a wink and went to the kitchen with his and Shane's bowls.

Shane gazed appreciatively at Ilya's back muscles flexing beneath his tank top as he ladled what looked like some kind of soup into each bowl, carefully cleaning the sides with towel before returning to the table. Ilya placed his bowl down, then brought Shane's bowl in front of him, hovering above him in anticipation.

With a murmured thank you, he tilted his chin up for a kiss, which Ilya gave willingly, and turned to look at what he made for him.

Shane felt his heart stop.

"*Ilya*," Shane whispered, not able to say much else. He could feel the tears welling up, an unstoppable force that streamed down his cheeks as he stared intently at the bowl in front of him, full of dark broth, seaweed, and beef.

"I..." Ilya started hesitantly, nerves obvious in his voice from where he was still standing next to Shane. "I am not the best cook, but I tried my best to follow your mom's recipe—"

Shane finally let out a sob, interrupting Ilya's explanation.

"*Shane*," his boyfriend whispered, knees thumping to the floor next to Shane. He felt an insistent hand at his back, stroking up and down to try and calm Shane. "What's wrong, *moya lyubov*?"

Shane pressed the heels of his palms into his eyes and let out another sob, body shaking. He leaned into Ilya's gentle caresses and whimpered, so embarrassed but too overwhelmed to do anything else.

"Shane," Ilya began and Shane shook his head, stopping Ilya from continuing.

"No, no, I'm fine. *Ilya*," Shane croaked out, finally turning to look at Ilya's beautiful face. His eyebrows were pressed together in concern and his mouth was pinched in that way it got when he knew Shane was upset.

“Ilya, I’m okay, really, I just...” Shane tried again. *God*, why was it always so hard for Shane to say what he felt? There were so many things he wanted to say, but he couldn’t seem to find the words or even get them out properly. He took a deep breath and looked into Ilya’s gentle eyes.

“Did you make me *miyeokguk*?” Shane finally gets out, voice cracking. Ilya’s eyes wandered across his face and he removed his hand from Shane’s back to sweep the tear tracks from Shane’s cheeks with his thumb.

“I did,” Ilya said. “You always mention it every year. That your mom makes you a special birthday soup. I know your parents aren’t here this year, so I asked Yuna to send me the recipe.”

“*Ilya*,” Shane whispered, choking back the tears that threatened to come back. It seemed like all Shane could say was his boyfriend’s name.

“It will not be as good as Yuna’s, but I wanted you to have it. It is tradition,” Ilya said, stroking Shane’s hair back from where it fell into his eyes.

They sat there in silence, Shane blinking away his tears and Ilya watching him carefully. Eventually, Ilya sat back on his heels and pushed to his feet.

“I almost forgot,” he said, moving to open the fridge. “I picked these up from your parents’ house this morning. Your mom made them for you before they left.”

Ilya pulled container after container of *banchan* from Shane’s fridge, stacking them carefully on each other before closing the door with his shoulder. He returned to the table and set each container in the free spaces on the table. By the end of him laying out the side dishes, there was no space.

While Ilya removed the cover of each glass container, Shane watched as all of his favorite side dishes were unveiled. Fuck, he was going to cry again. Ilya returned to the kitchen to place the covers into the sink and then sat back down on his side of the table.

“Want to eat?” Ilya asked, glancing up at Shane.

“Yeah,” Shane said, heart still threatening to beat out of his chest. He muttered a quiet *jal meokgetseumnida* before he scooped up the broth first, sipping at it and closing his eyes to savor the taste. Then, he took another spoonful, this time with broth, seaweed, and a piece of beef.

“Is it okay?” Ilya asked, nerves sneaking into his question.

Shane nodded, mouth full of *miyeokguk* and eyes still watery. He swallowed, sniffing, then did his best to smile at Ilya without collapsing into an emotional heap.

“It’s delicious, Ilya. Thank you so much,” Shane replied and *ugh*, shit, his emotions were ramping up again. He couldn’t help it, these overwhelming feelings of complete adoration for his boyfriend were threatening to break him down.

Shane was always blown away by how sweet Ilya was, but the entirety of this dinner was proving again and again why Ilya was the love of his life. This was *his person*, his attentive, softhearted boyfriend who noticed everything about Shane and who made him feel accepted, nurtured, and protected.

Ilya, who knew his mom wouldn't be here today to make him *miyeokguk* and decided to learn it himself, to make the trip to Montreal despite having his own commitments in Ottawa.

His Ilya, who was the only man who had ever made Shane feel loved for who he was and not in spite of who he was.

Shane is startled from his thoughts by Ilya's house slippers tapping hesitantly into his. "Are you okay, Shane?"

"I'm more than okay," Shane said. "I'm just... really, really in love with you. I hope you know how much this means to me."

Shoulders relaxing, Ilya grinned at Shane and began to shovel soup into his mouth, pausing occasionally to eat a bite of rice or one of the *banchan* he was familiar with.

Dinner continued in a comfortable silence, only the distant and muffled voices from the tv as background noise. Despite the lack of conversation, Ilya tangled their feet together and made sure to shoot Shane butterfly inducing smiles every now and then. Shane settled into the moment, endlessly grateful for his life and the gorgeous man across from him.

As soon as Shane felt himself unwinding back into his normal sense of self, heightened emotions relaxing with each bite of homemade food from Ilya and his eomma, Ilya reached out a hand to wipe at the corner of Shane's mouth.

"How was the game?" Ilya asked, somehow knowing that Shane was finally ready to break the silence and talk. Truly, no one would ever get Shane the way Ilya did.

"The Admirals were tough, tonight," Shane started, and the two of them went back and forth as they filled their stomachs with warm soup, rice, and delicious *banchan*.

Once their bowls were empty and that night's game was fully rehashed, Ilya stood up to clear the table. Shane followed to help, but was halted by his boyfriend's hands pushing Shane away towards the living room.

"No," Ilya scolds. "No birthday boys allowed in kitchen."

Shane laughed and let Ilya have his way, happy to be doted on. He stopped in his room to change first, pulling on a pair of shorts that he knew clung to his ass and showed off his legs and one of Ilya's soft and worn shirts, before heading back to the living room.

Ilya wasn't one who cared much about what Shane wore, but he knew what Ilya liked. His boyfriend just cooked him a heartfelt meal and made him so happy he cried, it's only right that Shane wore a tried and true outfit that made Ilya crazy.

Clattering dishes and running water echoed from the kitchen as Shane settled into the couch, sinking down to wait for Ilya and watch rerun clips from tonight's game. It was a few minutes later that Ilya walked into the living room, bowl in his hand with a lit candle shoved into a scoop of ice cream.

"*Happy birthday to you,*" Ilya sang, confidently off-key, flames flickering across his beautiful face. "*Happy birthday to you.*"

Ilya stopped in front of Shane on the couch while Shane groaned and sat up, gripping Ilya's hips.

"*Happy birthday, dear Shane, happy birthday to you!*" Ilya finished, beaming ear to ear. "Now you must make a wish."

God, he's so cute. Ilya was endearing on a regular day-to-day basis, but even more so at times like these, so excited to celebrate the people he loved and make sure traditions are followed.

Shane shut his eyes, too emotionally worn out to play around and make Ilya impatient like he normally would, and made his wish. *I want this man forever. I never want him to leave my side. I want to love him and be loved by him for the rest of my life and beyond.*

Shane blinked his eyes open, looking up to see Ilya already staring at him, content and fond, like he knew exactly what Shane wished for. With an adoring smile towards his boyfriend, Shane blew out his candle and stole the bowl of ice cream to place it on the coffee table behind Ilya.

"Hey!" Ilya shouted as Shane got a grip on his thighs and pulled him horizontal onto the couch. He crawled over his boyfriend and collapsed his body weight onto him to bring their faces close together.

"Wow, Shane Hollander," Ilya giggled, face to face with what Shane assumed was his own helplessly adoring expression. "So strong. If you wanted me like this you could have asked."

Shane wiggled into a more comfortable position, legs between Ilya's thighs and elbows pressed to the sofa. He couldn't help but kiss Ilya, quick and searing.

"I love you," Shane murmured, hands carding through golden curls as he drew back. "Thank you for tonight. I can't begin to tell you how much it meant to me."

Ilya hummed, twinkle in his eyes as his palms cupped firmly over Shane's butt. He squeezed once, sliding his hands beneath the fabric to hold at bare skin, then leaned up to press a smacking kiss to Shane's mouth. "I love you, Shane. I hope you had a good birthday."

Shane kissed Ilya again, unhurried and soft, before pushing his face into Ilya's neck and going weightless, content to remain there until they decided to move.

He knew that later they'd get up, share the bowl of ice cream, and probably talk again about tonight's game. Ilya would most likely hound Shane about what he said to Scott Hunter tonight and giggle at Shane's recount of his terrible, yet still successful, attempts at chirping.

After all of this, they'd go to their bed and Ilya would fuck him slow and steady, press Shane's face into their sheets until he cried, then gently flip him over to watch him come undone. Ilya would come with Shane's name on his mouth, hips stuttering into Shane until he collapsed into his arms. They'd laugh into each other's mouths, sweaty and exhausted but so very satisfied, before cleaning up and falling asleep.

In the morning, Shane would wake up exactly where he always wanted to be, held in the arms of the man he loved more than anything else in the world, feeling cherished beyond belief.

For now, though, Shane kissed at the sensitive spot on Ilya's neck and relished in the shiver that ran through his boyfriend.

"Any birthday with you is my favorite," he said. "I want you with me for all of them."

"Always," Ilya murmured, smile pressed to Shane's hair.

Always, Shane repeated to himself, content, so very loved, and finally at ease.

End Notes

in my head ilya cannot exist without calling shane some kind of pet name every two seconds but shane doesn't ever say anything beside ilya's name (which ilya doesn't mind cause he knows shane).

one day shane unconsciously calls ilya jagiya and ilya almost explodes himself.

to my asian and pacific islander lgbtq baddies across the world, this is my love letter to you. i hope we all find someone who loves us in all the ways that matter.

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