

Dream Cheater

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Dream Cheater

by [Snakeswithsocks](#)

Summary

"I could marry Svetlana."

Ilya says it the way he does in real life. Loose. Half-amused. Like he's commenting on the weather or the merits of a toaster.

"And I could have a gun. What's new?" Shane thinks. Shane can't hide the hurt in his eyes as he meets Ilya's gaze, calm and collected.

"She's American, it would be easy citizenship," he pauses, typing on his phone absentmindedly. "She would do it. Her father is goalie Sergei Vitrov."

Shane scoffs, "Yeah, you've told me."

"She would help me..." Ilya says in a singsong tone.

or; what if Shane never says "Don't Marry Svetlana" and dreams about it?

Inspired by the song "Dream Cheater" by Precious Pepala

Notes

Taking a break from my main fic, "The Rooms Left Unopened (The Man I Need)" for a second to get this idea written down.

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

"I could marry Svetlana."

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Shane scoffs, "Yeah, you've told me."

"She would help me..." Ilya says in a singsong tone.

Shane feels tears prick at the edges of his eyes, shaking his head. "But," he pauses and stumbles over his words. "Is she, I don't know, someone you'd want to marry?"

Ilya responds calmly, still looking at his phone. "We are friends. We would be fine. And it would be for the passport."

Shane nods in understanding, but also in disbelief. They had just spent the best week of their lives at his cottage, his *home*, and now is the right time to bring this up?

"Okay, but-"

"But what?" Ilya says, still not looking up from his phone.

Shane sighs heavily, forcing the tears to not fall and staring intently at the couch instead of Ilya. "You like women, right? You could find someone you'd want to marry for real and still get the passport."

Ilya puts his phone down on his chest sighing. "Maybe, but-"

"But what?" Shane interrupts, getting visibly frustrated.

Ilya shakes his head. "I have this problem."

Shane stares daggers in Ilya's direction. "What's the problem?"

Ilya exhales from his nose, leaning forward casually, sporting Shane's button up from earlier, his mother's necklace still visible beneath the collar. He rests his head in his hand, looking at Shane carefully. "I like women, yes?"

Shane feels his breath catch. "Yeah, I know."

Ilya continues, "And everywhere I go, I'm surrounded by beautiful women. And they love me."

Shane scoffs again, looking out the window and failing to stop a tear from falling. "Sounds rough."

"Yes, it is. Listen," Ilya says seriously, leaning slightly closer to Shane. "And these women, they're so...sexy and fun."

As he describes these women, Shane feels his chest implode with pain, but he does not show it other than his glistening eyes, tight jaw, and pursed lips. He stays quiet, letting Ilya finish.

Ilya looks straight into Shane's gorgeous eyes and says with the utmost sincerity, "But I am always thinking about this slow, fucking hockey player with beautiful freckles."

Shane lets some tears fall, exhaling and smiling slightly.

"And a weak backhand."

Shane laughs out, "A weak backhand?"

"Yes, very weak. And he's so boring, and he drives this terrible car," Ilya continues as he leans back into the couch cushions.

"It's a normal car!" Shane retorts.

Ilya takes a deep breath, finally admitting, "I am always wishing these women were him."

Shane stays quiet a moment, taking everything in.

"It's a terrible problem, huh?" Ilya asks earnestly.

Shane swallows hard, pausing. His voice breaks slightly as he quietly asks the question he has feared, "Do you want that problem to go away?"

Ilya shakes his head slowly. "Mm-mmm. I don't ever want that problem to ever go away."

They both breathe for a moment, Shane's mind racing.

They sit like that, touching toes on the couch and enjoying each other's company.

That night, Shane dreams in voices.

She is hot. She is easy. She is friend.

The words drift through the dark like smoke, familiar and irritating, the cadence unmistakably Ilya's.

He's back on the couch at the cottage. Same cushions. Same low light. The room feels too quiet, like it's holding its breath. Ilya is beside him, close enough that Shane can feel warmth

through the space between their knees.

“You said it like it was nothing,” Shane says.

Ilya doesn’t look at him. He’s scrolling on his phone, thumb moving lazily. “It *is* nothing.”

From the corner of the room, someone laughs.

Svetlana is there.

She isn’t dramatic about it. She’s not sneaking or apologizing. She’s perched on the armchair like she belongs, one leg tucked beneath her, wearing a loose T-shirt and no pants. Shane recognizes the t-shirt with a jolt. One of Ilya’s. Older than him. Soft in the way fabric only gets after years.

“You always do this,” she says mildly, to no one in particular.

Ilya finally looks up, smiling. Not the teasing grin he gives reporters. Not the sharp one he uses when he’s defensive. The real one.

“It is practical,” he says. “We are compatible.”

Compatible.

The word presses into Shane’s chest, heavy and airless.

Svetlana stands and crosses the room, moving through the space like she’s memorized it. She reaches out and fixes Ilya’s collar with easy familiarity, fingers brushing his throat. Ilya leans into it without thinking, like it’s instinct.

“You don’t need drama,” she says. “You never did.”

Shane tries to move. His legs won’t listen.

“I’m right here,” he says, louder this time.

Neither of them reacts.

Svetlana glances at Shane then, her gaze skimming over him without hostility, without interest.

“Oh,” she says. “You’re still here.”

Still.

Ilya sets his phone aside and looks at her like he’s considering something obvious. Something that’s been waiting patiently.

“You could marry me,” she says lightly, echoing him back to himself.

Ilya nods. “Yes. That makes sense.”

Sense.

That hurts worse than anything.

Shane feels the couch dip as Ilya stands, but when he reaches out, there's nothing there. The space beside him is cold, suddenly unfamiliar, like he's been sitting in the wrong place all along.

"Hey," Shane says, panic crawling up his throat. "You said— you said you were always thinking about me."

Ilya pauses at the door, hand on the frame.

"I was," he says, not unkindly. "But this is easier."

Svetlana slips her hand into Ilya's, fingers fitting like they've done it before, like they'll do it again.

The door closes.

Shane wakes up with his heart hammering and his jaw clenched tight enough to ache, the echo of Ilya's voice still ringing in his head.

"This is easier."

Shane groans, rubbing his hand over his face. His eyes squint open, only to be met with sunlight beaming in the windows of the open room.

Ilya is still asleep beside him, mouth parted, arm thrown over Shane's waist with the same unthinking trust he always has. There's no guilt in his body. No hesitation. No sign that he's done anything wrong.

That almost makes it worse.

Shane stares at the ceiling and lets the anger bloom anyway, hot and irrational and already searching for somewhere to land. His heart is still racing, like he's just caught someone in the act, like he's been made a fool of.

He hasn't.

He knows that.

Knowing doesn't help though.

He carefully untangles himself from Ilya's arm. Ilya makes a soft whine in his sleep, brows knitting, fingers curling briefly in the empty space Shane leaves behind. Shane would think it was endearing if he wasn't currently furious with him. Still, Shane almost climbs back in.

Instead, he gets up.

The kitchen is pale with early morning light, all clean lines and quiet. It feels too innocent for how he feels inside it. Shane makes coffee with more force than necessary, the machine hissing like it's offended on his behalf.

Behind him, Ilya pads in barefoot, hair a disaster, wearing Shane's sleep shirt like he never questioned whether he was allowed to. He leans in automatically, aiming for Shane's shoulder.

Shane shifts away.

It's barely a movement. A fraction of a step.

He misses, tripping into the island.

Ilya pauses. "Good morning?" he says slowly, recalibrating.

"Morning," Shane replies, already bracing.

Ilya watches him over the rim of his mug. "You look like someone stole something from you."

Shane huffs a laugh that has no humor in it. "Feels like it."

"Was it me?" Ilya asks lightly, a smirk on his face.

There it is. The opening. The moment Shane could explain that his own brain staged a crime in the night and handed him the bill for it.

Instead, he shakes his head. "No." It's the truth. It's also a lie.

They eat in fragments. Shane keeps his eyes on the table, on the window, on anything that isn't Ilya's face. Every normal movement feels loaded, like proof he's supposed to be interpreting.

When Ilya reaches out under the table, toes brushing Shane's ankle, Shane pulls back on instinct.

Ilya stills, eyebrow furrowing. "You are upset," he says, not accusing, just naming it.

Shane grips his mug harder. The dream whispers at him again, uninvited, replaying certainty where there was none, *"You don't need drama."*

"I'm fine," Shane says, because saying *you cheated on me in my sleep* sounds insane.

Ilya studies him, searching for a clue that isn't there. "You know," he says quietly, "when you look at me like this, it feels like I have already lost an argument I was not allowed to be in."

Guilt punches Shane square in the chest. He doesn't respond, and simply eats aggressively, filling the kitchen with silence.

Outside, the lake is calm, blue and unbothered, like nothing bad has ever happened anywhere near it. Shane stands on the dock, arms crossed, trying to shake the feeling that he's reacting to something imaginary with very real consequences.

Ilya joins him, stopping a careful distance away.

"If something is chasing you," Ilya says, softer now, "you can tell me."

Shane swallows. The words press at the back of his throat, crowded and sharp.

It was only a dream.

But it felt like betrayal.

Why does it still hurt if it wasn't real?

"I just need a minute," Shane says instead.

Ilya nods, accepting it even though it clearly costs him. He turns back toward the cottage without another word.

Shane watches him go, the ache settling deeper.

The worst part isn't that the dream lied to him.

It's that it left him holding feelings that don't know where they came from, treating the man he loves like he's already done something unforgivable.

And Shane has no idea how to make it right without admitting that his own mind was the one that cheated first.

"What the fuck do I do?" he thinks, holding his head in his hands.

The private rink next to the cottage is empty except for Shane.

That's the way he wants it. That's why he bought it anyway.

The lights hum overhead, too bright, too honest, reflecting off fresh ice that hasn't been scarred by anyone else yet. Shane skates hard, vicious little bursts of speed that don't lead anywhere, stopping so abruptly the blades shriek in protest.

Again.

Again.

Again.

His lungs burn. His legs ache. Sweat slicks down his spine, soaking through his shirt until it clings unpleasantly to his skin. He doesn't slow. He doesn't want to. Every glide is a penance, every shot a demand he keeps making of himself.

You don't get to feel hurt if nothing happened.

You don't get to punish him, so punish yourself.

The puck smacks the boards. Shane chases it down immediately, breath ragged, jaw tight.

He doesn't hear Ilya come in.

He only notices when a bottle slides across the ice and bumps gently into his skate.

Shane stops short, startled, chest heaving.

Ilya stands by the bench, jacket still on, hair damp from the walk over. It had started raining about 3 hours ago. He holds another water bottle loosely in his hand, eyes taking Shane in all at once: the sweat, the frantic energy, the way he's skating like he's trying to outrun a thought.

"You will pass out," Ilya says calmly.

Shane bends to grab the bottle, takes a long drink without looking at him. The water is cold enough to sting. He deserves that too.

"I'm fine."

Ilya doesn't argue. He never does when Shane's like this. He just watches, quiet and patient in a way that somehow makes it worse.

"You've been here long time," Ilya says. "Coach would be impressed. Or concerned."

Shane scoffs and fires another puck down the ice. "I'm practicing."

"You are punishing," Ilya corrects gently.

That lands.

Shane whips around, eyes sharp. "You don't know what I'm doing."

Ilya's mouth presses into a thin line. He steps closer to the boards anyway. "I know this," he says. "When you skate like you are angry at ice, it is never about hockey."

Shane laughs, short and ugly. "Maybe it is today."

"Shane—"

“What?” Shane snaps, louder than he means to. “What the *fuck* do you want from me?”

Ilya holds up the bottle slightly, like a peace offering. “I brought you water. For...hydrate.”

The kindness in it, the simplicity, the fact that Ilya knew exactly where to find him and why he’d be here, cracks something open too fast.

“I don’t need it,” Shane says sharply, shoving the bottle back toward him. “I don’t need you hovering. You’re not my mom.”

Ilya recoils like he’s been struck.

“I am not hovering,” he says, hurt flickering through his voice before he can hide it. “I am worried.”

“Well, don’t be,” Shane fires back. “I didn’t ask you to come, Rozanov.”

The words echo off the empty rink, ugly and final.

For a moment, Ilya just stares at him. Not angry. Worse. Wounded.

“You are treating me like I did something wrong,” Ilya says quietly.

Shane’s throat tightens. He opens his mouth, but the truth is too complicated, too humiliating to untangle here, under fluorescent lights with sweat cooling on his skin.

“Just—” Shane gestures helplessly. “Leave me alone.”

Silence stretches between them, thin as ice.

Ilya nods once, sharply, like he’s making a decision he didn’t want to make. He sets the bottle down on the bench with deliberate care.

“Okay,” he says, voice flat now. “If that is what you want.”

He turns and walks out without looking back.

The door slams harder than necessary.

Shane stands there, frozen, the echo ringing in his ears louder than the earlier scrape of skates.

The adrenaline drains out of him all at once, leaving his limbs heavy and useless. He sinks down onto the ice, legs folding beneath him, helmet rolling away.

The empty rink feels cavernous now.

Shane presses the heels of his hands into his eyes and finally breaks, shoulders shaking, a sob tearing out of him before he can stop it.

He didn’t mean it.

He didn't mean any of it.

All he wanted was to bleed the feeling out of himself before it could hurt Ilya.

Instead, he's done exactly that.

And there's no whistle to stop play.

The fire is already going when Shane comes outside.

It's burned down to a low, steady glow, embers pulsing orange and red like something alive but tired. The night air is cool against Shane's damp skin, the smell of smoke clinging to his clothes as if it followed him out here on purpose.

Ilya sits on the outdoor couch, elbows resting on his knees, hands loose between them, staring straight into the fire. He doesn't look angry. He doesn't look sad. He looks empty.

That scares Shane more than anything else today.

"Hey," Shane says quietly, stopping a few feet away.

Nothing. Not even a shift of weight. Not even a blink Shane can see from here.

Shane swallows and moves closer, the gravel crunching under his shoes loud in the silence. He sits on the couch beside Ilya, careful not to touch him yet.

The fire pops softly.

"You didn't come back," Shane tries.

"I went where I was told," Ilya says without turning his head.

The words are flat. Polite. Unfamiliar.

Shane winces. "I didn't mean—"

"Is fine," Ilya interrupts, still watching the flames. "You were very clear."

That lands harder than yelling would have.

They sit there. The silence stretches, thick and uncomfortable, the kind that forces Shane to listen to his own breathing, his own thoughts circling like vultures.

The fire throws light across Ilya's face, carving shadows under his eyes, along the line of his jaw. He looks older like this. More guarded. Like something has closed and locked without fanfare.

Shane rubs his hands together, restless. "I was out of line."

Ilya doesn't respond.

"I was tired," Shane adds weakly, then immediately hates himself for it.

"Hm." Ilya grunts.

The fire crackles. Somewhere in the trees, something moves. A loon calls out into the night, but neither of them mention it.

Minutes pass. Shane counts them in heartbeats, each one heavy with the awareness that Ilya isn't meeting him halfway anymore.

Finally, Shane exhales shakily, his voice breaking slightly. "I'm sorry."

That gets something.

Not a look, but a breath. A subtle tightening in Ilya's shoulders, like the word hit a place that still hurts.

"I didn't mean to snap at you," Shane continues, voice rough. "I didn't mean to make you feel like you'd done something wrong. You didn't."

Ilya's gaze flickers, finally, just barely shifting away from the fire. Not to Shane. To the space between them.

"You pushed me away," he says quietly. "And you would not tell me why."

Shane nods, throat tight. "I know. And I hate that I did that. I was—" He stops, swallows hard. "I was punishing myself, and I took it out on you."

Ilya's jaw works, like he's biting back something sharper.

"You looked at me today," he says, voice still even, "like I was stranger. Like I was guilty."

Shane's chest caves in. He leans forward, elbows on his knees, staring into the fire now too because it's easier than facing that truth head-on.

"I had a dream," he says, barely above a whisper.

Ilya goes still.

Shane keeps going before he can lose his nerve. "It felt real. And I woke up holding all that hurt with nowhere to put it. And instead of dealing with it like an adult, I—" His voice breaks. "I shut you out."

Silence again. But it's different this time. Tense. Waiting.

The fire shifts, embers collapsing in on themselves.

Ilya finally turns his head and looks at Shane.

Not cold. Not forgiving. Just tired.

“You should have told me,” he says.

“I know,” Shane whispers. “I’m sorry.”

Another long beat.

Then Ilya exhales, slow and controlled, like he’s letting something go one careful piece at a time. He looks back at the fire, but he doesn’t pull away when Shane’s knee brushes his this time.

Shane doesn’t pull away either.

The contact is accidental, barely there. That feels like permission. Or mercy.

Shane swallows hard. “You probably want to know what the dream was, huh?” he says quietly.

Ilya doesn’t look at him. He just nods once, eyes still fixed on the fire.

So Shane talks.

“It started with you,” he says, staring into the embers like they might keep him steady. “On the couch. You said it again. ‘I could marry Svetlana.’ Same way you did before. Like it didn’t matter.”

Ilya’s fingers curl slightly where they rest between his knees.

“And then she was there,” Shane continues, voice roughening. “Not... not showing up. Just already there. Like she belonged.” He huffs a shaky breath. “She was wearing your shirt. One I didn’t recognize. And no fucking pants”

Ilya closes his eyes.

“You kept saying it made sense. That she was easy. That she didn’t make drama.” Shane’s hands clench together, his voice catching as tears started to fall. “And I couldn’t move. I kept trying to say something and you wouldn’t even *look* at me.”

The fire crackles.

“You said you were always thinking about me,” Shane says, swallowing hard. “And then you said, ‘This is easier.’”

That finally does it.

Ilya turns to him, sharp and incredulous. “Shane,” he says, disbelief bleeding through his accent. “You treated me like enemy all day because of a dream?”

Shane flinches like he deserves it.

“I know,” he whispers. “I know how it sounds. I woke up already angry and I didn’t know where to put it and I just—” His voice cracks deeply. “I couldn’t shake it. It felt real. And that’s not your fault. None of it is.”

Ilya scrubs a hand over his face, exasperated now, pacing one short step away from the fire before stopping. “You shut me out. You snapped at me. You looked at me like I had betrayed you.”

“I’m sorry,” Shane says, the words tumbling over each other. “I’m so sorry. I hated myself the whole time. I kept thinking if I just ran it out, skated it out, it would go away and it didn’t.”

His breath stutters.

“I was so scared,” he admits. “And instead of trusting you, I punished you for something my brain made up.”

Ilya turns back slowly, something unreadable moving across his face.

"Don't marry Svetlana," he says, begging.

Ilya throws his hands up, completely lost. "Why the *fuck* would I do that Hollander? Huh? Is this a joke to you?"

Shane shakes his head, already retreating. “I shouldn’t have said that. I don’t know why I said that.”

Ilya stares at him, chest rising sharply. “No,” he says. “You do not get to say something like that and then pretend you are lost.”

He steps closer, firelight flickering across his face, eyes bright in a way Shane hasn’t seen before. Too awake. Too focused.

“You think I am simple?” Ilya asks, almost yelling. “You think Svetlana is in my mind the way you are?”

Shane opens his mouth. Ilya interrupts, furious. "No, you shut up and listen." Shane closes his mouth.

“I wake up,” Ilya says, relentless now, “and before I check my phone, I think of you. Before I skate, I think of how you would watch me skate. I adjust my stride because I know you notice these things.”

Shane’s breath starts to shake.

“When I am in gym,” Ilya continues, “I hear you telling me not to cheat my reps. When I am angry, I imagine you telling me to calm down. When I am happy, I want to show you.”

He laughs once, sharp and breathless. “I plan meals around you. I buy food you might eat even when you are not there. I stand in grocery store arguing with imaginary Shane about

pasta like this is normal.”

“Ilya,” Shane says, barely audible.

“When I am on plane,” Ilya says, voice climbing, “I replay conversations we have not had yet. I think about what you will say when I land. When I am in hotel bed, I sleep on one side like you are there.”

He presses a hand to his chest, fingers digging in.

“When I take a fucking shit,” he adds, wild-eyed now, “I am thinking about you. About something stupid you said. About how you laughed. About how you look when you are trying not to cry.”

Shane’s vision blurs completely.

“And when I sleep,” Ilya says, suddenly quieter, more dangerous, “you are there too. You do not leave me even then.”

The silence after that is heavy, vibrating.

Shane takes a step forward. “You don’t have to keep going.”

“I am not done,” Ilya says, breath coming fast. “You say you are afraid to lose me, but you do not understand. You already *own* me, Shane.”

Shane feels a pain in his chest like a bullet. There is silence except for the fire flickering and popping, a loon calling in the distance.

“I love you,” Shane says.

Ilya stops mid-breath.

“What?” he whispers.

Shane stands and steps closer, voice breaking, desperate and raw. “I love you. I can’t listen to you do this to yourself. I love you.”

Rain starts to fall. Slow at first, then harder, drops hissing against the fire, steam curling up around them like the night is exhaling.

Ilya stares at Shane like he’s trying to relearn the shape of him.

“Я тебя люблю,” he says finally, the words tumbling out rough and urgent, like they’ve been clawing at him from the inside. He says it again, softer, reverent. “Я тебя люблю.”

Then he cups Shane’s face, hands shaking.

“I love you,” he says in English, grounding it, claiming it.

He kisses him hard, like he's afraid if he doesn't, the moment will vanish. Rain soaks through their clothes, through their hair, plastering them together, neither of them feeling cold, neither of them caring.

They break apart laughing and crying at the same time, foreheads pressed together, rain dripping from their noses, breath tangled.

"We are not okay," Ilya says faintly.

Shane laughs, wrecked and giddy. "No."

They continue to stare into each other's eyes as the fire burns out, unable to let this moment go. The rain really starts to pour, and they laugh, stumbling inside. They are completely soaked through, leaving puddles on the floor. Shane hands Ilya a towel with shaking hands. They sit on the couch wrapped in blankets, knees pressed together, still staring at each other like they might disappear.

"I said it," Shane murmurs, like he's checking reality.

Ilya nods, thumb tracing Shane's knuckles. "You did."

"And you didn't run."

"I could never," Ilya says quietly. "Not from you."

Shane leans into him, exhausted and safe, the storm still raging outside while something inside finally, mercifully, goes still.

Epilogue

Morning comes slowly.

Rain taps against the cottage windows in a patient, unhurried rhythm, the kind that makes the light outside stay gray and forgiving. Shane surfaces from sleep with a congested groan, throat raw, head thick and heavy.

Beside him, Ilya is a furnace under the blankets.

He's breathing through his mouth, nose completely useless, one arm slung over Shane's chest like it's a legal claim. Every few seconds, he lets out a soft, ridiculous snore.

Shane smiles, then immediately regrets it as his sinuses throb.

"Hey," he croaks.

Ilya stirs, blinking blearily. "Mm."

“You alive?”

“Maybe,” Ilya says, voice wrecked. He squints at Shane’s face, then softens. “You are sick.”

“So are you.”

“That is because of love,” Ilya says seriously.

Shane snorts and buries his face in Ilya’s shoulder, breathing in the faint smell of shampoo and rain and something steady he didn’t know he needed this badly.

“I love you,” Shane murmurs, like he’s testing the words in daylight.

Ilya’s hand tightens at his back. “I love you.”

They lie there for a while, saying nothing, listening to the rain and each other’s breathing, the world narrowed to warmth and congestion and shared space.

Ilya drifts off first, mouth falling open again, soft snores returning almost immediately.

Shane follows soon after, lulled by the sound, nose blocked, heart full, wrapped tight in blankets and certainty.

Outside, the rain keeps falling and a loon calls, but neither of them hear it.

End Notes

Kudos and comments are appreciated! Feel free to read my other works as well!

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