

Somebody Who Could Swallow Love

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Somebody Who Could Swallow Love

by [Signsofsam](#)

Summary

Ilya's Instagram feed has always been a love letter to Shane, since they became them, moments in time that will always lead to a memory for him. It's the best Ilya can do, considering their circumstances, but it's the one way he can tell the world (in secret, stolen moments, random things that only mean something to exactly two people) that he's head-over-heels in love with Shane Hollander.

The FanMail video comes out in March, and it's like Ilya realizes he can be in love out loud, even during the soft moments.

The world is not ready.

AKA: Five times Ilya posts the small moments, and one time he loves out loud.

Notes

Hollanov has been the singular thought in my brain for months, I swear to God.

Title is from Silver Spoons by Erin LeCount.

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

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one.

They wait until after the playoffs for Shane to move in. It's easiest that way, even though Shane's basically been living at the house in Ottawa since the end of Montreal's run, too hurt by his own team to stay in the city. He needed the escape, and Ilya was ecstatic to offer it to him. But still, a good chunk of Shane's stuff lived in the Montreal house until one weekend in May.

Until suddenly it doesn't, and now Ilya and Shane are finding a place for their books to share, their suits, their clothes, their kitchen supplies ("Do we really need that many tupperware containers, Ilya?" "Is stupid question, *Shane*. Need for turn melt, *obviously*."). And Ilya?

Despite everything, the sudden clutter they are dealing with, the squabbles about furniture, Ilya is reveling in the domesticity he's never quite had before. He loves the fights over kitchen appliances. He loves bickering over which of their very comfortable, very nap-worthy couches are staying. He loves that they are having spats over something that means that they are a **they** in every sense of the word.

He takes a photo of the open boxes in the trophy room, Shane's Rookie of the Year trophy on clear display. He posts it with the words **making space for the second best hockey player** and grins when the likes start pouring in.

two.

Ilya might not have celebrated Christmas as a child, but as an adult, he *loves* it, and he knows that's because of the Hollanders. His first Christmas with them, he was so lost, so uncertain and uncomfortable with their celebration, and Yuna and David (and Shane, of course) had so effortlessly folded him into their traditions. It had left such an impression that the next year, he decided his house needed to be decorated, too, and he looked forward to Christmas with his family for *weeks* beforehand.

This Christmas, the first after their outing, felt different. For one, he *and* Shane had decorated the house, and the domesticity of it squeezed Ilya's heart as they were hanging lights. For another, there was no hiding. He and Shane had spent Christmas Eve at CHEO, handing out gifts, taking photos, signing posters, and doing it all in specially-made Centaurs holiday-themed sweaters, but they had spent it together, as husbands, rings and love on full display

that ended up on both the Centaurs and CHEO's official Instagram account. They'd been photographed at various Christmas markets leading up to the holidays, with Yuna and David in Ottawa and with Hayden, Jackie and their kids in Montreal, holding hands, hugging, and even more than one cheek kiss plastered on random Instagram and Twitter accounts. There were random posts from both of them about hot chocolate with the rest of the team, pressed against one another in the booth.

On Christmas Day, after gifts had been open and they were waiting for lunch, Ilya makes his Christmas post. Most years, it's something bland and generic, but this year, it's a post of Shane in his Christmas pajamas, Anya in his lap with a bow on her head and a disaster of wrapping paper around them. He's drinking hot chocolate from a Grinch-themed mug and grinning at David and Yuna, who end up on the edge of the frame.

He titles it **having myself a merry little christmas.**

three.

Ilya loves their quiet weeks at the cottage.

He loves how it is truly reset time for them both, a time to decompress from the season. He loves that others might see it as boring, but he sees it as stability, as the place he can just relax and *be*. He can watch Shane grill, watch the stupid Canadian wolf birds and their friends on the lake, nap in the hammock, swim in the lake, take Anya for trail walks and generally just forget the world and all obligations.

And he and Shane cook.

It's amazing how such a menial task can be infused with such love and affection, but every time he and Shane brush against each other as they work on their meal, the heat sparks and Ilya knows—he *knows*—that they are going to wreck each other later. They spend a whole night teasing each other like that just for the storm that follows.

Today, though, Ilya has spent most of the afternoon and David and Yuna's helping his father-in-law build some shelving units from Ikea (Shane had laughed at Ilya when he told him what he was going to do, wished him good luck with a soft kiss, and Shane had been right; David and furniture building did *not* mix), and when he came home, he immediately headed off for a shower, wondering if he could convince his husband to go to dinner in town that night.

Except, when he comes out of the bedroom, Shane's waiting nervously by a set table, and there's a plate of chicken parmesan for both of them.

Ilya's heart stutters.

"You didn't have to cook," he manages to get out, and Shane rolls his eyes lovingly, reaching out a hand for Ilya.

"You spent the entire afternoon helping my handyman-challenged father build stuff; I think the least I could do was cook you something for dinner," Shane answers, pulling Ilya's chair out for him. "Also, I love cooking with you. Turns out I also love cooking for you."

And god damn, there's that fucking heart stutter again.

He makes a post sometime in the early morning hours the next day while his husband sleeps beside him, a photo of Shane sitting at their table, the wall of windows showing off sunset and the lake and the dock. There's a half-eaten plate of chicken parmesan in front of him, and Shane's giving him a look of fond exasperation. He captions it **choosing you always**.

four.

Shane drags Ilya to museum after museum when they have a trip to play Washington and also have a free day, and Ilya can't help but love every moment of it. Shane loves the Smithsonian, especially the dinosaurs, but eventually all the people get to be too much, so they take refuge next door at the National Gallery of Art, and they get lost in the artwork, gallery after gallery of so many beautiful paintings. Shane likes to study his favorite pieces, and in turn, Ilya loves to study Shane, smiling softly at how his eyes move across the canvas, of how the edges of his eyes crinkle as he studies what he likes most. And the entire time, he keeps up and running commentary to Ilya.

Once, he turns to his husband and grins softly. "Sorry if I'm boring you," he whispers, because they've been in the National Gallery for at least two hours, and Shane's probably assuming that Ilya is bored, even if he's anything but.

"Never," he answers, leaning in to press a kiss to Shane's lips. Nothing untoward because neither one of them are looking at getting kicked out for getting hot and heavy by the Monet, but a promise that Ilya is, in fact, having the time of his life.

That night, he posts a photo of Shane looking at a Claude-Joseph Vernet painting called The Shipwreck, eyes scrunched, dusting of freckles on display.

being boring with you <3

five.

When they win the Stanley Cup in Shane's first year with the team, Ilya is ecstatic. He feels like this could be the start of *something* (a dynasty, his brain supplies, but it's way too soon to say those thoughts out loud), and he's so incredibly proud of the team that got there. He's so happy for Bood, who's spent years in Ottawa purgatory, but stuck with his team, because he loved them too much to not. For Wyatt, who Toronto said wasn't good enough to start but who anchored their team night after night. For Luca, who, Ilya is certain, will be the face of the Centaurs' future. For Dykstra and Nick Chouinard and even fucking Tanner Dillon. He's so happy for all of them.

But he's happiest for Shane, who'd come to a new team after his old one abandoned him and flourished. He knows Shane worried that somehow all his critics and doubters would be proven right ("how would they be proven right, *moya lyubov*?" he'd asked when Shane had first voiced his worries. "You are Shane fucking Hollander. You are the second best hockey player of our generation. Do I need to take you to the trophy room and remind you what it feels like fucking a king?")

David takes the photo, sometime during the team celebrating with their family. It's of Shane looking up at the crowds in awe, in happiness, in relief, and Ilya is behind him, out of focus but with his hand tangled in Shane's. He's clearly only got eyes for Shane in the photo. You might even be able to interpret the utter awe and pride on his face as he watches his husband (if you squint. Ilya only knows about the feelings because he's the one who felt them.)

He posts it in black and white, and writes **you did it, moya lyubov.**

plus one.

Ilya is starting to like Pride Night. He still thinks it's kind of performative, but if there's a team that is least performative, it's definitely the Centaurs. Firstly, the owners make it well known that they are allies and will continue to support not only their out players, but all out players, and all the players that still aren't comfortable coming out, even if it means making a fight against other owners, other teams, the NHL and the commissioner himself. The Centaurs players that aren't queer have always supported their teammates and not a one has *ever* refused to wear the Pride Night jerseys or refused to participate during Pride itself. And then there is their Centaurs community, which cheered their hearts out for Troy when he came out, who never made Ilya feel hated when the video came out, who had a standing ovation the first time Shane was introduced. It's the community that goes out of their way to break records for any donation drive the Centaurs have, the community that has always supported their community outreach and the Irina Foundation, and especially after the FanMail video, the community that shows up and out time and time again.

So yes, Pride Night might be performative for most of the NHL, but for Ottawa, for the Centaurs, for Ilya, it's starting to mean something.

He posts the photo before the game, taken by Harris. Shane's smiling wide for the camera, Ilya's smacking a kiss to his cheek, and their hands are raised so their rings are the focus of the frame. They're both in their Centaurs Pride Night jerseys. He knows the Centaurs will also be posting it, along with a plethora of team photos interspersed with resources and stats on the LGBTQIA+ community, so he has to make sure his caption is on point.

pride night means we both score, right? 😊

Shane's reply comes quickly, and Ilya pins it. **And win. Don't forget about winning, dear.**

(They do win. Both Shane and Ilya score, both on and off the ice.)

End Notes

Again, is it corny? Resoundingly yes.

Do I have a single regret about that? No, no I do not. Clearly, I love soft, schmoopy love and I will write it all day long.

Also, the picture I mention in the fourth bit is one of my favorites from when I visited the National Gallery of Art. And the feeling of how you step out of the Smithsonian and into the Gallery and the quiet and peace? It's real because it's how I felt, and I think Shane would be much the same. If you ever get a chance, go to the Smithsonian, see the dinosaur fossils, but definitely spend time at the National Gallery. And honestly all the museums on the National Mall.

Thank you for coming to my TedTalk about how good all the museums in DC are.

And again, while I haven't commented back to anyone, I've read every comment. I'm so glad you all love soft and schmoopy as much as I do. Thanks in advance for all the comments/kudos, and if you want, come follow me [here](#) on tumblr.

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