

this is how i want to love you, cover to cover

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this is how i want to love you, cover to cover

by [allforyoumylove](#)

Summary

“Don’t—” Ilya starts, already reaching, already cupping Shane’s face between both hands, thumbs warm and tender against his cheekbones like they’ve always belonged there.

Shane’s eyes are big and gorgeous and genuinely curious. “Don’t what?”

Don’t make me look like a lovesick idiot. Don’t make my heart trip over itself for a way out of my chest and into yours. Don’t say it like that—so fucking sincere—like you don’t know how devastating it is for me.

“Don’t butcher my language,” he says instead and kisses Shane’s smile hard, like reflex, like gravity, like there was never going to be another option.

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Shane sets out to learn Russian. Ilya discovers he's incapable of keeping his composure.

Notes

these characters have had me in a chokehold for weeks *fuck*. this is my first heated rivalry fic and posting in a new fandom is scary so pls be nice. I've kept the russian simple since I don't speak it myself and google isn't always reliable with translations (and because shane wouldn't know anything more complicated yet anyway)

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

The first Russian phrase Shane learns to recognise—*understand*, not merely hear—is *ya tebya lyublyu*.

By the end of their second week at the cottage, he suspects the sentence he's repeated more than any other is, "Say it again in Russian, please."

Ya tebya lyublyu

Ya tebya lyublyu

Ya. Tebya. Lyublyu

He tries saying them back to Ilya, rolls the syllables carefully across his tongue, attentive to the unfamiliar softness of them, the way the words bend in the middle. *Lyublyu* refuses him. The consonants tangle, and his mouth doesn't quite know what to do with them yet.

He tries anyway. *Loo-bloo. Lyu-blue*. He doesn't really mind being wrong here. Not with this. He just wants Ilya to know that he loves him. Very, very much.

Every attempt earns him the same look from Ilya—something open and deeply tender. As if watching Shane reach for his love for Ilya in Ilya's mother tongue tilts the very axis of his world.

Shane is rewarded with loving kisses pressed to his neck, followed by smiles that bloom into quiet laughter, the sound vibrating against his skin. Ilya laughs like this only when he's undone, when joy catches him off-balance. His breath ghosts hot and familiar along Shane's throat, his mouth lingering as if reluctant to leave.

And then Ilya says it again, effortlessly, perfectly, over and over and over, and it's as beautiful and breathless as the first time Shane ever learned what it meant.

—

The next word Ilya teaches Shane is *pozhaluysta*. Please.

"Very important," he says. "Perfect for a polite Canadian like you."

Shane practises it in low-stakes moments first. When he asks for the salt. When he wants Ilya to stay on the couch a little longer.

Ilya corrects his pronunciation exactly once. After that, he lets Shane keep it slightly imperfect. He likes it better that way.

Eventually, he discovers that it's a dangerous word. That it'll make him do anything Shane wants.

When he spends the night at Shane's, Shane wakes and rolls into him instinctively. His bedsheets twist around his legs, and when he shifts closer they slide lower along Ilya's waist. His bedroom smells like them, and Shane's inner thighs burn a little from where Ilya's stubble rubbed against them. He traces the lines of Ilya's athlete body with slow attention, as if reading something he already knows by heart but never tires of. The solid plane of his chest, the hills and valleys of his abs, the V leading to his groin. The quiet power of him at rest. Shane's hand drifts lower, reaching between Ilya's legs. He feels the change there gradually, of Ilya waking beneath his palm.

Ilya turns his head toward him, his mussed hair curling at his nape, eyes still half-lost to sleep. "G'morning," he mumbles, voice thick and scratchy.

Shane smiles. "Good morning."

Ilya leans in and presses a kiss to Shane's forehead, then to his brow.

Stroking Ilya in slow tugs, Shane feels him hardening rapidly in his hand. "Ilya," he whispers, breath barely there. "*Pozhaluysta.*"

A part of Ilya breaks open at that. He makes a sound in the back of his throat and reaches for Shane, fingers closing around Shane's jaw the way they have since they were young. He seals their lips together, already giving in.

"Fuck," he whispers into Shane's mouth. "You drive me crazy."

His thumb presses more firmly into the bone of Shane's jaw. The rest of Ilya follows, weight settling over Shane as he tilts forward, his dick, fully awake and eager, rubbing against Shane's thigh.

Shane's hands rest easily at Ilya's hips, fingers digging into flesh. "How do you say 'fuck me' in Russian?"

Ilya looks like he's contemplating whether to tell him or not. "If I tell you," he says, "you won't get out of bed today."

"Why not?"

Exhaling, Ilya noses along Shane's cheek. "Because I'll never be done with you."

"Come on," Shane grins. "What is it?"

Ilya closes his eyes for half a second, then leans down and kisses the curve where Shane's neck meets his shoulder, slow and open-mouthed. "*Trakhni menya.*"

The words sink into Shane's skin like heat. They don't feel like language as much as sensation, spreading outward from where Ilya's mouth just was. He lifts his hips into Ilya's

and repeats the phrase the best he can, shaping the sounds from memory alone—and then, because he knows exactly what he’s doing, he adds a soft “*pozhaluysta*.”

Ilya drops his forehead to Shane’s shoulder. He feels Shane’s hands working their way into his hair.

“*Da*, Hollander,” he murmurs, half-laugh, half-surrender. “I will fuck you.”

There’s affection in it, and want, and that tender note of awe. He still can’t believe this is his—this devastating man who learns his language and uses it like a key. Lifting his head, he fits himself to Shane’s parted lips.

—

Shane learns swear words next. This is not an accident. He asks for them explicitly. “You use them a lot,” he explains.

Ilya laughs, cocky, delighted. This is familiar territory. He teaches him the worst ones first, because of course he does. Over-enunciates. Gives examples, makes it a performance.

“This one,” he says, pleased with himself, “is very versatile. For when you drop things. Or miss a goal.”

“I don’t miss goals,” Shane says, fixing him with a look and a smile.

Two days later, Shane drops a glass in the kitchen. It doesn’t break, just chips, but the sound is sharp enough to startle them both.

Under his breath, Shane mutters, “*Blyat*.”

Ilya looks at him, and a helpless grin breaks loose on his face—bright and stunned and deeply proud.

“I love you,” he says, grabbing Shane’s face and kissing him everywhere he can reach. Shane laughs and tries to fend him off half-heartedly, nose scrunching, freckles bunching together, already giving in.

—

Shane learns the words for objects. Mug. Toothbrush. Window.

Ilya watches him label the apartment with language, like he’s laying down new routes in his mind. Sometimes Ilya will point to things and ask, “This one?”

Some words stick, others slip through Shane's fingers. Ilya can see the machinery of it working, the moment of concentration, the quiet recalibration as Shane tries not to confuse the words for chair and table.

"I feel terrible that you've had to translate yourself all these years," Shane says. "I can't even imagine how exhausting it must've been."

Ilya feels a sudden tightness in his chest. Shane treats learning his language like an act of love, of respect. No one has made the effort to know Ilya like this before.

"My English was never as bad as your Russian," he says, overwhelmed, deflecting.

Shane's cheeks flush. "Fuck you, your language is impossible to learn. I'm trying my best."

"*Da, kotik.*" Ilya wraps his arms around Shane, kissing his temple. "*Ya tebya lyublyu.*"

Shane learns the words for glasses on a Saturday afternoon, stretched out on the couch. He resists them at first, squinting at another one of his hockey biographies, then finally gives in and slips them on, and Ilya just says, "*Ochki.*"

"Hm?"

Ilya taps beneath his own eye. "Means glasses."

"Oh." A blush spreads under Shane's freckles, and he ducks his head, smiling down at the page.

Ilya hides behind his own language. *You don't know how fucking cute you are in your glasses. It's unbearable. I can't believe I get to have you like this.*

Wonder flickers in Shane's eyes. "What does that mean?"

"Nothing," Ilya says in English. He crawls onto Shane without asking, settling his weight on him, eyes already closing. "Read to me."

"I thought my books were boring."

"They are," Ilya says. "Perfect for a nap. Will put me right to sleep."

Shane doesn't even bother calling him an asshole. He props the book against the back of Ilya's shoulder, one hand carding lazily through his hair. Ilya lets out a contented sigh and hears Shane's smile as he begins to read.

He has a nice reading voice, Ilya thinks—and then Shane’s voice keeps going without him, sleep taking him between one word and the next.

They still don’t get many days like these: slow, lazy ones that stretch time thin and ask nothing of them. But when they do, Ilya is sure this is what peace looks like.

—

Ilya teaches Shane insults early.

“To use on Hayden.”

“You do realise he’ll be even more pissed at you if I start calling him things in Russian,” Shane says, one corner of his mouth quirked up.

Ilya smirks back. “Exactly.”

He teaches Shane how to shape the sounds and where to put the emphasis, how the same word can be playful or sharp depending on tone.

Weeks later, Shane mutters one when Ilya steals his pillow early one morning, hooking it with his arm and dragging it over like a prize. “*Mudak*.”

It’s slightly mispronounced, wrapped in a cute Canadian accent, and Ilya breaks into a smile, delighted. “Did you just call me an asshole, Hollander?”

He lunges, all limbs and momentum, manhandling Shane onto his back and launching himself on top of him like a wrestler who’s waited years for this exact opening. Shane makes a surprised sound and then breaks into laughter—real, unguarded laughter, his sleep-puffy eyes crinkling in a way that makes something warm and reckless bloom in Ilya’s chest. God, he looks so, so lovely like this.

“I’m dying,” Ilya announces, clutching at his chest like he’s been stabbed. “Is very tragic.”

He lets himself collapse dramatically and bonelessly on top of Shane, all exaggerated weight and theatrical defeat, face pressed against Shane’s collarbone. He sighs like a man at the end of his long and storied life.

Shane laughs again, quieter this time. “Get off me,” he says, entirely without conviction.

“No,” Ilya murmurs. “I’m dead. Cannot move. Have to stay here forever.”

—

Sometimes Ilya doesn't translate on purpose.

He'll say something soft and quick, then refuse to explain, watching Shane work through it on his own. Shane hates incomplete information. It gnaws at him.

They're at Shane's cottage, sprawled on opposite ends of the couch. Ilya nestles his head back against the throw pillows, not even trying to pretend that the mushy feeling behind his sternum isn't caused entirely by watching Shane frown, so concentrated and earnest, trying to unlock every part of him.

Then Shane says, "I think that means... you miss me."

"Yes." Ilya nods. "It does."

Shane preens a little, and Ilya watches him like he's witnessing a miracle.

"I'm right here," Shane says. "No need to miss me."

Ilya hums, long and low. "Mm, but you're so far away. *Idi ko mne.*"

Shane knows those words. *Come to me.* The golden lamp light spills across the living room, and Shane's eyes catch it, glimmering in the reflection. His lips curve into a half-smile as he slips across the couch, crawling over Ilya's outstretched legs and straddling his lap.

Ilya's hands move without hesitation. They reach under the hem of Shane's—Ilya's shirt—brushing over the soft, taut skin of his waist. His fingers thread beneath the waistband of his shorts, beneath the elastic of his briefs, digging into the curve of his ass with familiar ease. Leaning down, Shane presses his mouth to Ilya's, too gentle for what Ilya needs. The sound Ilya makes is needy, slightly frustrated.

"Let's go to bed," he says.

Shane glances at his watch. "It's not even eight yet."

"I want to fuck you," Ilya says, blunt and unadorned. He grinds his hips up against Shane with deliberate force. "When we're done, it will be past your bedtime."

Shane's laugh trickles into Ilya's mouth and down his throat. Ilya's heart flutters recklessly. It's the best feeling he knows.

Ilya learns that Shane remembers everything he tells him.

Not always the meaning of words. Sometimes only the sounds—which words soften Ilya’s voice, which ones make him sharper, louder, larger. He learns that Russian is not just vocabulary but temperature, how warm or cold a sentence can be, depending on how it’s said.

He doesn’t remember in a showy way. Not like he’s collecting evidence or keeping score. Just quietly, faithfully, the way some people keep pressed flowers between the pages of books they love.

He finds out when he’s behind Shane, hands firm at his hips, lips slack and breath damp against the nape of his neck as he fucks him. He’s murmuring without thinking, words slipping loose in Russian because that’s what happens when he wants too much, when he’s no longer translating himself.

Shane responds instantly—he always does when Ilya speaks freely like this—body tightening, breath breaking. Ilya feels it everywhere: in Shane’s back arching into him, in the way his name is almost said and then lost.

Later, they’re tangled together, cleaned-up, boneless and sleepy.

“That word you kept saying—*bol-shuh*—” Shane murmurs.

Ilya smiles. “*Bol’she*.”

“*Bolsheh*. I think you said it on the phone... After your father died.” He hesitates. “What does it mean?”

The room shifts. Suddenly Ilya is back in that cold, graffiti-stained viaduct in Moscow, the wind biting, the concrete cold through his jacket.

“It means ‘more’,” he says quietly. “My brother—he, uh. He always wanted something from me. Wanted money. I gave him so much, but it was never enough. He always said, “*more*, Ilya.” *Bol-she*.”

“Oh,” Shane says quietly, his thumb stilling where it rests against Ilya’s ribs. Ilya’s face must have slipped into something grave, something Shane immediately assumes he caused. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make you sad.”

“You don’t make me sad.” Ilya smooths Shane’s hair back from his forehead. “You are perfect.”

Shane exhales. “So when you say it—during sex—do you need me to do anything different?”

“No,” Ilya doesn’t hesitate. He traces the birthmark on Shane’s ear, tugging lightly on his earlobe. “I don’t mean it like that. Is just—even when I have all of you, I still want more. I can’t get enough. I’m like my brother in that way. Selfish.”

Shane cups Ilya’s cheek and looks him straight in the eye. “You’re not,” he says. *You’re not like your brother. You’re not selfish*. Simple and absolute. He presses a soft, sure kiss to Ilya’s lips. “I love you.”

Surrender washes over Ilya then. Since his mother died, no one has listened to him like this. Not the quiet parts, not the unguarded ones. Since he left home, no one but Svetlana has listened to the language he slips into when he's too tired to be anyone else—and even then, never like this. Never the way it is with Shane.

“I feel the same way. About you. Always,” Shane murmurs, a little smile on his beautiful face. “*Bol'she.*”

His accent threads the syllables, piercing Ilya's heart. Ilya rolls on top of him, buries his face in the warm, safe crook of his neck, and exhales a shuddery breath.

—

Shane discovers that watching Ilya lift weights while hardcore Russian rap pounds through his home gym is the hottest thing he's ever seen.

It's too loud for Shane's liking, but he can't look away. Each bicep curl, each controlled exhale, sends a shiver down his spine. The way Ilya's jaw tightens with effort, the slight lift of an eyebrow at a clever rhyme that Shane doesn't understand, the way the music seems to pulse through him like blood—it's hypnotic.

Sweat slicks Ilya's skin. His muscles bulge and gleam, veins standing out along his arms, skin pulled tight over strength earned the hard way. His sleeveless shirt clings to his torso, his hair is damp and curly, shoved back from his forehead, and between sets there's a low murmur in his throat as he sings along under his breath, the language sitting easily in his body.

Leaning against the doorway, helplessly attentive, Shane lets his eyes trail every movement. His heartbeat gathers high in his throat, heat spreading through his chest, his stomach.

Ilya looks so mouth-wateringly sexy, and Shane feels like he's going to spontaneously combust. He wants Ilya to crowd him back against the wall, to press all that heat and sweat into him. He's ready to sink to his knees, strip Ilya's shorts from his hips and beg him to shove his dick down his throat.

Ilya racks the weights and reaches for his water bottle, squirting water in his mouth. When their eyes meet, the smirk that finds Shane is knowing, dangerous in its certainty.

“Later,” Ilya says. Fuck, he knows Shane so well.

Shane huffs a soft breath. *This man. This. Man.*

Then Ilya comes closer, unhurried, all loose confidence. The words of the song roll effortlessly from his lips, deep and slightly breathy from exertion. Shane doesn't know what they mean, only that they feel like being singled out, claimed.

Ilya stops close, close enough that Shane can smell sweat and soap, close enough that he finishes the line right against Shane's mouth, the words dissolving into a messy, open-mouthed kiss.

My fucking man, Shane thinks. *Minemineminemine*.

His hands find Ilya's waist, fingers gripping the fabric of his shirt, and Ilya smiles into it, victorious, like this was always the point.

"Did you come just to stare," he asks, lips still grazing Shane's, "or are you going to join me?"

"Only if you turn the music down."

"No. I'm not weird like you, listening to podcasts while working out."

"They're nice," Shane protests. "You learn things."

"Okay," Ilya cuts in, already waving it off. He knows that tone, knows that if he doesn't stop it now, Shane will launch into a long defense of his boring podcasts.

When Shane pulls back like he might actually leave, Ilya laughs and catches him by the waist, tugging him close again, his hands sliding around to shamelessly settle at his ass.

"I'll turn it down a little," he says, giving Shane a playful squeeze. "But only for you, Hollander."

—

Ilya learns that he can't fool Shane in his native language as easily anymore.

One night, he sits at Shane's kitchen island, chin in hand, watching Shane portion leftovers with near-clinical care. The pit of Ilya's chest aches and he murmurs words in Russian without quite meaning to let them escape.

Shane pauses, looks up. Ilya can see him parsing sounds, checking them against the growing list of words he knows.

"What does that mean?" he asks.

"That you're boring," Ilya says.

Shane frowns. "No, you didn't say 'boring'. I know that word."

"Oh? And how do you say 'boring', then?"

"Skooch-nee."

Caught, Ilya exhales a quiet laugh. “Yes. *Skuchnyy*.”

He slips off the chair and circles the island, closing the distance with a put-on casualness. He pulls his phone from his pocket, opens the translation app, switches to voice-to-text.

Softly, he repeats himself. Presses play.

“*I adore you*,” the voice says.

Shane looks at the screen, then at Ilya. His expression rearranges itself a little, like furniture moved just enough to make a room inhabitable in a new way. He repeats the words slowly, testing them, the syllables a little clumsy in his mouth, the accent wrong but earnest.

It’s entirely too much for Ilya to survive with dignity.

“Don’t—” Ilya starts, already reaching, already cupping Shane’s face between both hands, thumbs warm and tender against his cheekbones like they’ve always belonged there.

Shane’s eyes are big and gorgeous and genuinely curious. “Don’t what?”

Don’t make me look like a lovesick idiot. Don’t make my heart trip over itself for a way out of my chest and into yours. Don’t say it like that—so fucking sincere—like you don’t know how devastating it is for me.

“Don’t butcher my language,” he says instead and kisses Shane’s smile hard, like reflex, like gravity, like there was never going to be another option.

—

Shane learns how many words Ilya has for snow.

Winter reaches Ilya’s place in increments. First the light thins, as if diluted. Then the air sharpens. Finally, the quiet arrives—the specific, weight-bearing quiet that settles as the days shorten. Ilya doesn’t withdraw so much as he compresses, folding inward by a few degrees.

They’re half-watching the weather one evening—some local broadcast playing softly in the background, snow falling across the screen—when Shane asks him how to say ‘snow’ in Russian.

“*Sneg*.” Ilya keeps his eyes on the TV. “But there’s a lot.”

“A lot of words?”

Ilya nods, and Shane waits.

“There’s *porosha*,” Ilya says after a moment. “Is a little old-fashioned, but it is like powder that kind of makes your footsteps disappear.” He gestures with two fingers, smoothing an invisible surface. “My mother liked this one,” he adds, quieter. “Said the world was clean again.”

“*Nast* is after,” he continues. “When it freezes again. Looks safe but will break your ankle. The word is not used very often, but...”

A pause. A glance toward the window.

“There’s *sugroby*. Uh... happens when it’s windy and the snow hasn’t been cleared away?” He looks at Shane for the right translation.

“Snowdrifts?” Shane offers.

“Yes. Snowdrifts.” Ilya says, rolling the *r*. “*Metel’* means blizzard. *Purga* also means blizzard but stronger, more extreme.” Snow that erases distance, streets, voices. Ilya exhales through his nose. “Good for hiding.”

Shane nods. “So, a lot of snow.”

Ilya glances at the window again, where snow drifts down in a steady fall, then back to Shane. “My mother would’ve liked it here,” he says. He rests his hand on Shane’s thigh. “She always said winter is easier when someone waits for you inside.”

Fingers skim Ilya’s wrist. A moment later, his hand is lifted, pressed to Shane’s warm, gentle lips.

—

Shane learns about diminutives.

He notices them in the small, subtle way Ilya speaks to people he loves. The soft, clipped ending he tacks onto Anya’s name when he plays with her. The affectionate twist on a teammate’s name after a loss, when he’s captain Ilya Rozanov. The way Ilya’s voice changes almost imperceptibly, lower, warmer, as if the word itself has been wrapped in cloth before being offered.

Shane catalogues it all. He asks Ilya about it. He wants to know what the endings mean, when they’re used, who gets to use which ones. He listens as Ilya explains, stretched out on the couch and gesturing vaguely, shrugging in a way that suggests it’s nothing special.

“They don’t mean anything on their own. Is just for showing more... I don’t know, affection?”

Shane is aware that they aren't just cute nicknames but tools for shaping intimacy, a way to fold closeness into words. He learns which forms are playful and which ones are almost sacred, tests the shape of the words in his mouth.

One night, long after Ilya's place has gone quiet, Shane lies half-awake, listening to Ilya's breathing. Spread across his chest, Ilya is heavy and warm, fingers absentmindedly tracing slow, aimless shapes into his skin. Shane watches the slow rise and fall of his back and thinks, with a careful kind of certainty, that some things deserve to be returned.

"Ilyushenka," he whispers.

The word barely disturbs the air, but Ilya goes very still.

Shane doesn't know it completely—not the history threaded through that ending, not the weight it carries. He doesn't know it's the ending Ilya's mother used, murmured into his hair when he was small enough to be gathered up and held. He doesn't know that Ilya tucked away that sound years and years ago, convinced it belonged to a life he no longer had access to.

Shane knows only this: that the name settles easily in his mouth, and that Ilya deserves to hear it again from someone who loves him deeply.

For Ilya, the sound opens like a door he did not know was still there. Suddenly, he's six years old, small and shaken, standing in the narrow space of a dim hallway while his father's anger still echoes off the walls. His chest aches with the kind of hurt that has no language yet. He seeks his mother's arms, desperately and instinctively, and buries himself there. She smells like vanilla. Her hand smooths his hair. She whispers his name like a promise that the world hasn't ended.

Tears gather along Ilya's lash lines, sudden and hot, blurring the dark. He doesn't even have to blink for them to spill. They slide freely over the bridge of his nose and pool on Shane's chest. Shane's arms tighten around him.

More than twenty years later, Ilya finds the same comfort. It's right where he reaches for it, already waiting.

Ilya doesn't know when he stops testing Shane. There's no moment he can point to, no decision made. They've been married for ten years, and Ilya has spoken Russian to Shane every day for just as long. Somewhere in that time the habit of quizzing Shane simply dissolves. One day, he's no longer waiting for the telltale pause or the careful, inward look of translation. He just talks. Complains. Jokes. Slips from English into Russian mid-sentence, the way his mind does when he's tired or content, no longer guarding himself.

And Shane follows. He understands more than he can speak, still. He answers in English when his reach falls short. In Russian when he can, slower and more deliberate, but sure. He catches Ilya's jokes. He finishes the sentence when Ilya trails off, distracted, already reaching for his coat or his keys.

Every night, without exception, Shane says goodnight to their daughter in both languages, voice soft. Lily Irina Hollander-Rozanova is six years old and fluent in both. He calls her *solnyshko* or *lapochka* like it's second nature. She answers Shane easily, switching without thinking, sometimes correcting his endings with gentle authority. Shane only smiles and thanks her, earnest, as if being taught by his own child is the most natural, extraordinary thing in the world.

She has Shane's black hair, his deep brown eyes, and—*thank god*, Ilya thinks every day—his beautiful freckles. But she's Ilya's daughter too, unmistakably. She's funny, sassy, sensitive. Kind.

Sometimes Shane lingers in the doorway of their kitchen or living room and watches them together, untamable love coursing through his body: Lily's small hands gesturing, her words tumbling over Ilya's in quick, confident Russian, Ilya answering her easily, tossing in a joke just to send her into soft, bright giggles. With his heart stretched almost to breaking, Shane watches Ilya become the father he needed for himself.

"Did you hear what Papa just said, Dad?" she asks Shane with a grin, tilting her head up as he leans down to kiss the crown of her hair.

"I did," he says, eyes soft on her, then on Ilya. He smiles. "But Papa is wrong, I've never had a weak backhand."

Something quiet and immense settles in Ilya's chest. This is fluency. Not a perfect accent or mastery of grammar. Just being met. Just being known.

End Notes

ilya normally: 😎💥🧊🔥😏

ilya when shane says one (1) word in russian: 😍💕😓💕💕

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