

To Say Goodbye, To Say Hello

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To Say Goodbye, To Say Hello

by [VicIsWriting](#)

Summary

Ilya is so used to grieving his mother alone. Now he doesn't have to.

Notes

Hi!

First fic in this fandom and first fic I've written in years so be nice please and thanks!

Big up [Extra](#) for encouraging and being a sweetie!

Thanks to [Scoops](#) for reprising her role as my beta and life saver.

Also I am sorry I do not know a LICK of Russian so tried my best and there are probably some very wrong translations occurring here.

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

November 18th 2023

Shane wakes up to an empty bed.

Unusual, sure. But not unheard of. He strains tired ears to the en-suite, expecting to hear the telltale sign of Ilya peeing or washing his hands before crawling back into the bed to sleep some more.

He reaches across to the empty side of the bed, trying to absorb the warmth of his husband from the sheets before his actual body heat returns and drags Shane back down into sleep. The sheets are stone cold, and Shane suddenly feels colder.

He rolls the other way and taps blindly across his nightstand until his finger touches his phone's screen. It lights up, and he squints against the bright display.

It's a picture of Ilya and Anya from last year at the cottage. They're sitting on the dock, both wet and dripping from swimming in the lake. Anya's tongue is lolled out to the side as she pants from exertion, and Ilya is laughing brightly as he looks above the camera at Shane.

It's 4:23am— too early for even Shane to get out of bed, let alone Ilya. But as his eyes scan down he sees the date and he *knows*.

His body protests as he gets out of bed, his knees in particular, as he trudges down the stairs. Ilya got the pain in his hips, and Shane got the knees— it seems a fair distribution for how they've been on *and* off ice.

Anya snuffles and protests lightly as he walks past her in bed— not as much as she would if he was the first to disturb her. Another warning sign.

The house is cold, so cold that Shane grabs a throw blanket from the back of the couch as he wanders through the house in search of his husband. It's eerily quiet too, only gentle huffs

from Anya and the gentle patter of his own bare feet against the hardwood.

In the kitchen, Shane finds a glass of water on the counter, mostly full except for maybe a sip or two. The sliding doors to the back porch are open, and he sees a hunched over figure on the steps.

Ilya looks so pale in the moonlight, his freckles and moles dark against alabaster skin. He's hunched over with his elbows digging into his knees, head in his hands.

For the first time in a long time, Shane doesn't know how to approach him. This is not like the times he's fired up and practically vibrating out his skin with energy, or the times where he is numb for no known reason at all and just sits there staring into space like he's hoping for an answer from the universe.

He sighs, and his breath hitches, and Shane thinks it doesn't matter so much if there's a *right* way to be here right now. He thinks it just matters that he is here.

"Ilya?" he says, as he makes his way through the open door and onto the deck.

"Hi," Ilya croaks back, his voice hoarse and shuddering.

"Are you—" Shane begins, then thinks better of asking a stupid question.

"I am... okay." Ilya answers anyway. "Not depressed, I mean."

Shane sits beside him, resting his temple against Ilya's shoulder.

"I am sad, but, normal person sad not..." he trails off, but Shane understands.

Sometimes Ilya is sad, and there is no reason or logic. He is empty and hollow and nothing Shane does will fix it. Nothing anyone could do would fix it. *That* is his depression. But sometimes he is sad for reasons that can be explained, and sometimes he can say why but usually he can't find the words in any language. But it is fixable, it is a tangible sadness that Shane can help with, or Shane's mom can soothe, or Shane's dad can mitigate with distractions, or the team can laugh out of him.

Shane leans further against his husband, hoping the pressure helps him as much as it helps himself in times like this. He plants a gentle kiss to his upper arm before sliding his own arms around Ilya, draping the blanket over them both and tucking himself into Ilya's chest. "I am so sorry, moya lyubov."

"Twenty years," Ilya murmurs, his voice so low and so broken that Shane breaks with him.

"I would always leave her flowers today, and when I couldn't I would pay Andrei to do it for me. I would pay for the fuel and the flowers and even his *time*." Ilya choked off in a half contained sob.

Shane, not for the first time in his life, sent bad and horrible vibes towards his brother-in-law.

"Nobody else would, everyone was so ashamed." Ilya grabs Shane's hand with his own and presses them both to his chest. "So embarrassed by her for not being strong enough"

"She was strong," Shane says, repeating words he'd heard before. "She was—"

"She was wonderful. She was... tortured. She did not have you. She did not have what I have. I wish she did but then maybe I would not be me." Ilya presses the words against Shane's temple.

"She is alone now, and I am not. I feel... guilty." Ilya's arms slip around Shane's hips, and he presses in.

“I made choices,” he says, and he squeezes Shane tighter. “I will never regret these choices, but now her grave will be empty. She will be alone, and nobody will mourn her there.”

Ilya shudders, and not just from the breeze. “I can never go back. I can never leave her flowers, I can never sit there and feel her with me. She will think I chose to abandon her like everyone else did.”

Ilya sobs, a real and broken sob. It comes straight from his soul. “I did not choose this, but it was my choice. Do you understand?”

Shane nods, and furrows in deeper. When he thinks about how much Ilya gave up for them, for *him*. It breaks him every time.

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January 7th 2024

It's weird going to the cottage in the winter. Ilya is so used to the space being bathed in warmth and sunlight and the innate feeling of *home*.

They had a few days off, Shane had suggested coming here, and who was Ilya to say no?

Shane seems nervous, almost like the first time they had made this drive to the cottage. He's adorable, awkward, and perfect. He is the love of Ilya's life, even when he's fidgeting enough to make Ilya go crazy,

“You said we are going to relax, yes?” Ilya asks, clamping his hand down on Shane's jittering thigh.

“Yeah,” Shane replies, jittering.

“You are not relaxed.”

Shane huffs indignantly, but doesn't continue to bicker or chirp. Another sign that this is *weird*.

The cottage is as beautiful as it always is, though now cast in cool winter light instead of the warm summer glow. Each window pane is framed in frost and the wood sparkles with tiny ice crystals.

Shane turns off the engine and gets out of the driver's seat. Usually Ilya drives, but he is still adamant he won't be caught dead driving the jeep. (Even though he will begrudgingly agree it is good in the snow.)

They walk up the steps together, Shane's hand shakes slightly as he unlocks the door—probably from the cold.

They left Anya with David and Yuna, deciding carting her around for only a few days would be cruel and unnecessary. Like her getting to run around and be free for only a couple of days instead of months is like dangling a carrot and then ripping it away.

As much as Ilya appreciates the idea of them having a few days together, he knows he won't be good company. Shane probably knew this too.

Maybe that was the whole reason they were here. His husband truly is wonderful.

“Let's go out back,” Shane says after dumping his bag by the bottom of the staircase.

“It is cold,” Ilya replies. “Don't think I can get it up in this.”

Shane's cheeks flush as they always do, and his eyes roll just the same.

"Not for that, you Neanderthal"

"That's a new word, what is that?" Ilya asks, already tracing Shane's steps through the cottage to the sliding doors at the back.

"Oh— uh, like a cave man. Before civilisation." Shane looks toward Ilya, brows furrowed in the way they always do when he has to think about explaining English terms

"Testing my English today? I see," Ilya jokes. "I know civilisation. This is what I am not when I leave my socks on the floor or am rude to Pike."

Shane laughs, wrapping his hand around Ilya's wrist. "Yes, exactly."

"I don't see what Pike has to do with us fucking on the—"

Ilya stops as they step outside.

He knows the backyard of the cottage like the back of his hand. It's a sprawling wooden dock; it's a beautiful patch of green that he and Shane *attempt* soccer on; it's a fire pit that they stare at for no reason at all.

But now there is a piece of stone set into the ground on a small patch of grass that was otherwise unused.

It is a simple square stone— maybe marble. Shane pulls him along to the stone with his grip around Ilya's wrist.

“Remember when... we talked about your mother?” Shane’s voice is barely a whisper, and Ilya can feel the shake in his fingers where they are pressed against his pulse point.

“Yes,” Ilya responds, moving closer to the stone sitting in his husband's most precious place.

“Well I know it’s not the same, and I know it’s not... right— but...”

As Ilya gets closer he sees the engraving on the stone. There’s a small orthodox cross etched in, with *Irina Lina Rozanov* and his mother’s birth and death dates.

“Wait here,” Shane murmurs, caressing Ilya’s arm before disappearing inside the cottage.

Ilya falls to his knees in front of the stone. His hands reach out and caress the engraving of his mother’s name before looking out across the lake. His heart feels like it’s expanding tenfold in his chest, and his lungs cannot find enough room to breathe.

“Hi, mama.”

“Ilya?” Shane’s hand rests on his shoulder, his thumb tracing a line up and down his neck. “Is this—”

“It’s perfect, moy lyubov. Just perfect.” He reaches his own hand up to clasp Shane’s on his shoulder, stroking his thumb against the top of Shane’s.

“These are for her,” Shane says, and Ilya turns his head away from the stone for the first time to look at his husband.

Shane stands there radiant as always in the cool winter light. He holds a small tasteful bouquet of flowers— Ilya does not know what kind.

“They’re peonies,” Shane says without Ilya even needing to ask. “Exactly twenty.”

Ilya presses his temple against Shane’s hip, breathing a sigh into his husband’s jeans.

“I read online that it has to be an even number for remembrance in Russia,” Shane rambles. “There was nothing about what *type* of flower but I—”

Ilya takes the flowers from Shane’s grasp, looking across the small and delicate petals. “It is perfect.”

He places the bouquet against the base of the stone, his hands shaking. “Ya tebya lyublyu, mama.”

“Ya tebya lyublyu, Irina,” Shane whispers. “Spasibo tebe za nego”

Ilya let out a shaky sob as he leaned back into his husband, staring at the memorial for his mother.

“I know it is not the same,” Shane says. “And I hope one day we can go and see her for real without fear. But for now she isn’t alone. We won’t let her be, okay?”

Shane bends down then, curling his body around Ilya as he sobs at the stone.

Ilya and Shane sit at the stone for a while, talking about their life and their love and everything that had happened since the last time Ilya had visited his mother’s real grave. They talk until Ilya has no words left in English or Russian. He caresses the flowers at the base of the stone, gliding his fingers up past the date of her death and over her name until he reaches the cross at the top of the marble. “Ty s nami”

Ilya had found a home in Canada, in Shane, with the Centaurs and David and Yuna. He knows now how it feels to belong and be wanted, loved and cared for. He hopes now that his

mother will too.

End Notes

Weeeee! Thanks for reading.

My bad Russian translations are as below:

moya lyubov - my love

Ya tebya lyublyu - I love you

Spasibo tebe za nego - thank you for him

Ty s nami - you are with us

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