

that freedom, living off the grid

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that freedom, living off the grid

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Summary

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Notes

title from Taylor Swift's *Wi\$h Li\$t*

“Can’t believe you ordered all these seeds just for birds.” Ilya gestures to the bags around them on the floor, Anya’s nose is buried in the one at his feet. “Pretty sure that they sell these premixed.”

“Most of the mixes have a lot of filler that aren’t good for the birds.” Setting the container of seeds he’s just combined in the middle of the table, Shane shoos Anya out of the way and starts piling the different bags away in the closet.

Once he’s finished, he grabs their coats, knowing the minute they’re done with this project Ilya is going to want to hang the feeders outside, even though the snow has finally picked up. It’s at least seven inches deep at this point, coating their sidewalks and making travel impossible for everyone in the region.

It’s actually kind of wonderful to not to be able to go anywhere.

To not *have* to.

Still, Ilya can get a little stir crazy at times so as soon as Shane had seen the forecast he’d found what they needed to finally tackle this project.

Because it was a project, he was under no illusion that it wasn’t. If they were going to put some feeders out for the birds in winter he wanted to know which worked best for the ones that stayed in their area through the dark and cold.

They’d finished one of the options yesterday—twine strung with blueberries and cranberries—and taken them out while it was still just icing out.

They’d kept an eye on it while they were playing cards after dinner, but that had quickly turned into strip gin rummy—which they made the rules up for and thoroughly enjoyed—so if the feeder *had* attracted any attention they’d missed it.

Completely.

“Ok, so peanut butter is on pine cone, now what?” Ilya brandishes the spatula he’s been using to spread the peanut butter, pine cone twisting in his other hand.

“Just carefully roll it in the seeds I mixed and then put it on the paper.”

Ilya nods, teeth pressing into his lower lip as he does. “And this… this will not attract loons, right?”

He knows it won’t.

Shane reminded him that loons are migratory birds when he first brought up the idea of putting together some feeders, but… some things you can’t be too sure about.

Sure, he has a fucking tattoo of one and when they’re at the cottage he can almost—*almost*—appreciate their grace on the water, but at their home?

He doesn't need their terrifying calls echoing in their backyard, thanks.

"For the fifth time—"

"Is only third."

"Fine." Shane chuckles, adding his own finished pine cone to the table. "No, the loons are all gone for winter. Hopefully we see some finches and blue jays, maybe some cedar waxwings..."

He continues to name other birds, the reasons why some might show up now and others might try the feeders later in the season, nose scrunched, eyes full of enthusiasm.

He's never come out and admitted it, but Ilya suspects Shane has a running list of birds he's spotted in different cities and countries they've visited.

It's terribly cute.

"Ok, ok, get it. Lots of different birds might visit." He snags a scoop of peanut butter, transfers it to his hand and ducks under the table to share it with Anya. She's there in a second, nose bumping his leg as she enjoys her treat.

"Maybe even some woodpeckers, which I why I don't want to put anything too close to the hou—" Shane's words die as Ilya straightens, a smear of peanut butter brushed high on his cheek. "You've got..."

"Hmm?"

"When you gave Anya her treat..." Shane gestures, but it's no use, Ilya's swiping across his jaw, down his neck, nowhere near the bit of food.

He's laughing helplessly at Ilya's scrunched brow as he abandons his seat at the table, thumb sweeping over his husband's skin as he rubs the offending spot.

"Thanks." Ilya tilts his head, captures Shane's finger, slowly sucking the peanut butter away. "Let's go put these outside before it gets windy again?"

Exhaling shakily, Shane nods, tossing Ilya his coat before gathering the completed pine cones.

Outside the snow is falling fast: big, fat flakes dancing towards the ground at a steady clip. It's beautiful and somehow still—calm—all at once.

Anya races ahead in her puffy coat, doing circles in the yard as they wade their way out to a tree near their grill. Shane has just hung the fourth of the feeders when the wind *does* kick up, spraying some loose seed over his shoulders, into the hood of his coat.

"Maybe..." Ilya steps close, one hand cupping Shane's elbow, the other hovering near his wrist as he checks on Anya's progress in the snow. "If you stand still enough birds will come visit you. Like Disney princess."

“Does that make you my prince?”

“Of course.” Ilya’s hands skim up Shane’s arms, brushes the stray seed from his coat. “Am offended you would even ask.”

“I’ll show you offended.” Rocking up, Shane captures Ilya’s mouth, hand splaying low on his back as he brings their bodies into full contact.

Ilya smiles against him, fingers tunneling in Shane’s hair as he breaks away, trailing kisses along his husband’s jaw. “Yes, yes, show me.”

The only answer he gets is Shane’s freckles bunching happily, the corner of his mouth tipping up as he hooks his hand into Ilya’s coat pocket and tugs him even closer. Their hips rock together and Ilya groans, the only sound in the quiet of the falling snow.

Backing him up slightly, he cages Shane against the back of their buried Adirondack chair, hovers over him a long moment before bringing their mouths back together.

It’s gentle.

Warm.

His lips tracing over Shane’s jaw, the crest of his cheek as his hand—

“Jesus!” Shane lets out a sharp gasp, eyes flying open as Anya bounds towards them. “Your hands are too cold to...” He can’t help himself, he turns into the hand cupping his face and presses a kiss to Ilya’s palm. “Let’s head back in.”

“Ok.”

They make their way back inside slowly, Anya leading the way through an almost nonexistent path. Once inside, Ilya starts rummaging for blankets while Shane throws their wet things, Anya’s coat included, in the dryer.

“Better?” Ilya asks as Shane flops next to him, face still flushed from the frigid air.

“I just didn’t realize how cold it had gotten.” Stretching, he leans into Ilya’s side, grins as a blanket covers them almost immediately. “Thanks for going along with this, I know birds aren’t your favorite.”

“Is fine.” He drops a kiss to the top of Shane’s head. “You and Anya both like to watch birds so am happy to put up with them.”

It’s an understatement really.

Ilya does nothing short of championing the things Shane enjoys.

Shane loves him for it.

Among many, many other things.

“Still...” Carding his hand through Ilya’s damp hair, he let his head fall to his shoulder. “I appreciate it.”

“I know.” Ilya’s still chilled fingers splay over Shane’s neck, slip under the collar of his shirt. “You do the same— Hey, not for you!” He sits up from his relaxed position against the back of the couch so fast Shane almost falls to the floor. “Is bird food, not food for squirrels!”

Righting himself, Shane follows Ilya’s gaze out the window to the new feeders. Sure enough, a giant squirrel is making a meal out of the one closest to the tree branch.

“We can probably easily adjust how close to the tree they are, if we put a longer piece of twine it should make it harder for the squirrels but still easy enough for the birds.” Snagging his phone from the coffee table, he starts searching as Ilya pulls him back into his embrace. “Yes, look, it seems like there’s a five-seven-nine guideline to...”

“Shane?” He presses his chin to Shane’s shoulder, cups his hip.

“Sorry, yeah, this can wait. It’s just a rule to help keep the squirrels away.”

“Ok, bookmark it for tomorrow, yeah?”

He does, saving the page before sliding his phone back onto the table and snuggling back into Ilya’s arms. Letting his eyes drift shut, he listens to the cadence of his husband’s breathing, the gentle gust of the wind outside, as he rests his head against Ilya’s chest.

He’s contemplating whether they can just stay here for the rest of the night when another blanket falls over them, Ilya’s hand smoothing it down over his back.

“Still cold?” He drops a kiss to Ilya’s collarbone, tangles their legs together even more.

“Better now.” Smiling as Anya curls up at their feet, he skims his fingers down Shane’s spine. “Oh, I think there might be a blue jay at one of the fruit ones we made yesterday...”

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