Ilya makes pelmeni

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Ilya makes pelmeni

by ilovelesbianism

Summary

Ilya's love language is food… Shane has food issues. Will Shane be able to enjoy a Russian meal Ilya cooks for him? Good thing Ilya is a supportive boyfriend.

Notes

Slight trigger warning but no talk of body image or weight. Shane's eating problems here are mostly centered around sensory issues and control. Take care of yourself!

See the end of the work for more notes

Ilya knew Shane hated his diet. He always had. Sure he loves the control, the order… but there's no way he isn't miserable eating the same bland food 24/7.

He's always wanted to cook for him, food is his love language, it always has been. It's how his mom often made him feel better after difficult arguments with his father, how he could find comfort in his mother's recipes that were passed down from generations.

She was a great cook, and when she died… all he had left of her were the good memories they'd made together.

He did his best of course, trying to get Shane out of his comfort zone, but his pleading always seemed to fall on deaf ears.

It was important to Ilya, to be able to share his culture with his boyfriend. Realistically, what else could he offer other than comfort and stability?

He knew Shane loved him, and he loved him back… but a part of Ilya wished he could show him the best way he knew how, with cooking for him. He wanted to make him happy, but after months of teasing him and making comments about his strange eating habits didn't seem to work… he knew he had to make a bigger gesture. He was scared though, petrified even, to make Shane uncomfortable in any way. Shane had opened up about his autism, and briefly touched on his strange habits… but he'd always seem to avoid discussing food whenever possible.

Was it just a hockey thing? He didn't know. He'd always felt out of the loop on the whole dieting thing. Sure he worked out a ton, it's just a part of the profession. But he'd never really payed much attention to what he ate, the thought of it was miserable to him.

Maybe it was a control issue, with more and more curiosity building over the last few months, he'd made it his mission to learn more about it. He came across psychology papers about eating disorders and how being autistic may correlate to or worsen people's relationship with food. But Ilya didn't think Shane was that extreme. Yes he was weird about it, but he still ate regularly, not like the stuff he'd seen online.

Either way, after seeing his boyfriend refuse his offer to make him food over and over again… he was determined to fix whatever the issue was.

He would make him something, without bothering to ask, knowing he'd receive a no in return. He'd had enough of watching Shane pick at the same food every single day, looking deflated every time he'd look over at Ilya's plate. It was no way to live.

It was settled, he'd made him a classic Russian meal, just like his mom used to do for him.

It was a warm, sunny Saturday, and they were on their yearly retreat at the cottage. The bright sun was shining through the windows, onto the perfectly crafted wooden floor of Shane's vacation home.

Ilya loved the cottage, more than any other place they'd regularly spend time. It's where he'd met Shane's parents, the first time he felt truly comfortable to be himself in front of Shane. He'd never told him, but it meant the world to him that he was ever invited in the first place. He knows they're in a place in their relationship where he could tell him his feelings… but a part of him thinks it's a bit silly. After all, who would care so much about such a calm, uneventful retreat. At least that's how he imagines Shane saw it.

Aside from his fond memories in the cottage, there's something else to look forward to right now. Today is the day, he smiles, completely content with his decision to cook for his boyfriend.

Shane would be out until later this evening, away at his parent's place helping them with some light spring cleaning. The Hollanders seemed to do it every year without fail. It was boring, but endearing. Very in character.

Thinking about it pulls at his heartstrings, the image of Shane mapping out a scheduled time to do something nice for his parents, without even being asked. It was kinder than anything Ilya ever do… unless it was for Shane of course.

With the kitchen and home completely empty and quiet apart from the melodic sounds of birds chirping outside, it was the perfect day to cook.

He'd decided to make pelmeni, classic Russian dumplings. His mother would make them for him all the time. It was quick and easy, and a great choice to not overwhelm Shane with too many strong flavors all at once.

There were many fillings he could use. Mostly savory like cabbage or meat, but his mom would also occasionally prepare ones with cherries. While a bit out of the norm, those were his favorites. He had a bit of a sweet tooth.

However, with Shane's aversion to sugar, he thought maybe that wasn't the way to go for his first time trying a foreign dish.

He'd bought multiple different ingredients, and all types of fillings based on what he thought would be the most palatable for Shane.

First was mushroom, then pork, then cabbage. He couldn't quite decide what to get in the moment while at the Russian market, so he'd just gotten them all.

He wanted to make them from scratch, not straight out of the box like many of the options sealed and frozen, straight from the store. Those were good, but Shane deserved the best, which Ilya knew he had the skill to provide. All thanks to his wonderful mother.

First he started on the dough, which he'd pre-made a few days before and kept in a little mini-fridge in the corner of the kitchen. Usually it's where he kept small snacks and strange Russian food he knew Shane would never bother to try. Thankfully Shane never looks in there, because he doesn't want to ruin the surprise. He wants Shane to come home with everything ready for him, taking the pressure off his shoulders of preparing his own food.

That was usually how it went at least, he'd mostly make it himself in fear that "Ilya would get it wrong". It pissed him off to no end, constantly wishing he could take the stress off of Shane's shoulders.

Getting back to the task at hand, he grabs a rolling pin from the right hand drawer, which is of course neatly organized from top to bottom, and unwraps the cold dough.

He scrolls on his phone for a bit while waiting for it to defrost.

After a couple minutes, he walks over to the small fridge and pulls out some onions and ground pork. He'd chosen it as the filling because he knew Shane was comfortable with meat, probably more so than an acquired taste like sour cabbage. A classic staple in Russian culture.

Next he rolls out the dough, chops up some onions and parsley, and sets a pot of water onto the stove on high heat. In the meantime, he begins to mold and stuff the dumplings with pork.

He seasons the meat, making sure not to use an overly huge amount of salt and pepper, just in case it would set off any sensory issues for Shane. It was something he often complained about whenever he was forced to eat out, so Ilya knew not to push it too far.

It's a good thing that most Russian food itself is not spicy in the slightest, but he still wanted to be extra careful. If he had any say though, he would have squirted a bunch of hot sauce onto his own meal, probably disgracing all of his Russian ancestors in the process. What had his time in America done to him…

When the water hits a boiling point , he drops the pelmeni in the bubbling water and takes out some sour cream. He's taking a gamble with it, but it's important to get Shane at least somewhat out of his comfort zone. After all, how can you eat pelmeni without sour cream? His mother would never.

He stirs the pot for a while, checking his phone to make sure Shane isn't on his way home yet. It was a short drive from his parent's house to the cottage, he didn't want to be walked in on mid cooking…especially because Shane would start to hover over his shoulder and police what he was doing.

Finally, after about 10 minutes of boiling the dumplings, he gets a strainer out and pours the hot water out of the pot and into the sink.

Ilya gets two bowls out, one for himself and one for Shane. He figured it was important to be there to eat with him, it was something he saw people saying was helpful online.

He drops a dollop of sour cream onto Shane's plate, making sure to have it not directly touching the dumplings, and adds a bunch onto his own.

Just as he begins to set the table, he gets a text from Shane.

"I'll be home in 5."

Perfect.

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Shanes had a long fucking day. He woke up earlier than usual, his alarm accidentally waking Ilya in the process. That made him feel even worse.

He knows getting up at 6 am while on what's supposed to be a relaxing retreat is a bit strange, but his parents needed his help. They'd told him to come "whenever" but he just wanted to get it over with. In his head, the faster he cleans the place up, the quicker he'll be home to cuddle with Ilya.

So he'd gotten his things, had a protein shake for breakfast, and punched his parent's address into his car's gps.

The day went by fast, with him being on his feet the entire time, dusting and sorting through boxes.

After a few hours of cleaning, his mom offered him some sweet tea and waffles. They were low carb, but he just wasn't in the mood. He was upset enough at the thought of leaving Ilya behind all alone for the entire day.

Having gotten there at around 7 am, he glanced at the clock as he made his way outside. 5 pm. Shit had he been gone that long?

He suddenly feels extremely guilty. What was Ilya doing all alone at the cottage all day? He hopes he isn't too bored. That's something that's always in the back of his mind whenever they spend time together.

Am I even fun to be around?

It's something Ilya had always teased him about, being boring. Realistically he knows it's a joke, but he can't help overthinking it sometimes.

Rubbing at his eyes, he pulls out of the driveway and heads home.

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He unlocks the door and is immediately hit with the scent of something unfamiliar. Not bad… just different.

Maybe Ilya had made himself food while he was gone? Fuck… he should have had something in the fridge for him before he left. He begins to chastise himself internally, thinking about his boyfriend sorting through the cupboards, attempting to find something edible in Shane's plethora of diet foods.

He knew Ilya didn't like his eating habits, he'd made it very clear over the course of their relationship… but those same habits made him feel safe. As hockey got more and more

intense over the years, he started to run himself into the ground with anxiety and thoughts of failure. He'd been drafted. He's good, he knows he is… but what if his talent will fade away after a few years.

That's when he began to workout obsessively and monitor his food intake. All his life he'd been a picky kid, always unwilling to try new things in fear that he wouldn't like them. But over the course of his career… it's just gotten worse.

Certain smells began to make him nauseous, even the thought of different kinds of textures repulsing him eating even less than he already was.

But he didn't have a problem. Sure sometimes he wished he could enjoy food like the rest of his teammates, but it wasn't a top priority for him. Hockey had always been more important.

The smell wafting through the house became stronger as he entered the kitchen, where he saw Ilya sitting quietly on his phone, a small lamp turned on beside him. It illuminates his face beautifully, casting a warm shadow onto the bridge of his nose.

Surprisingly, the room smelled good… he'd never smelled anything like it before.

He feels hungry all of a sudden. He hadn't been able to eat his regular meals today, the thought immediately stressing him out. He didn't like to go off his routine, whether that meant eating less, or eating more.

Ilya notices him come in and immediately turns to look at him.

"Hi." He says, waving at him calmly and smiling.

Fuck he missed him so much…

He feels the tension in his shoulders lesson slightly when he looks at him.

Ilya stands up and walks over the where he's standing, giving him a brief kiss on the cheek. Arms wrapping around him, he mumbles something into his hair.

"I missed you." He playfully growls in a way that indicates a strong case of cuteness aggression.

Shane lets Ilya hold him for a minute before slowly pulling away and reciprocating the gesture, this time on the lips.

"I missed you too." He replies, hoping his facial expression is doing him justice with how tired he is. Sometimes that's difficult for him, especially on days like these where he's somewhat overworked himself.

"I made you something." Ilya says finally after a beat of silence.

Shane's brows furrow. Something?

Ilya seems to sense the confusion on his face.

“Pelmeni. It’s Russian dumpling.” He says, a certain nervous quality to his voice.

Oh. So that’s what the smell is…

Shane thought he’d made it for himself… suddenly he feels a pit in his stomach.

He has to eat something different, something that Ilya made for him. Something he put time and effort into.

Fuck. He feels himself getting nauseous.

He looks over at the table. He can’t refuse, Ilya’s already made it for him. It must have taken all day. Shit.

He gulps nervously, doing his best not to show the immense anxiety he’s feeling on his face.

He makes eye-contact with Ilya.

“Whats um… what’s in it?” He manages to get out, looking over his boyfriend’s shoulder and into the living room. There are two plates already prepared, one for him and another for Ilya, he assumes at least.

“Don’t worry, just meat, nothing crazy.” Ilya responds; seemingly doing his best to reassure him.

“Ilya… you know I’m on a diet.” He says quietly, trying his best to lesson the blow. Fuck he feels guilty.

He looks at his boyfriend, feeling unsure.

“Yes, but this fits with diet.” Ilya responds, a serious look in his eyes.

He doesn’t want to panic, it’s the last thing he wants right now. He hates disappointing someone he loves so much. A pit forms deep in his stomach. One he can’t quite tell if from hunger or anxiety… probably both.

He starts to breathe funny, feeling a panic attack coming along. Shane doesn’t like to feel pressured, the thought of giving up control scares him more than anything else. Worst of all, he hates making Ilya sad. He’s stuck in this situation, suddenly wishing he’d stayed at his parent’s house.

“Hey hey, it’s okay.” He hears Ilya attempting to comfort him in a soft voice.

“It’s just one meal, nothing bad will happen if you eat once. Okay?” He’s looking at him with anticipation, rubbing a warm finger against his cheek.

Shane feels himself gulp, probably loud enough for Ilya to hear.

“Let’s go sit down yes?”

He looks at him with what can only be described as uncertainty. Can he do this? Should he do this? Fuck, he can't decide.

Looking closer at the plates on the table, he sees what appears to be sour cream slathered onto the side of the bowl. Great. As if it couldn't get any worse.

Against his better judgement, he lets Ilya lead him into the living room, steadily gripping onto his hand.

They sit down together, Shane glaring at the food placed in front of him. It looks good, but he has no clue what's in it, or how it was prepared. What if this messes up his progress?

Unfortunately Ilya seems to read his mind right away.

"You're scared?" He asks, raising an eyebrow, but still keeping a neutral look on his face.

He feels shame fall over him all of a sudden. It's ridiculous, to be scared of food. He has bigger problems, and Ilya's are even greater. Why can't he be normal?

"No, I'm not." He replies and shakes his head, doing his best to appear indifferent.

But it doesn't seem to work, because Ilya doesn't let up.

"It doesn't look good?"

Shane peers down at his plate. It does, it looks good.

"It does it's just…" he mutters quietly.

"You can have just this once okay? Nothing wrong with eating food you like."

Shane feels a hand on his shoulder as Ilya sits down next to him. Picking up his fork, he gets eye-level with Shane.

"See, I'm eating too." He says, taking a big bite and looking at Shane with an encouraging look in his eyes.

"Okay…"

It does make him feel better, knowing he's not being judged, that his boyfriend is eating with him.

He apprehensively takes a bite, hoping it isn't a waste of macros.

It's good. It tastes savory, with a bit of sweetness? More importantly it tastes homemade, fresh.

"Good?" Ilya asks, looking at him with raised eyebrows.

Shane nods, beginning to smile back at him.

Grinning, Ilya leans in and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

Maybe he can do brave things.

End Notes

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