

Bloom like our love

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Bloom like our love

by [kool_ranch_kunt](#)

Summary

Shane had researched many flowers and plants that were native to Russia, and he had settled on two different ones, the fern leaf peony, and chamomile, which is Russia's national flower. He had placed the peony root, and chamomile seeds carefully into a shoebox on the passenger seat next to him, as he drove in silence.

He thought that maybe he was doing too much, that he was overstepping. But he would have to wait until the summer to find out.

Notes

I saw someone talk about the idea of Shane creating a little memorial for Irina, and I thought that was so beautiful. So here's a little one-shot about that.

Shane didn't realize how much he took his family for granted until he met Ilya. Every horror that Ilya had to go through, at such a young age, makes him nauseous to think about. Shane never had to worry about coming home at night to people who did not want him there. He never had to think strategically about his actions to get love from his parents, they just loved him.

When he met Ilya the first time, he thought he was an asshole through and through, never did he think it was a defense mechanism. Never did he think that being cold and stern was the only way Ilya knew how to live.

The thought came to him one night, while he was watching Ilya as he slept so peacefully. The way the light from the moon shone down through the window, hit the silver cross that hung from Ilya's neck in such a way it made it shimmer. The only piece of his mother he had left, the only memory of her that Ilya let himself carry with him. Irina was the only person in his family to truly love him, and she was taken from him so early on in life.

He never took the chain off, the only time he had was to place the ring Shane had proposed to him with, carefully onto it next to the cross.

Ilya carried the people he loved the most closest to his heart. That's where the cross lay now, even in his sleep.

Shane thought of Irina's headstone in some cemetery in Moscow. No flowers placed over her grave. The ones that may have been there before were long gone now, swallowed by the earth. She lays there quietly in the cold ground, with no one to mourn her.

The life that he and Ilya had built together was beautiful, but Shane knew that Ilya risked everything for it. He wished he would have thought about doing this sooner. Ilya had cut all ties he had in Russia once they came out publicly, and Shane failed to realize that his mother was one of those ties too.

Nothing came for free, but some expenses were far more cruel than others.

—

Shane usually doesn't have the time to make the drive to his cottage during the fall, but he wanted this to be perfect. Ilya was traveling with his team for the next two weeks, which gave him enough time to come up here without any suspicion.

There was a spot in the backyard that overlooked the lake, where Ilya loved to sit, and he decided that would be the perfect place for this.

Shane had researched many flowers and plants that were native to Russia, and he had settled on two different ones, the fern leaf peony, and chamomile, which is Russia's national flower.

He had placed the peony root, and chamomile seeds carefully into a shoebox on the passenger seat next to him, as he drove in silence.

He thought that maybe he was doing too much, that he was overstepping. But he would have to wait until the summer to find out.

The ground was hard beneath his feet, leaves crunching under the weight of each step he took towards the small corner in the backyard. It was late September, the cold was slowly creeping back in, he never minded the cold, but he hated what it meant. The summer was for them, and them alone. All other seasons were for everything else.

He kneeled gently on the soft dirt below him, gently shoveling a small hole into the ground, placing the peony root carefully into it, placing the dirt back over it until it was halfway covered.

Then he stood back and began to carefully scatter the chamomile seeds around the area, leaning down to gently press the seeds into the fresh dirt. He was not much of a gardener, so he could really only pray that these actually ended up growing in the spring.

The other part of this was a small plaque he had ordered, which would be arriving later in the year. He had it engraved:

In loving memory of Irina Rozanova

May you see pieces of her soul scattered around you

He really hoped this would not be too much for Ilya. He wanted him to love it, Shane wanted to give him something he never thought he would get again.

—

It was late June the next time Shane was able to make it to his cottage again, this time sitting in the passenger seat was the small plaque he would be placing into the ground. He was scared to see what the flowers he had planted looked like, if they even grew at all.

When he arrived at the cottage, he immediately went through the house and out into the backyard, turning towards where he had been several months before. What he saw made his eyes start to water.

Beautiful flowers had bloomed up from the ground, and were scattered all around, leaving a perfect open spot in the front, like they were waiting to welcome her with open arms.

Shane walked over to the flowers, taking in all their beauty, only hoping that they measured up to Irina's own beauty. He gently created a shallow divot, and placed the plaque into the ground.

After doing so he took a step back, it was everything he had wanted it to be, and somehow even more.

He could feel all of his emotions pooling in his eyes, he wished he would have been able to meet her. To thank her for bringing the love of his life into this world. To apologize for all the evil that filled her world, the same evil that filled Ilya's world.

"I hope you are as proud of him as I am," he said, watching the flowers sway slightly in the summer breeze.

Ilya would be here in a few hours, which gave Shane enough time to collect himself, and get everything else in the house ready for their time here.

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Ilya arrived just before sunset, the sky painted soft shades of gold and lavender as his car pulled into the drive. Shane watched from the porch, heart beating a little too fast for something he'd planned so carefully. Ilya looked tired in that familiar way, travel-worn, shoulders tight, but the moment his eyes landed on Shane, something in him loosened. He smiled, soft and real, and crossed the distance between them in a few long strides.

"Hey," Ilya said, voice low, arms wrapping around Shane like he needed the reminder that he was home.

Shane pressed a kiss into his hair, breathed him in. "Hey. I've got something I want to show you."

Ilya pulled back just enough to study his face, suspicion flickering there. "You're smiling like you've committed a crime."

Shane huffed a quiet laugh. "Just... come with me."

They walked toward the back of the property together, fingers brushing, then lacing without either of them quite realizing when it happened. The lake glimmered through the trees, cicadas humming, the air warm and alive. Ilya was talking about something mundane, training, a teammate's terrible music taste, until he stopped mid-sentence.

He saw the flowers first.

The chamomile had spread generously, white petals and yellow centers dotting the ground like stars fallen into the grass. The peonies stood taller, full and lush, their blooms heavy and unapologetically beautiful. And at the center, nestled into the earth, was the plaque.

Ilya's hand tightened around Shane's.

He stepped closer on his own, slow, like he was afraid the whole thing might disappear if he moved too quickly. Shane watched his shoulders stiffen, then sag, breath catching sharply in his chest when he read the engraving. For a long moment, Ilya said nothing. He just stood there, staring, eyes shining in a way Shane recognized all too well.

"You—" Ilya tried, then stopped. He swallowed hard. "You did this?"

Shane nodded, suddenly unsure of where to put his hands, his heart in his throat. "I didn't want her to be alone anymore."

Ilya knelt without a word, fingers brushing over the plaque as if it might be warm beneath his touch. He laughed once, broken and breathless, shaking his head. "Romashka," he murmured, almost to himself. "She loved chamomile. She used to make tea every night, said it fixed everything. Even when it didn't."

Shane crouched beside him, close but not crowding, letting Ilya set the pace. Tears slipped down Ilya's cheeks freely now, but his expression wasn't only grief, it was something softer, fuller.

"I thought," Ilya said quietly, "that when I left the last time, that was it. That she was gone forever. I never thought I would see her again, Shane." He looked up at Shane then, eyes red, vulnerable in a way he rarely allowed himself to be. "You gave her back to me."

Shane shook his head, voice rough. "No. She was always yours. I just... wanted to make sure the world remembered her too."

Ilya surged forward then, arms locking around Shane's neck, holding on like he was anchoring himself to something solid. Shane hugged him back just as tightly, pressing his face into Ilya's shoulder, letting the moment be messy and raw and real.

"Thank you," Ilya whispered. "For seeing me. All of me. Even the parts I don't know what to do with."

Shane pulled back just enough to rest his forehead against Ilya's. "I'll always make room for them," he said. "Every part of you belongs here."

They stayed there until the sun dipped low and the air cooled, until the flowers were bathed in twilight and the lake reflected the first hints of night. When they finally stood, Ilya took one last look at the small patch of earth, at the quiet, living memorial Shane had built with his hands and his heart.

"She would have loved this," Ilya said, a small smile breaking through the tears. "She would have loved you."

Shane squeezed his hand, that was the only response he thought felt right. There were no actual words he could say in response. This was exactly what he wanted to give to Ilya. He

wanted to give him a space to love the one person who he thought he would never get to again.

As they walked back toward the cottage together, the seasons didn't feel quite so cruel. Summer lingered, held in place by love, by memory, by the certainty that nothing truly precious was ever lost, it just learned how to grow again.

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Ilya went back alone the next morning.

The lake was still and pale, mist curling low over the water like a held breath. The cottage was quiet behind him, Shane still asleep, unaware of the way Ilya slipped out of the room with careful steps, as if the morning itself might shatter if he moved too loudly.

The flowers looked different in the early light. Softer. More real somehow. Dew clung to the chamomile petals, the peonies heavy and bowed, and for a moment Ilya could almost convince himself that they were breathing.

He stood there for a long time before he knelt.

His knees pressed into the damp earth, darkening the fabric of his pants, but he didn't care. He reached up and pulled the chain from beneath his shirt, the silver cross and the ring sliding into his palm. They were cool against his skin. Familiar. Anchors.

"Hi, Mama," he said quietly in Russian.

The word caught in his throat, foreign and fragile from disuse. He hadn't said it out loud in years. Maybe not since the hospital. Maybe not since before everything went wrong.

"I found you," he continued, voice low, almost reverent. "Or... Shane did. I think he wanted you to know you're not forgotten. That I'm not alone."

He laughed softly, shaking his head. "You would like him. You'd pretend not to at first, of course. You always did that, said hockey players were trouble." His fingers traced the edge of the plaque, careful, as if touching her name too firmly might hurt. "But you'd see it. The way he looks at me like I'm something worth keeping."

The mist shifted, a faint breeze moving through the flowers, and Ilya closed his eyes.

"I'm happy," he said, the admission trembling but true. "I didn't think I was allowed to be. I thought if I ever was, it meant I'd erased you. Like loving my life now meant I'd stopped loving you."

His chest tightened, breath stuttering. "I'm sorry I left. I didn't know how to stay and survive. I didn't know how to be your son and still be me."

Tears fell freely now, spotting the dirt beneath him. He didn't wipe them away.

"I carry you," he whispered, lifting the chain, letting the cross catch the light. "Every day. Right here. I just—" His voice broke, and he pressed his fist to his chest. "I wish you could see me. See who I became."

He stayed like that, kneeling in the quiet, until the sun climbed higher and the mist thinned. When he finally stood, he bent and plucked a single chamomile bloom, careful not to disturb the others. He tucked it gently at the base of the plaque, a small offering.

"I'll come back," he promised. "I won't disappear again."

As he turned toward the cottage, he felt it then, not a voice, not a sign, but something warm and steady settling in his chest. Like permission. Like a hand at his back.

When he slipped back inside, Shane stirred but didn't wake. Ilya paused, watching him sleep, the same way Shane had once watched him. He climbed into bed quietly, curling into the familiar warmth, and for the first time in a very long while, grief didn't feel so lonely.

Outside, by the lake, the flowers swayed gently in the morning light, holding his words close.

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