you dream in a language that i can’t understand

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you dream in a language that i can’t understand

by bankrobber

Summary

Shane starts learning Russian in secret after their rookie season, and doesn’t tell anyone.

It means he can understand Ilya’s Russian when they speak on the phone while Ilya is in Moscow for his father’s funeral.

Notes

I’m still at the cottage!

This fic idea has been in my brain since I first watched episode 1x05 and I decided to finally write it. I have a few other multichap fic ideas and wanted to try my hand at writing hollanov before committing to those.

Disclaimer: I’ve only watched the show, and I don’t speak Russian myself.

Thanks to ShfiftyFive for looking over this & helping with a few tweaks before posting.

The title is a quote from the film Past Lives.

I hope you like it :)

See the end of the work for more notes

Hello, please, thank you, see you next time, goodnight, sweet dreams, you are beautiful, I want to kiss you.

Those were the basic Russian phrases that Shane memorised to start learning Ilya's language. He'd thought about studying it for a while, wondering if it would help him to communicate better with the boy who had gotten under his skin and taken over every thought that wasn't about hockey. After a press conference with the two of them where he'd had to answer a complicated question that Ilya couldn't understand, he made up his mind.

In the summer of 2011, following their rookie season, Shane finally had some down time. Giddy from a flirty text he received from "Lily", he popped into a bookstore to purchase a Russian dictionary, and a couple of other beginner language books. He skipped the suggested travel phrases, and went right to memorising the words he'd like to say to Ilya.

It wasn't easy. Russian was difficult; he could barely understand the alphabet, and its grammatical structure wasn't like English or French or Japanese. One of the books stressed the importance of understanding the grammar, so Shane attempted to, but it was slow going. Hockey consumed his life, and he didn't want to risk travelling with the books, but whenever he was home in Montreal and had a rare moment of free time, he'd study Russian.

Sometimes he questioned why he was doing it. He'd seen photos of Ilya with a woman at a night club on the same night as he'd received a flirty "Lily" text, and it made him all the more conflicted. He knew he was probably being naive, that it was too soon for any kind of gestures like this when all they were doing was texting after two casual hook ups, but he couldn't help it. Ilya was as addictive as being on the ice.

Lily
I saw your perfume commercial. Does perfume smell like losing?

His books didn't have the translation for "fuck you" in Russian, but the internet gave him the best equivalent, "иди нахуй", which apparently meant to fuck a dick, and he laughed at the irony. His phone didn't have the capability to text in Russian, so he couldn't send it, but he practiced saying it out loud while he responded to Ilya in English.

Over the years he slowly started to learn more words and phrases. He learned how to say "you're handsome" and "I like your smile" and (imagining that he was visiting Ilya in Russia) "a table for two please" and "I'll have a ginger ale". His accent was probably rubbish, but he sometimes watched interviews where Ilya spoke Russian and tried to copy him. He could imagine the way Ilya would tease him for his bad accent, probably mock him for butchering Russian words until Shane cut him off with a kiss.

When Ilya finally fucked him, he wondered how to say "fuck me deeper" in Russian (he would look it up later on his laptop). He wondered how to say a lot of things. It made his stomach twist into knots that he couldn't yet say any of it aloud to Ilya, but he hoped that one

day he'd get the opportunity, and for now, they continued to communicate in English and through sex.

Through his rudimentary studying, he gained a greater appreciation for Ilya's struggles with English. Though Ilya didn't admit it, Shane knew it must be hard not being fluent, but the two of them made up for any language barriers with their hands and mouths. Ilya certainly knew enough English to get Shane worked up. He still blushed whenever he read back over their old texts to each other, something he often did when he felt lonely. (When he missed Ilya.)

Lily
Want to come when you're in Boston?

Jane
Did you use Google Translate?

Lily
No.

Jane
What you wrote makes no sense.

Lily
Oh yes it does. Read it again.

It was a dream to one day flirt with Ilya in Russian instead of English, to be the one surprising him with his improved grammar. He often considered cheekily replying to one of Ilya's teases with "мудак" (asshole). He often thought about it, just dropping random Russian words into conversation and seeing how Ilya would react, but he was never brave enough to try.

Every time he considered mentioning that he was learning Russian, it felt too intense. *He* felt too intense. Even after years of flirting, texting, and fucking, he didn't quite know what he and Ilya were. He'd never been good at navigating relationship dynamics; he was very all or nothing, and certainly wasn't the type of person to juggle multiple people at a time. Unlike Ilya, random hookups with women didn't appeal to Shane, and he didn't even know where to start to find another man to fuck. He'd accepted that he and Ilya weren't exclusive, and he didn't want to jeopardise what they had by being too much. Learning Ilya's language felt akin to admitting that he actually would quite like to be exclusive fuck buddies with Ilya, so he kept it to himself.

He was glad he did, because when Ilya ghosted him following the 2014 Sochi Olympics, he felt like he'd completely misread their dynamic. Clearly he didn't mean as much to Ilya as Ilya meant to him, and he wanted to kick himself for not seeing things more clearly.

Back home in Montreal, he threw out his Russian books and cried remembering the fact that he'd successfully bought a coffee in Russia *in Russian*, but had no one to celebrate that little victory with. He thought he probably wouldn't speak Russian ever again.

Для тебя, мама!

Shane watched Boston win the Cup, saw Ilya lift the trophy above his head and shout those words (“For you, mum”) to his mother, and felt a lump develop in his throat. There was so much that Ilya had never told him, so much that Shane had wished he would.

Ilya never spoke about his mother, never mentioned her any time he spoke about going home to Russia, never indicated that she was so important to him that he would dedicate his victory to her.

He missed Ilya terribly, and despite being hurt by Ilya’s ghosting, he suddenly had questions and wished he could talk to Ilya to learn the answers.

When he and Ilya reconciled after the 2014 Major League Hockey awards, Shane tried to start a conversation about Russia—about Ilya’s family—but Ilya retreated immediately and put all of his walls up. Shane was slowly learning to read him, and hated that his family was such a source of agony for him. He didn’t push it, but he thought then that maybe Russian might be the way to get Ilya to open up. If he showed Ilya that he wanted to get to know him through his own language, maybe Ilya would let him in.

A few days later he installed some language learning apps on his phone and downloaded a Russian podcast.

You’re beautiful. My God. Just like that, baby. Good boy. You’re killing me. Perfect. Fuck.

Russian often fell out of Ilya’s mouth in the heat of the moment, and one late night on Shane’s couch, after Ilya had called him “my pretty boy” in Russian, Shane almost confessed to understanding him, but he didn’t want to ruin things. Ilya never said anything so gentle in English, and it sounded beautiful coming out of his mouth in Russian, so Shane clung to the words.

For nearly two years now they’d been eagerly texting and meeting up to fuck whenever possible, laughing on the ice and laughing in bed. Ilya was still closed off, and they still didn’t really talk about themselves on a personal level, but Shane had to believe that he had become important to Ilya the way Ilya was important to him. The way Ilya spoke to him in Russian proved it. Things felt good between them. Easy. Shane was happy.

One downside to keeping his Russian a secret was that it meant he could actually understand bits of what the Metros’ Russian goalie, Miitka, was saying. He had considered casually mentioning that he was studying Russian (thought that maybe Miitka might be able to give him some tips) until during one game against the Admirals, Miitka used a homophobic Russian slur.

Shane felt his skin turn clammy, and it reminded him that he was getting too bold. He wasn’t safe even with his teammates. His current happiness with Ilya could only happen in private—

he needed to keep his secrets a secret.

In 2016, when Shane captained Montreal to win the Cup for a second year in a row, he felt unstoppable. As they usually did, he and Ilya met up around the MLH awards, a teasing smile on Ilya's face when he gave Shane a congratulatory blow job. In fact, their smiles never left either of their faces. Ilya kept jokingly calling him "Mr Dynasty" as they fucked, and Shane couldn't get enough.

His guard was down. He was riding Ilya and the high of winning when a Russian word slipped from his tongue, "*блядь*."

Ilya noticed immediately and fixed him with a curious look. "Did you just speak Russian?"

"Uhhh…" Shane flushed hot, realising he'd let the word for "fuck" escape his mouth. "Yeah, I guess I learned it from you."

A smirk formed on Ilya's face. "Is sexy. Say it again."

"*блядь*."

As they were lying in bed afterwards, Shane still sprawled across Ilya's chest, catching his breath, he noticed two things. The first was that Ilya wasn't smoking (he wasn't sure when he'd stopped, but it must've been a while ago now) and the second was that Ilya was staring at him with an expression he'd never seen before. It was a thoughtful look, and if Shane didn't know any better, he would've described it as a romantic gaze.

"What?" he asked nervously.

"I liked it when you spoke Russian," Ilya said quietly.

"Oh," Shane said, trying to seem calm about it. "I could…" He didn't want to scare Ilya, so he told a white lie. "I've been thinking maybe I could learn some."

Ilya laughed. "Yeah, you could probably learn in a week. No accent. Perfect."

Shane laughed too; if only Ilya knew how wrong that was. "Maybe."

"But no, you don't need to." Ilya shook his head, and Shane could feel Ilya pulling away from him emotionally, even though physically Ilya's arm was still around his waist.

"Oh." Shane's face fell. He didn't know what else to say. From the beginning, he knew that Ilya might react weirdly to him learning Russian, but he'd hoped that after all these years, Ilya would like it.

"My English is perfect," Ilya replied haughtily, though they both knew it wasn't true.

Shane nodded, finding it difficult to form words. "Yeah."

They were quiet, and Shane looked away from Ilya, scared that if he kept looking, Ilya would see right through him and learn all of his secrets buried down deep.

“You would really learn Russian for me, Hollander?” Ilya asked.

Shane shrugged and tried not to let his emotions show. He attempted a casual response, “Yeah, if you want.”

Ilya hummed thoughtfully and then suddenly flipped them over in bed. “Maybe. Is sexy when you speak Russian.”

“*You’re* sexy when you speak Russian,” Shane said boldly.

“*Чё, правда?*” Ilya said, which Shane knew meant something like “seriously?” but he was also able to guess from the disbelieving expression on Ilya’s face.

He nodded slowly, still not confident in making openly flirty comments.

“Not like you.” Ilya growled, “I want to hear you say ‘*иди нахуй*’.”

Shane knew that one already; it meant “fuck you”. He repeated it back to Ilya, and loved the smile that lit up Ilya’s face.

Shane was of the opinion that if he set his mind to something, he’d be able to achieve it, but learning Russian was proving quite the challenge to that opinion. After more than five years of studying, certain phrases and words were sticking, but some things wouldn’t click at all. He was better at recognising words aurally, and struggled most of all with writing in Cyrillic script. He constantly mixed up “нет” meaning “no” and “не” meaning “not”; forgot that he couldn’t use “иметь” (to have) for personal belongings; stressed the wrong syllable in certain words; and forgot about case changes. He had created a secret Reddit account to post in the Russian language forums, and was constantly being corrected on what he thought he’d finally mastered.

Everyone said being bilingual made learning a third language easier, but it didn’t feel like his English and French had helped him here at all. Part of the issue was that he was trying to learn using books and apps and videos, because he was scared that if he hired a tutor, people would find out. If the news spread that he was learning Russian then everyone would put it together that it was because of Ilya, who still didn’t even know he was actually studying his language in the first place and would definitely freak out if he knew. Shane didn’t want to take that risk.

He squinted at his phone, attempting to do his daily fifteen minutes of Duolingo without waking Hayden who was trying to sleep in the other single bed in their hotel room. Shane was doing a quiz based on all the random words and sentences he’d apparently learned so far —he questioned how much he was really learning—and was on a difficult question, where it required him to type the English translation himself without any hints. He stared at the sentence.

зачем в школе лошадь.

He recognised that the first word meant “why” or “what for”, and was quite sure the last word meant horse, but he wasn’t able to translate the rest. After a few minutes of staring at the sentence, he gave up and pressed the button to show the translation.

What is the horse in school for? the app revealed, and he frowned.

“Why would a horse be in a school?” he mumbled under his breath.

He groaned as he lost one of his three hearts in that exercise, and moved onto the next question. He was already down to one heart, meaning if he got another question wrong, he would fail to pass the quiz. Luckily this was simpler, and he filled in the blank for “university” in the sentence “I am studying veterinary medicine at university”. He similarly passed the next few sentences (“He was happy to visit Moscow zoo” and “the birds are eating breakfast”) and then got to another challenging one.

Думаю, у неё хорошая кровь.

Once again confident in part of the sentence, he typed out “I think she has” and then mulled over the last few words. He knew “кре́сло” meant “armchair”, and “кры́ша” meant ‘roof’, but he was grasping at straws just because they started with the same letters. Since he seemed to be on an animal themed round, he guessed that it said “I think she has a nice bunny” and was shocked when it was wrong.

“‘I think she has good blood’. What the fuck.” He groaned. There was no way he was ever going to become fluent in this language. He wished he could just ask Ilya directly.

“What is it?” Hayden asked sleepily.

“Oh, uh, just doing a sudoku,” Shane lied.

It occurred to him that he should download a sudoku app so he’d be able to show proof if Hayden was the kind of person to do sudokus, and not the kind of person to just laugh and say, “Dude, get some sleep.”

“I will,” he replied. He glanced again at his phone and then quit Duolingo.

He opened his texts from Lily instead. They’d be seeing each other in a week when Shane would be in Boston, and he couldn’t wait.

At Ilya’s home, Shane felt more confused about their status than ever. Ilya asked him to stay the night, and was being all romantic, kissing him and cuddling him and making him a tuna melt, all the while talking about the women he liked to fuck and asking Shane why he wasn’t fucking women too. The difference between Ilya’s actions and words made it hard to know which to believe was the truth. It didn’t help when Ilya’s father called and immediately hardened Ilya’s demeanour.

From the other room, Shane could make out the words Ilya was saying, and a sense of shame washed over him; guilt for being able to understand what Ilya was saying when Ilya didn't know he could. Ilya had clearly gone into another room to get some privacy, but then his voice carried. He was angrier than Shane had ever heard him, and sounded hurt, too. Shane turned on the tv, but he could still hear Ilya yelling at his family.

His father didn't seem to know who Ilya's brother was, nor his own wife, and it didn't sound like he was speaking nicely to Ilya. On what must've been another phone call, Ilya called his brother an asshole. Shane would never speak to his own parents like that. It made him sad to think about that being the reality of Ilya's home life in Russia, and when Ilya returned to the lounge room, Shane just wanted to show him some comfort that he clearly didn't get from his family.

"How's your father?" Shane asked quietly.

"Ah, you speak Russian now?" Ilya said, a mix of shock and what seemed like anger on his face.

Shane swallowed. Ilya clearly didn't want him to know what he'd said on the phone. He still didn't know what was okay and what wasn't when it came to Ilya. He didn't dare admit to understanding Russian now; he didn't want to further provoke Ilya. "I know a little… I know the word for father."

Ilya's expression slowly changed into a smile, and as he drew Shane in to cuddle on his chest, Shane relaxed.

It always took Shane a while to process his emotions; they often caught up to him months after the fact. In this instance, he had to thank Rose for helping him see it all clearly. He'd run away from Ilya after Ilya showed him the very thing he'd been hoping for—vulnerability, truth, the possibility of *more*. (Called him Shane.) He did it because he was terrified of what it would mean to actually be gay—to actually be a couple—and navigate the homophobic world they lived in. Now, however, in Florida, with his arms around Ilya as Ilya cried, he felt less scared of that future.

He *wanted* a future with Ilya, and he knew, even if Ilya wouldn't verbalise it, that Ilya wanted it too. It wouldn't be easy; he understood now that Ilya wouldn't be allowed back into his country, and Shane didn't know enough about international laws, but he decided he'd start researching that too.

They never had more than a few hours together during the hockey season, but he was starting to form a plan for the upcoming summer. If he invited Ilya to his cottage, they could properly be together, and maybe they'd both get to experience a few weeks of what they'd had during that sleepover at Ilya's. Maybe they'd be able to make plans for their future. Maybe he'd finally tell Ilya that he knew Russian.

Occasionally he asked Ilya to speak Russian to him when they were in bed together, and he would find himself whispering the words back to Ilya. It was only ever sexual things like

‘fuck me’ and ‘just like that’. Ilya would smile brightly when Shane said them back to him, and the twinkle in his eye almost made Shane confess that he knew way more than that.

“I don't know. I don't know. English is too hard right now,” Ilya said, and Shane desperately wished he could be in Russia with him, helping him make sense of his troubling feelings about his dead father and his awful brother, and whatever else it was that was making him upset right now.

“I’m sorry,” Shane said, his secret on the tip of his tongue. “If only we could speak in Russian.”

“You know ‘ride me faster’ and ‘suck my cock’, what else is there to know?” Ilya joked, and Shane blushed, thinking of the times he had deliberately asked Ilya to speak Russian in bed, and how Ilya had obliged.

“Ha,” he said. He recognised the joke was a defensive mechanism, but Shane saw right through his armor now. He wanted to tell him that he might actually understand his Russian, but he bit his tongue. “Where are you?”

“I'm just walking. I needed to get out.”

Ilya had never sounded this sad before. Shane wanted to hug him again, to hold him the way he had in Florida. He wanted to wrap Ilya up in his arms and never let go. He would never run from him again.

“Hey, uh, I have an idea,” he said. “How about you tell me everything that's on your mind, but in Russian? Maybe it'll help. I can just… listen.”

“OK.”

He didn’t expect Ilya to go for it, but he did, and Shane soon learned that there was lots that Ilya wanted to tell him.

“*Я никогда больше сюда не вернусь…*” Ilya began. Shane didn’t understand everything that Ilya was saying, but he understood enough.

Ilya hated Russia and never wanted to return.

Ilya’s family demanded more, more, more. They treated him like a bank.

Ilya hated his brother, and his brother hated him.

Ilya felt empty. (This confession made Shane’s eyes well up with tears. He wished he could do more for Ilya. He listened intensely to him, hating that an ocean divided them right now.)

Ilya felt guilty for something to do with his father. (Shane was sure the guilt was unwarranted; Ilya had clearly been doing everything he could.)

Ilya had no one except Svetlana, and Svetlana loved him. (Hearing this felt like a kick to the teeth, but Shane kept listening, he had to, and he was glad he did, because…)

Ilya loved Shane. It was *always* Shane.

Shane's heart felt like it was going to explode out of his chest.

"OK, I'm done," Ilya said like he hadn't just dropped a bombshell on Shane at the end.

Shane needed a moment to remember to breathe.

"Shane? Are you there?"

"I… Yeah," Shane said, his ears racing with hot blood as he decided what to do. "Do you feel better?"

"Yes. Thank you."

Shane smiled softly. He felt like his own love for Ilya had just multiplied by a thousand upon hearing Ilya's sincere feelings for the first time. It made Shane decide to reveal his truth as well.

"Ilya?"

"Yes?"

"*Я тоже тебя люблю*." He'd said it. He'd said he loved Ilya in Russian. He felt like he was going to throw up. He listened as Ilya gasped, and then there was silence. He really felt like he might throw up. "Ilya?"

"What the fuck, Shane," Ilya said finally. "*You speak Russian?*"

"*A little*," Shane replied nervously in his best Russian, trying not to stumble over the words. "*Well, a lot, actually, but…* I didn't quite understand everything you said."

Ilya made a thoughtful noise, and then asked, "*When did you start learning?*"

"*Since… A while ago.*" It was hard to think of the words in Russian. This was his first time trying to have a conversation where he hadn't pre-prepared what he needed to say. He went back to English again. "I know you said not to learn, but—"

"I didn't think you were being serious," Ilya said, thankfully following his switch to English.

"You know I'm always serious."

"Mr Boring," Ilya said, but his tone was lighthearted.

"*That's me*," Shane replied, and loved the surprised laugh that Ilya made.

"*I love* 'Mr Boring'," Ilya said, whispering the last words, and it reminded Shane that he was in Russia, where it was dangerous to even speak like this.

Shane truly felt the seriousness of the risk Ilya was taking by being with him, and he realised he had tears running down his cheeks. It was a heavy weight to carry around. He wiped his face and looked around to check that he was still alone; sitting in a random stairwell was not where he expected to find out that the man he'd been in love with for years loved him in return.

There was silence on the phone, but for once Shane felt comfortable in it. What he would give to see Ilya's face right now. What he would give to kiss him. To hold him. To make all of his problems disappear.

"*I wish you were here*," he whispered in Russian.

Ilya's breath hitched. "*I wish I was too.*"

Shane smiled and was quiet as he processed the last few minutes.

"You amaze me, Shane," Ilya said finally.

"*Thank you*."

Ilya laughed, and it sounded like a happy one. "I can't believe it. How have you learned?"

"I used books, some Youtube videos, apps, Duolingo—"

"You are letting dumb owl teach you Russian?"

Shane laughed at his bluntness. "Yes."

"No, I cannot have it. I will teach you."

"*Пожалуйста,*" Shane said in an exhale. *Please.* It was what he wanted more than anything.

"I must. Your accent is terrible."

"*иди нахуй*." Shane said with a laugh, enjoying being able to say "fuck you" in Russian. He wanted to kiss Ilya so badly.

"*With pleasure.*"

"When you're in Montreal next week, you'll have to give me a lesson," he said, hoping it sounded flirty.

But Ilya didn't take the bait, his voice turning low and nervous. "Fuck, I—Shit. Shane, what are we going to do? We can't—"

"Ilya. Don't panic. We can figure this out. We'll find a way," he stammered, and then switched to Russian, though he struggled with both the future tense and the imperative mood, "*It will be okay. I keep you safe.*"

"*You will?*"

"*I promise. Just… Just… You will get out to… You will leave Russia. You… Come back to me.*"

Ilya sniffled. "OK. I will."

"*я тебя люблю*," Shane said again, hearing the *I love you* echo around the stairwell.

Ilya replied in English this time, "I love you too."

They spoke every day on the phone until they reunited in Montreal for the playoffs. Ilya ended up taking an earlier flight so he could have two whole days with Shane, even skipping some Boston practices in favor of staying in Shane's apartment. ("Are you sure? It's playoffs." "*Da.* I will still beat you.") Giving Ilya the code to his front door made Shane giddier than he'd been in years. He couldn't keep the tiny smile off his face as he waited for Ilya to arrive from the airport.

They reunited with the longest hug of Shane's life, and didn't even have sex until after eating big servings of miso ramen and kinpira gobo which Shane made for them both, using his grandmother's recipes. On one of their phone calls, Ilya had mentioned wanting to learn more about Shane's culture, since Shane was making the effort to learn Russian, and Shane figured food was the best way. His own Japanese was very poor, and he was raised with Western beliefs, but food he could do.

"Oh god, Shane, I'm still full. You must go on top," Ilya said as he flopped on Shane's bed dramatically.

Shane laughed, climbing on top of Ilya, and teasing him in Russian, "*I told you not to have a second serving.*"

"*It was so yummy*," Ilya whined, his hands finding Shane's hips. "My boyfriend is good cook."

Shane felt his lips stretch uncontrollably wide. He was falling even more in love with his *boyfriend* with every minute; he didn't know it was possible to feel this way. They didn't yet have a plan for how they were going to navigate secretly dating—they'd both admitted they wanted to see more of each other throughout the year—but with the unguarded way Ilya was behaving around him, he felt completely secure.

They showered together afterwards, and returned to Shane's bed with wet hair. They laid facing each other, and Shane pulled the covers up around them. Ilya, as it turned out, was a very tactile person, and he reached to find Shane's hand so he could hold it. Ilya pressed a soft kiss to his lips, and lazily stroked his chest with his free hand, right over his heart. It started beating a little faster.

"*I love you*," Ilya said in Russian.

"*I love you too*," Shane replied.

It was the first time they'd said it face to face. Huge grins took over each of their faces, and Shane couldn't resist leaning in to give him a long, firm kiss.

"I knew you could learn Russian in a week," Ilya said against his lips.

Shane laughed. "It was more than a week."

"A few months, then. Fuck you," Ilya joked, pulling back to rest his head on his pillow. "It's taken me fifteen years to get this good at English."

"What if I told you it wasn't," Shane started, wanting there to be no more lies between them. "I've been learning for almost six years now."

"*What?*"

He nodded. "Yeah. I, uh, after our rookie season… Thought it might help."

Awe replaced surprise as Ilya stared at Shane. He was actually stunned into silence. He squeezed Shane's hand, his eyes a little glassy. Eventually, he whispered, "Thank you."

Shane just smiled contently, satisfied that his years of hard work had been worth it.

"You *love* me," Ilya teased with a huge grin on his face.

"Fuck you," Shane said reflexively, but he was still smiling.

"Why did you not tell me?" Ilya asked, running a finger over Shane's sternum.

"You know why."

"Do I?" he said lightly, but his eyes revealed the truth.

"*Ilya*."

Ilya chuckled, and then gave him a serious look. "I'm sorry you couldn't tell me… I didn't make it easy."

Shane swallowed roughly, not wanting to bring down the mood by rehashing their past. "It's ok. I'm glad you know now."

"Yes. I am glad too. Like I said last year, it's sexy when you speak Russian."

Shane blushed and happily accepted another kiss from Ilya.

"Thank god you know now. I have so many questions. Why does 'Блин' mean pancakes but it's also a swear word?"

Ilya laughed and pressed a kiss to Shane's forehead. "I don't know."

"Why is a bat a 'flying mouse'?"

“It looks like mouse, no?”

“Maybe… but mice and bats aren’t related. Bats are more related to cats than rodents.”

“You are such a nerd,” Ilya said, kissing his cheek. “Bats, cats, rats. Who cares.”

Shane loved his teasing and turned his head to capture Ilya’s lips in another soft kiss. “Oh. What about why is the word—”

“Shane, you are asking me too many questions. I’m sleepy. Russian lesson can wait until morning.”

“Morning? Okay,” Shane replied, realising he too was quite sleepy. He turned and glanced at his alarm clock. It was later than he thought. Time had a way of disappearing when he was with Ilya.

“I want pancakes for breakfast.”

He laughed at Ilya’s audacity. “You can make them.”

“We’ll make together. Goodnight, Shane,” Ilya said softly, closing his eyes, and Shane thought it was cute the way his Russian accent got thicker with his sleepiness. He was discovering a lot this week, and he couldn’t wait to discover more.

He turned off the bedside lamp and laid back next to Ilya, murmuring a phrase he’d wanted to say for far too long, “*Сладких снов*.”

Sweet dreams.

End Notes

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