

“Ya teb-ya lyub-lyu.”

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“Ya teb-ya lyub-lyu.”

by [space_zombies](#)

Summary

Shane sat up, heart beginning to thud—not with fear, but with momentum. His brain latched on, suddenly efficient, suddenly sharp.

Trades happened. Players moved. People made choices all the time that weren't about winning cups but about living. And Ilya—God, Ilya deserved more than survival disguised as compromise.

Notes

Hi! So... how are we doing after the finale episode? Me personally, I died. Fucking dead. I don't know what to do now. Probably will be in misery until the Season 2 drops.

Anw, here's my lil take on Shane and Ilya's scene at the cottage where Shane kept replaying Ilya's words on his mind: I could marry Svetlana. And then later realized the meaning behind those Russian words.

I don't claim myself the book reader, I still haven't finished the book. So I twisted it a bit, but still accordingly to the TV show.

Please enjoy 😊

Shane sat upright with his back against the dark wooden headboard, the kind carved by hand and built to last longer than any season. The bed was his—custom linens, familiar weight, the faint scent of cedar and clean soap that meant home, not transit.

Beyond the floor-to-ceiling glass wall, the lake lay open and unguarded.

Moonlight spilled across the water in long, broken bands of silver, rippling with every quiet movement beneath the surface. Pines framed the shoreline like sentries, their reflections trembling where water met dark.

The cottage was silent in the way only owned spaces were—no humming vents, no distant voices, just the low, steady breath of night.

Shane's eyes stayed fixed on the lake.

"I could marry Svetlana."

The words kept replaying, not loudly—never dramatically—but with the quiet persistence of a puck tapping against the boards; again and again, impossible to ignore.

Shane had learned, over the years, that sleep did not come when something lodged itself sideways in his mind.

It wasn't panic.

It wasn't jealousy in the way movies made it look. *Well*, maybe a bit.

It was a problem presented without a solution, and his brain refused to disengage until it found one.

Marriage. Papers. Citizenship.

A life chosen not because it was wanted, but because it was easier.

He leaned his head back against the wood and exhaled slowly through his nose. The lake didn't respond. The moon didn't shift. Everything outside the glass felt steady, indifferent.

Beside him, Ilya slept.

The mattress dipped where he lay, warm and solid. Shane could feel it—the quiet proof of him. The slow rise and fall of his breathing, the faint sound when he shifted, untroubled by borders or paperwork or futures that demanded compromise.

That hurt more than the words themselves.

Shane's jaw tightened. His mind began its relentless inventory.

He thought about contracts. Timelines. Immigration rules he barely understood but had once skimmed at three in the morning after a road loss in Tampa. He thought about how long Ilya

had already been in the league, how many seasons he could still play, how unfair it felt that borders mattered more than love.

Love.

The word brushed him and retreated.

He pressed his fingers into the sheet, grounding himself in the texture. Cotton. Thread count high. Home linens. Familiar.

If he marries her, Shane thought, methodically, then it becomes permanent. No coming out, no confirming the relationship between us, no... future.

The thought made his throat tighten. He swallowed and forced himself to keep going.

If it became permanent, then whatever this was—whatever they had carved out in stolen nights and careful lies—would turn into something hollow. Something Shane would have to pretend not to feel.

That wasn't an option his brain would accept.

So he kept thinking. He thought in distances and logistics, in what could bend without breaking. He thought about the league as machinery—impersonal, efficient, capable of moving people across borders with the right timing.

Ottawa came up.

It surfaced in his thoughts not as a city, but as a distance.

Drivable. Possible. Close.

Close enough to drive. Close enough to touch. Close enough that the idea lodged and stayed.

Shane sat up, heart beginning to thud—not with fear, but with momentum. His brain latched on, suddenly efficient, suddenly sharp.

Trades happened. Players moved. People made choices all the time that weren't about winning cups but about living. And Ilya—*God*, Ilya deserved more than survival disguised as compromise.

Shane leaned forward, elbows on his knees now, gaze still anchored to the glass. His heartbeat picked up—not with fear, but with recognition. The sensation he trusted most: alignment.

And then his thoughts shifted, softened.

He thought of Tampa Bay; the memory of 2017 All-Star Game etched on his brain like a disease. Of sunlit water and laughter carrying across it. Ilya in the pool with kids, splashing without restraint, joy unguarded and loud.

No performance.

No calculation.

Just play.

Shane had watched from a distance then, something warm settling in his chest. He had known it even then—Ilya was cheerful at his core. Playful. Alive in a way that had nothing to do with goals or crowds.

He could see it now with startling clarity: Ilya on the ice with children, laughter echoing off boards, crouching to their level, teaching without realizing he was teaching. A future where that joy had room to exist.

A place that let him stay that way.

Shane swallowed. His throat tightened, but his thoughts remained steady.

He hadn't slept. Not for a moment. And the realization didn't feel like failure—it felt like proof.

This mattered too much to rest through.

He looked once more at the lake, moonlight trembling across its surface, and felt the decision settle into him with calm certainty.

There *was* another way.

He turned at last toward the bed. Toward Ilya. Toward the familiar curve of his shoulder beneath the sheets.

Shane reached out, gentle and deliberate, and touched his arm.

"Ilya," he murmured into the quiet of his own cottage. "I have an idea."

Ilya didn't sit up when Shane touched him. He shifted beneath the sheets, face turning slightly toward the sound of Shane's voice, hair mussed, eyes still heavy with sleep. One arm moved instinctively, reaching out until his hand brushed Shane's waist, anchoring him there.

"What," Ilya murmured, voice rough and low. "Did something happen?"

Shane shook his head.

He leaned closer, bracing one hand on the mattress beside Ilya's shoulder. He kept his movements careful, contained, like he was afraid of startling something fragile into flight. Moonlight slid through the glass behind him, catching in the planes of his face, turning his eyes pale and intent.

"I stayed awake all night thinking about that," he said.

That, finally, made Ilya look at him properly.

Shane continued before doubt could intrude. “Ottawa,” he said. The word landed between them, unfamiliar but solid. “You could move to Ottawa. Play for the Centaurs.”

Ilya blinked. “Ottawa? You know Ottawa is the same side as Boston, yes?”

“It’s close,” Shane said, already steady, already certain. “Close enough that distance isn’t a punishment. Trades happen all the time. You know that.”

Ilya didn’t budge. He stared at the anxious boy in front of his eyes, studying the intent behind this plan.

Shane exhaled. “You’d stay. Get the passport. Legally. Long enough to apply. You wouldn’t need to marry anyone for it.”

Ilya stared at him, mouth slightly open, as if the idea itself had taken time to arrive.

“And you?” he asked quietly.

“Montreal,” Shane said without hesitation. “I’m not moving.”

A pause. Then Ilya smiled faintly. “I know.”

Shane’s lips pressed together. “But we’d be close. And—” He hesitated only briefly. “We could build something together.”

Ilya tilted his head. “Build what?”

Shane searched for the right words, then let himself speak simply. “A hockey school. Or something like it. For kids. Something that lasts longer than us. We could build the narrative—there are young players in the team. We couldn’t fight forever, we’re not wrestlers. We can say you and I grow fonder, I approached you—“

“Shane,” he cut him off, this time with a faint, incredulous huff. “That’s... that’s too much words. I just woke up.”

Shane paused.

Not because he didn’t know what to say—but because he knew exactly how to end it.

He leaned in a fraction closer, close enough that Ilya could feel his breath, could see the seriousness etched into his expression. Shane’s voice dropped, stripped of explanation, stripped of strategy.

“You play Ottawa,” he said softly. “I play Montreal.”

The words settled into the space between them, heavy and simple and impossible to misunderstand.

Ilya stared at him.

Sleep fell away all at once.

The silence that followed wasn't empty. It was full—of implication, of sacrifice, of the quiet, terrifying truth that Shane had rearranged his entire future sometime between dusk and dawn.

Ilya went quiet.

He didn't move from where he lay, head sunk into Shane's pillow, hair mussed from sleep, eyes glassy in the low light. The words Shane had spoken were still in the air—too big, too carefully assembled to disappear just because the night wanted to stay simple.

For a moment, Ilya stared at the ceiling, blinking slowly, like he needed to orient himself inside his own body again.

"You really," he said at last, voice rough with sleep, accented more than usual, "you really thought about this all night?"

Shane hovered there; one hand braced near Ilya's shoulder, the other uncertain at his side. He hadn't planned for this part—the aftermath of saying it out loud. He nodded once.

"Yes."

The word came out plain. Honest. Unarmored.

Ilya's mouth pressed into a thin line. His throat bobbed when he swallowed.

"To be together?" he asked, softer now, not teasing. "Is that what you want?"

Shane didn't look away. His chest felt too tight for poetry.

"So much," he said. Then, because it was true and because he had already crossed every line that mattered, he added, "So much it hurts."

Ilya's brows furrowed before he could stop it. A warm tear fell, paving its way on Ilya's warmer cheeks.

He turned his head softly to the side, away from Shane, shoulders tensing like he was bracing for something he didn't trust himself to feel. A breath caught in his chest—once, twice.

It made Shane's chest tightened. He reacted without thinking. His thumb raised to wipe away the tear.

"Hey," he murmured, immediately, leaning closer. "Hey, hey, hey."

He slid his hand up, gentle, grounding, palm warm against Ilya's other cheek. His thumb traced a slow, unconscious arc, the way he did when Ilya woke from bad dreams.

Ilya silenced himself for a second—finding a way to process all this: the emotions, the warmth, the thought of Shane pondered that far ahead to craft a future with him.

Then he rolled back toward Shane and reached out, hands hovering with a sudden urgency.

He climbed over him without ceremony, legs sprawled against Shane's lower body, weight settling there like it belonged. Shane let himself fall back against the headboard, breath stuttering at the closeness.

The kiss wasn't desperate. It was full.

Ilya leaned down and pressed a kiss to his chest—right over his heart.

Another.

Then another, trailing upward—slow and reverent, mouth warm against skin. He kissed the hollow of Shane's throat, lingered there, then buried his face against Shane's neck.

He breathed him in.

"Ya teb-ya lyub-lyu," Ilya whispered, broken and breathless, the words pressed into Shane's skin between kisses.

Again, softer. *"Ya teb-ya lyub-lyu."*

Shane didn't understand the language. Not the meaning. But he felt it anyway—the warmth of it, the weight, the way it trembled like a confession that had been waiting too long.

He smiled without realizing it, warmth spreading through him, loosening something tight and aching. His hand coming up to rest at Ilya's hair.

Ilya lifted his head then, foreheads touching, breath mingling in the dark.

"I love you," he said, finally, in English.

The world tilted.

Shane stared at him, eyes wide, chest caving inward like something vital had just been struck.

"Holy shit," he breathed.

Ilya froze.

Color rushed to his face, flustered and immediate. "I mean—" he started, pulling back slightly.

"I love you too," he cut him off, voice breaking on the word too.

Ilya stilled.

He stared at Shane like the words had knocked the air from him. Like he needed to confirm they were real. Then he let out a sound that might have been a laugh or a sob.

“Fuck, Hollander.” He said softly.

And then he collapsed forward, forehead pressing into Shane’s chest.

Shane wrapped his arms around him without hesitation, holding him like he was afraid the feeling might evaporate if he didn’t anchor it there. Ilya’s weight settled fully against him, solid and trusting.

They stayed like that.

No rush. No hunger. Just breath and warmth and the quiet understanding that something fundamental had shifted.

Shane pressed kiss after kiss into Ilya’s hair, his temple, the crown of his head. “Oh my god,” he murmured, over and over. “I love you so much.”

They stayed like that for a long while.

Ilya’s weight rested fully against Shane’s chest now, heavy and real, his breathing uneven but slowly calming. Shane’s arms were wrapped around him, one hand pressed between Ilya’s shoulder blades, the other cradling the back of his head, fingers threaded into dark curls damp with tears.

No one moved.

No one needed to.

The lake outside the glass had gone perfectly still.

Moonlight filtered in through the glass wall behind them, pale and steady, painting Ilya’s features in silver and shadow. His lashes were damp. His lips parted slightly as he breathed.

Shane stared past the curve of Ilya’s shoulder, eyes unfocused, heart still thudding as if it hadn’t caught up to what had just been said. I love you. The words echoed—not loudly, but endlessly—like they had rewired something fundamental in him.

He swallowed.

“Ilya,” he said softly, barely more than breath.

Ilya hummed against his chest, a sound of acknowledgment, tired and warm.

“What’s...,” Shane hesitated, his fingers tightening slightly where they rested. He felt suddenly exposed, like he was stepping onto ice without testing it first. “What’s ‘I love you’ in Russian?”

Something softened in Ilya’s face. Not surprise—recognition.

He leaned in again, closer this time, lips near Shane's ear, voice low and careful, like he was placing something fragile into Shane's hands.

"Ya teb-ya lyub-lyu."

The sound hit Shane differently now. Not as warmth. Not as mystery.

As memory.

His breath stuttered.

His eyes burned.

He blinked once. Then again. It didn't help.

Shane stared at Ilya, chest rising too fast now, heart pounding with the force of recognition. His grip tightened instinctively, thumb pressing gently at Ilya's temple as if to steady them both.

"Oh," he breathed, voice breaking despite himself. "Oh my god."

Images rushed in uninvited—that cold stairwell, late-night phone call, static-heavy lines stretched across time zones. Ilya's voice low and earnest, slipping into Russian when emotion outweighed language. Words Shane hadn't understood then, but had felt, warmth seeping through tone alone.

He shook his head slightly, overwhelmed.

"You said that," Shane whispered. "Didn't you?"

Ilya's eyes widened just a fraction.

"On the phone," Shane continued, voice trembling now. "Back then. When you talked in Russian—were you saying that to me?"

Ilya didn't look away.

"Yes," he said immediately. No hesitation. No retreat. "Yes. I did."

Tears slipped free then, unchecked. Shane's chest hitched as the truth settled fully, painfully, beautifully into place.

"I loved you back then," Ilya said, voice thick but steady. "It was you. It was always you."

That was it.

Shane broke.

A sound tore out of him—quiet, raw, unguarded—as his face crumpled and the weight of it finally crushed through his ribs. He pressed his forehead briefly to Ilya's, breath shaking, before his tears spilled freely.

“Hey,” he murmured, voice low, instinctive. “Hey. Hey.”

He shifted his weight, careful not to crush Shane, lowering himself fully so his chest pressed to Shane’s, his ear settling just over Shane’s heart. He could feel it there—too fast, too loud, like it was trying to escape.

“Hey. I’m here.”

Shane nodded helplessly, fingers tightening in Ilya’s hair as if to anchor himself to the moment, to the truth.

“I—” Shane tried, then failed. He sucked in a breath that shuddered all the way through him. “I’m serious though,” he said, voice cracking. “Don’t marry Svetlana.”

The words came out raw, stripped of strategy or polish. Just truth.

Ilya’s arms tightened around him immediately.

“I’m not,” he said without hesitation, the answer instinctive, almost offended by the idea now.

He rubbed slow circles into Shane’s back, steady and grounding. “I’m not marrying anyone.”

Shane’s shoulders shook. He pressed his face into Ilya’s neck, breath uneven, tears soaking warm into skin. Ilya held him through it without flinching, rocking them just slightly, like Shane’s nervous system needed proof the world was still moving.

They stayed like that for a long time.

“No more,” Shane managed through tears. “No more hiding. No more running.”

Ilya pressed his lips to Shane’s jaw, then his cheek, then rested his forehead there, solid and real.

“No more,” he echoed.

Eventually, Ilya shifted again, easing them both down so Shane lay flat against the mattress, and Ilya curled partly against him—one arm wrapped around Shane’s shoulders, the other threading into his hair, fingers gentle against his scalp.

Shane turned onto his side without thinking, pressing closer, forehead tucked under Ilya’s chin. His breathing slowly evened, though tears still slipped free, quieter now.

Ilya pressed a kiss into Shane’s hair.

Then another.

Then, softer, he said, “You know... for a very serious, responsible man, you cry a lot.”

Shane let out a shaky, breathless laugh that caught halfway between a sob.

“Shut up,” he muttered weakly.

Ilya smiled into his hair, warmth returning like sunlight breaking through cloud. “No. I like this part,” he said. “Means you care.”

“I care too much,” Shane whispered.

Ilya hummed, thoughtful. “Yes,” he agreed easily. “But about correct things.”

Shane tilted his head just enough to look at him. His eyes were red, glassy, exhausted—and full.

From that moment, something settled between them with unmistakable certainty.

No more hiding.

No more careful distance.

No more lies dressed up as protection.

They had crossed into something simpler and braver. Pure warmth. Pure affection. Love without escape routes.

Ilya squeezed him once more, firm and real, then added lightly, because this was who he was:

“Also,” he said, deadpan, “if you ever stay awake all night thinking again, you are required to wake me earlier. I do better ideas with coffee.”

Shane laughed this time—soft, tired, real—and held him tighter.

And for the first time, the future didn’t feel like something to survive.

It felt like something they were already inside.

Outside, the lake remained still, moonlight unbroken across its surface.

Inside, everything finally, quietly aligned.

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