every second of it

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/76530721.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	F/M, M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Yuna Hollander & Ilya Rozanov, Shane Hollander & Yuna Hollander, David Hollander/Yuna Hollander, David Hollander & Ilya Rozanov, David Hollander & Shane Hollander
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov, Yuna Hollander, David Hollander, Svetlana Vetrova
Additional Tags:	Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug, Ilya Rozanov-centric, Christmas Fluff, Found Family
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-27 Words: 6,758 Chapters: 1/1

every second of it

by stezea

Summary

He loved the idea of them being his family after years of having none, and he wanted to make them happy, so he added second, third and fourth presents for each and every Hollander into his cart, and felt better and better with every next swipe of his card.

or, a little peek into the first Christmas Ilya spends with Hollanders.

Notes

Thank you twitter user @chasingbodies for the idea and supporting me stealing your idea! Well not stealing borrowing but still thank you so much
I did mix up the book and the show canon a bit, just because I can. The most not obvious part is that I took the show canon in a way Shane DID NOT say I love you in Russian back.
Obligatory English is not my first language. Not obligatory but warranted: Russian is my first one, so prepare for the shower of unnecessary but cute details about existing as a Russian around holidays and as a whole.
The list of russian songs about ilya you didn't ask for but need (basically songs about pathetic loverboy yearners which we all know ilya is):
Немерено – элли на маковом поле, лампабикт
Просто так – TRITIA
Отопление – Хаски
The list of russian new years song is not here because i listen to sad pathetic love shit but dunno search for it on spotify or better youtube im sure it will be there! Fear the new stuff. The old songs are goat tho.

it's fully fluff just happy people being happy. i mean it.
happy holidays!

if you do find some mistakes, either grammar, or spelling, or the way i wrote christmas stuff, be happy to point it out. i've only ever had new years.

See the end of the work for more notes

Ilya loved every second of it.

First, brushing through crazy crowds with his dampened curls concealed by a conspicuous cap and in shades, still very much recognizable and visible simply by towering over the sea of all the grandmas and tiny children with his hockey height and build. He was practically the only young man here, in this mall, but it spoke more about the state of American men and their stance against even trying to make their loved ones happy for Christmas, and Ilya was very much the exact opposite of any of that. He loved picking out wrapping paper, and checking for differences between two very similar scenic puzzles, and choosing the wine just by the prettiness of the label. He loved the very thought of seeing his family reacting to his presents, their smiles, and the way they would invite him into their routines – he knew David would share the puzzle with him, and Yuna would pour him a glass, too.

He loved the idea of them being his family after years of having none, and he wanted to make them happy, so he added second, third and fourth presents for each and every Hollander into his cart, and felt better and better with every next swipe of his card.

He spent years not knowing what to do with his money, he spent millions on expensive cars and lonely estates that got dusted in the dark, he spent himself on people who would never become a part of his life, but it finally made sense to have all this, money, time and soul, because he couldn't stop just giving it all out in return. Not as an oblation, but as gratitude. Well, maybe, a bit of oblation, but not that Ilya particularly cherished anything he had before to be able to truly immolate it for this. Not that anything ever was enough to get *Hollanders* in return, so Ilya simply thanked his immense luck for somehow having even a touch of something so perfect, so crazy, so real.

So, he browsed the shops, he bought every little thing he liked and thought a particular Hollander would like, and he smiled all the way through the process.

Well, not all the way. He had zero tangible idea of what to get for Shane.

After nine years of knowing him, but not *knowing*, not really, Ilya suddenly realized that behind their Hollander-Rozanov heated rivalry and later acquired amity, he never expected to be so blindsided by their Shane-Ilya new-found familial love. And part of him wanted to play a cheeky part of a Russian dedicated wife and buy him shaving cream, and maybe socks, too, especially so because Shane didn't exactly need shaving cream to begin with, but he didn't feel like joking about it. Not about the very first Christmas gift for his official boyfriend.

Future husband, to be fair, but Ilya wasn't ready to voice this thought to the world even in the restraints of his own cranium. He was superstitious like that. Gladly, one of the boxes was wooden, so he knocked it thrice, spat over his left shoulder, and shook his head. He wasn't going to spook his happy future, not today.

He put a bear-shaped candle holder in his cart and then added candles as well, smiling to himself. Yuna would laugh at his joke here, he was sure, since she never stopped teasing him about his bear tattoo, and she sure as hell would hate to display Boston mascot at her home but would be obliged to, as it was a gift, from Ilya especially, and he would be elated hearing

her exasperated sighs every time she would as much as notice it in her peripheral vision sitting comfortably somewhere on their shelves. It would also be like leaving a part of himself to remind Hollanders about him and return to – he already flicked a coin into their pond and stuffed some of his shirts in the back of their drawer, but he wanted to be certain about it.

And still. His stock already included a woolly hat, two of those 10 thousand piece puzzles (he had a hard time choosing so he bought both) and some special trays for solving them (Yuna kept scolding them for taking over the dining table), a bottle of good Russian vodka, and three chargers with an USB-A cord for David, variety of different wine bottles (yes, with pretty labels), comfortable, but stylish, knitted cardigan and a robe, some hair products he picked with a borrowed hour of labor time of the poor sales assistant, and a Rozanov Boston jersey he accompanied the bear candle holder with (he didn't even play for them anymore, but it was just to spite her further, he bought Ottawa one, too, to ease the first reaction), for Yuna. Some of those were just in good humor, but he did really put some love and recently acquired knowledge in the others, because he didn't want to come off as cocky as they had thought of him for the last 9 years when he gave them ironic crap. To be fair, he did like the ironic crap, too. He liked the cable cords the best.

Ilya also bought a silver lily pendant on a chain, but he felt embarrassed about it and tried to talk himself out of giving it to Shane. He first chose the rose one, his last name was kind of about it, but having his ex being named Rose spoiled this option. He also found the lily to be a symbol of them hiding, so the feelings about this one were also mixed. And yet, he genuinely wanted to give Shane something to always have with him, though Canada didn't sell *Ilya* chain pendants anywhere, obviously. If he was in Russia, he could just drive to the first touristy local shop outside of Moscow and buy an engraved teaspoon with his name, but the thought of giving Shane a spoon with his name made him cackle. Why spoons, he didn't know, and never wondered before.

Maybe, he could engrave something like a plug, perhaps next year.

He took a picture of an obnoxious pair of stockings made to look like candy canes on display of some lingerie store and sent it to Svetlana. She reacted with a painting nails emoji and replied:

17:44 Svetik-semitzvetik

Jane would rock them better than me iykwim

Ilya sent her a middle finger, amused, and felt the urge to open up to her. She already figured out *Jane* was a guy, and maybe, maybe, that he was Shane, but Ilya just needed to talk to his best friend about them. About being a boyfriend. About celebrating Christmas together. About shopping for gifts to give out to his new parents-almost-in-law. Without the almost part if he has something to say about it.

Again. Knock on the wood thrice, spit over your left shoulder. Ilya really should have stopped thinking about it, or he would jinx the hell out of it.

All in all, he loved the hours he spent choosing thoughtful and not really gifts for Hollanders. Except Shane. Shane's present was still a looming possibility of a Great All-Time Fuck-Up. But Ilya was going to figure something out, even if it was two weeks before Christmas, and more so, two weeks of practice, and games, and non-stop travelling.

*

Second, he loved wrapping all those presents in different papers divided by a certain Hollander he was going to give it to. Yuna's paper was red, with golden ornaments all over it, not overly glossy. Very pretty. For David Ilya chose the blue one with silver shiny snowflakes. He liked the way it kind of resembled his eyes and hair colors, but also the cloudy sky David presumably liked, based on the way his whole Instagram page was filled with the pics of pretty skylines.

Shane's was tacky, with ludicrous pictures of Santas, and reindeers, and snowmen, in every color imaginable. Ilya took it the second he saw it in the sea of classy, foiled, neatly printed, emerald green and red wrapping papers, and he had no idea why exactly it felt like Shane to him. But it did. It would also piss Shane off like hell, to be fair, and Ilya used it as a way to compensate for the sappiness of the present itself.

He didn't really pick one yet, and he had two days left, but he somehow was sure it would be incredibly, impossibly, painstakingly sappy.

He also got a tattoo of a loon, which didn't count as a present in itself, not truly, but he planned to wrap his hand to reveal it, too. Sometimes he thought about just wrapping his whole body, or just a dick, but he would need a lot more paper while having only one roll, and it crossed the line of irony, which he already disregarded as not good enough. Ilya so painfully needed to think of a perfect gift it drove him insane.

But, now he was wrapping the presents he already had, and he was uncharacteristically giddy about it. He hid in their room with Shane, having kicked him out first, surrounded by the boxes, and backs, and scraps of paper, and pieces of tape that folded on themselves and pissed him off with that. He put on some cheesy Christmas music to fully get into the spirit, and now that one song from *Home Alone* played as he neatly folded the paper of the puzzle box. He tried to make each and every present look perfect, struggling when the excess of the paper refused to be held by three pieces of tape on the sides, but not once he scolded whatever it was he struggles with like he usually woud. No, he cherished every second, and he took his time, mostly not in an attempt on perfection, but to spend a little more time doing something out of pure love for people. He rarely got to do something like that. Or feel like that, to be honest.

"Can I come in?" he heard from the door in lieu of knocking. He raised his head to see Yuna, peeking through an ajar door, her expression so incredibely warm his heart twinged. He wanted to spring up and hug her. He wanted to cry ugly. He wanted to never leave this moment.

What a way to go in 15 years, from fearing your father's service weapon being unholstered by your impure desires to being excited for your mother-in-law to hoist you up and embrace in her pure love.

What a life you've chosen yourself here, Ilya Rozanov.

*

Yuna hated every second of it.

She rarely got anything exciting out of Christmas preparations, now that Shane was a grown adult. Christmas Eve used to be fun when she got to fake Santa's huge footprint on the carpet while David distracted little Shane with looking for the Christmas reindeers in the backyard, or when she covered for David while he drew snowflakes and wrote *ho-ho-ho's* in white gouache on the outside of their windows, or when she got to dress little Shane into intricate but ridiculous costumes, like a baby elf in 1995, or a lamppost in 1997. Now, with their only son out of the house and not even celebrating with them every year, the Christmas preparations mostly meant talking to exhausted cashiers, noisy neighbours, and overstimulated David, cooking something classy and so Canadian to impress their locals at the community service, and watching another rerun of *Die Hard*.

She liked it, well, tolerated, when Shane was there. She still found some fun in choosing him a present, showing him embarrassing baby pictures, and cooking for *him*. For their little family.

She knew David loved when Shane was there, too. They got to have their own little merry Christmas, just the three of them, without neighbours who thought of them as miserable sad parents having to endure the lonely holiday and always invited them somewhere. David loved cooking for them, as well. It was a set of traditions they all cherished: a meal from mom, a meal from dad, no movie reruns but a good laugh over something new the Hallmark put out that year, one meaningless present and a stocking full of favourite candy, even if Shane's was full of protein bars. It worked greatly. It didn't even require much preparation at all.

Yuna hated that she didn't get that simple traditional Christmas with her son this year, even while he was there. Not that she hated Ilya Rozanov. She kind of hated the change it ought to bring, and she mostly, only really, hated not *knowing* how to incorporate his own traditions into theirs, how to manage four people, not three, and how to make Ilya happy with them this year.

She made it known she learnt how to say his name properly and now earnestly cringed every time an announcer butchered it. She went in great ways to order something silly, what a young man would like, but meaningful for a present. And she never, ever, said anything about being so nervous of his presence ever since they agreed with Shane and David that it would be great to have him here this year. It would. She just hated the idea of not being able to corner him and ask about every little thing she needed to know to make it perfect. She had to make it perfect. She saw how her son loved this man – and she just had to make sure he loved it here with them, too. Both of them.

It was hell of a lot of a job.

Yuna Hollander was never a quitter. She raised the best NHL player, after all.

It was a couple of days before the Christmas Eve she found out she was wrong this whole time. She was going to ask if Ilya, who never showed a part of him down here for a solid three hours, was okay and needed something to eat. She knocked three times. Then, when he didn't open, she took it upon herself to push the door slightly ajar and saw the reason why: the young man was deeply drowned in a flow. Creative, or just tentative, she didn't know, but he had tape in his hair, sciccors in his mouth, and Carol of the Bells on full volume.

Her stomach flipped with warmth. If she was thirty years younger, and before she met David, she surely would have fallen in love with this boy just by the way he smiled to himself wrapping presents for his new family.

She also knew he had been an orphan. She never spoke about it but made it in every way obvious that not anymore.

But, the feeling in her stomach, although similar to butterflies, wasn't falling in love. Well, not of that kind. She knew that much, because she only ever felt it about one person, and it wasn't David.

It was Shane.

Yuna had a son in her hands now, the new one, but not less loved, and she sure as hell wasn't going to waste it. "Can I come in?" she asked, not even trying to wipe the smile off of her face.

Ilya looked up and quickly put the half-wrapped box in his arms behind his back. Blinked twice. "Uh…"

"Have you wrapped mine?" Yuna clarified, not stepping further into the room before Ilya nodded, having looked around him just to check. Then, she entered the room and sank onto the floor next to him, taking a wooly hat with knitted snowflakes on it into her hands. She made a show of examining it even though her next words had already formed when she was still at the door. "David will love it".

She just knew it was for him, and by the way Ilya simply smiled broader she knew she was right.

"Really?" he asked, quietly, like a kid who just had to make sure he was really-really getting that puppy for his birthday.

"Yes," she confirmed and was surprised when Ilya only nodded to himself and returned to wrapping the puzzle box he hid from her before. She loved Ilya when he was up to his usual antics, but seeing this, domestic, dedicated, unbothered by the world side of him simply made her feel protective over him. He didn't put up his walls even with her around, he didn't bicker, he didn't close himself off. And she was kind of happy he hid this part of him in this room, not only because the world was a dangerous, ruthless, shitty place for such honesty, but because she would be jealous of others who got to have Ilya like this.

Nope, no. It's only a Hollander prerogative. No one else will get it, she decided then and there, only partially, only when Ilya decided it was time and place, but not like this.

Like Shane was now that his secret went out the door with them felt like fully himself in their home, Ilya got this place, too, to be fully Ilya. Unabashedly and truthfully. And she would make sure of that.

And maybe, she hated Christmas preparations, but surely not *every* second of it. Some of those were truly perfect without her even trying.

*

Ilya loved every reaction he got from Hollanders.

David let out such a funny, animated laugh when he opened the chargers, and Yuna threw his jersey across the room into his head. Ilya loved wheezing along with them and dodging Shane's attempts to smack his sides. The puzzles warranted a ten-minute rant from David, too, about the beauty of the pictures, and the differences in puzzle cuts, and the way they could place the trays here in the living room to let everyone who passed by add a piece to the whole thing, but also it made him look at Ilya somewhat incredulously, like David knew more than he let on.

Yuna immediately changed into the cardigan and poured her and Ilya a glass, even though David tried to one-up her on that offer with the vodka. Ilya just took both glasses and dodged Shane's exasperated smacks again.

He didn't think Shane would be so frustrated with him after he gave him his present.

Ilya had to drive for 4 hours to get this thing when he thought of it. And then, inbetween the drives, he spent around the same amount of time browsing his new house and unopened boxes (he had stayed with Shane, or Hollanders, or in the hotel rooms for a lot more time than here to even unpack properly) for the thing, and the more time he spent the less genius the idea looked for him.

But, he still felt giggly, almost sappy, while he stood up and cleared his throat. He dragged Shane up from where they sat on the floor as well, just because the occasion felt like a standing one. And before his breath got a chance to catch up, or his pounding heart deafened him enough, or his legs gave out, Ilya took an unwrapped puck from his pocket.

Shane didn't look that impressed.

Ilya didn't let this get under his skin as he brushed the worn off surface of the puck and took a deep steadying breath. He also turned the puck over so Shane could read the words and realize that it came from the first ever game they played together. Canada-Russia Junior Worlds Final. Almost ten years ago.

"I don't think losing or winning was about hockey that day," Ilya started, mostly unprepared. He did think of what he would say, but decided the words would come naturally, and it seemed they did. "I think I won because I met you. I also think you should have it, because I lost my heart that day, and these two should go together".

“A puck and your heart?” Shane furrowed his brows in confusion, but he still blushed. Ilya took it as a win.

“Yeah, with you. You should have them both,” he explained carefully. “Like, this trophy is yours, ‘cause you won that thing. Me, I mean”.

“It’s not a trophy”.

Well, Ilya just had to chuckle helplessly. “Shane, I’m trying to be romantic, shut up”.

Shane watched his face for another couple of seconds and then beamed so brightly Ilya almost covered his eyes from the fierceness of it.

“Oh, I got it!” Shane exclaimed, and the next second his face crumpled. “Ilya-a…” he cried out through tears and smiles, and threw his hands around Ilya. Well. A win’s a win. Ilya just held him tighter and smiled over his shoulder to Yuna and David, who both had eerily similar awed expressions on their dim-lit faces. The moment felt magical, almost. Like from a Harry Potter movie or something like this, Ilya simply couldn’t come up with a better comparison.

Then, he thought, it was not to compare. It was to live in. So, his eyes fluttered closed, he kissed Shane’s temple, and his thumbs drew circles around Shane’s back.

Ilya loved it endlessly.

He still waited for his turn. Hollanders gave out their presents to each other before him, in a strange order, like, Shane first got another non-fiction hockey book from David, then David got a leather cardholder from Yuna (he commented how he didn’t notice his had worn off but Yuna did, it was honestly wholesome), then Yuna got some tickets to some show from Shane. It genuinely looked practiced, but, something told Ilya, that’s how lived-in years-long family traditions look like. He tried to soak in it to the point of never remembering his last holidays back at home, where he gave everyone expensive gifts on his first salary and got a pair of bootleg sneakers two sizes small. He tried to never come back home for New Years after that.

So, he felt incredibly off-handed when David rose up and just went to get eggnog from the kitchen. He was under the impression the eggnog was for after the gift-giving. Maybe, David noticed the question in his eyes when he got back and handed him one of the mugs, because he looked at Yuna, then back at him and asked:

“Do you want yours now? We have them, but…” David trailed off at the incredibly puzzled face Ilya made.

“What? Why not now? Yes, I want my present!” he exclaimed in faux outroar, not quite losing his smile yet. Yuna laughed at his antics, as she always did, but it sounded almost shy. “You all have yours, I have mine!”

Shane chuckled beside him, somewhat awkwardly, shaking his head. Ilya gave him a look he hoped translated his distaste towards not having a present given to him approximately yesterday. With a little smile on her pursed lips, Yuna stood up from her chair, walked across the room and sat on the floor next to the two of them.

When she placed her hand on his shoulder, Ilya started suspecting something serious. Was someone dying from cancer? Was *he* dying from cancer?

“It’s just that, um, we know they don’t really celebrate Christmas in Russia. Right?” she said.

“Yeah…” croaked Ilya, and it was now that he really believed they just skipped his presents whatsoever. But David said they have them? Whatever. His faux outroar turned into a tangible worry. “So I don’t get gift?”

“Ilya,” Shane said, pointedly.

Okay, yeah, whatever, he can go without gifts. Not a big deal.

“But I got *you* gifts!” he argued despite trying to look like it was not a big deal.

“Ilya, we have a fucking room full of gifts for you, and I told them it’s a stupid idea, but they wanted to give them to you for New Years,” Shane intercepted, exasperated, and only then noticed he swore. “Sorry. Swear jar, I know,” he stopped Yuna from commenting. “Because they insisted you only celebrate the New Year”.

Somehow, even after drinking all that cold beer, Ilya suddenly felt very warm in his stomach. He could swear his face reddened from the way his cheeks burned, and he knew exactly just how stupidly lovestruck his unprompted smile looked. He moved his gaze from Shane to David and then Yuna, not quite believing what he had heard.

It was, actually, really sweet. The thing is, American Christmas did not have that much difference from Russian New Years, apart from the date – all the same outrageous lights on the streets, old bearded men in red costumes, fir trees and present boxes. So, Ilya never cared much about doing all the same things just a week earlier than in his childhood. And yet, just a thought of someone unknowingly, or maybe very much purposefully, giving him this little island of distant, familiar, childish feelings, drowned in memories years ago, among the country that was still new to him – Jesus, it nearly made him want to cry.

He was almost 30, for God’s sake!

“We thought, maybe, we can throw together something on the 31st? Just so you have this celebration, too,” David added, somewhat shamefully.

It shouldn’t’ve really mattered, but it did, and Hollanders thought of that. Or perhaps, they somehow missed his flashy cross he never took off and thought he doesn’t celebrate religious holidays – whatever, the most important thing is they were ready to interrupt their routines, their traditions built on years of being a family, to incorporate something new. *Someone* new. Him, Ilya Rozanov, to be completely fair.

And to think that he gave them a *charger* and *a Boston jersey with his name on it*. Jesus Christ.

“Um,” he started, but his voice broke. He cleared his throat, ignoring very attentive, very concerned gazes from all three of the Hollanders, and promptly pretended his eyes weren’t

wet. “I mean… It wasn’t that stupid of idea”.

Ilya wiped his nose with the back of his hand and let Shane fully embrace him in his warm, huge hockey arms, just like he loved it: his temple pressed onto Shane’s collarbone, cheek to his shoulder, feeling his breath messing Ilya’s curls. The smile on Ilya’s lips was so jarring and wide his jaw hurt.

He wanted to tell them all he loved them like crazy, but he opted for:

“But, no, I’d like my gifts now. I’ll get you something for the New Years. Separately”.

“Greedy,” Shane whispered into his hair, a grin so audible in his voice. Ilya scoffed and leaned up to smooch his cheek.

Smiling as brightly as them, Yuna brushed her palm over his knee. “Sure, honey,” she said.

A minute later she brought out not, like, a room full of presents, but a lot more boxes than Ilya ever anticipated. Straightening up, he looked at David’s pleased-with-himself face and back at the literal shopping cart Yuna pushed into the room. Letting out an amused chuckle, Shane pressed himself into Ilya’s back, absentmindedly rubbing his chest.

Ilya felt flanked (“Surrounded, but unbowed!”) with no way out, but he so wholeheartedly loved it. He exhaled, and leaned into the hug, and let himself be bathed in this unabashedly sincere care, this time in the form of holiday presents.

Yuna gave him three middle-sized paper bags with cute scenic paintings on them. Well, maybe he and David share their love for scenery, he had in fact zoned out multiple times just watching sunsets through their windows. Two contained very well-made and quite expensive looking action figures of him and Shane, his in Centaurs uniform, and she made a spectacle of showing him how he could detach and change the hands of the figurines and bend them around to pose with the sticks or without them. Ilya tried so hard not to make a comment about which pose exactly he would put the figures into, but based on Shane’s blushed cheeks he knew exactly his mother didn’t particularly think this present through.

The third one was a Metros T-shirt, and Ilya wheezed so hard his stomach hurt. They did have a similar sense of humor with Yuna, surely they did.

“So you never show up in an enemy’s merch in our house never again,” she added, clapping his knee while he tried to stop laughing.

As if he wouldn’t start tearing up over wearing a Hollander surname on his back if he stopped laughing right this second. No, Jesus, this family was of saps, him included, and he didn’t know how to even contemplate the level of care these people tried to show him.

Well, maybe he could, as he did the same thing for them.

There were also small things. New blanket. Some pretty hoodies. Electric razor (he complained about his one breaking apart not more than a week ago). Recipe book of Japanese cuisine. A bag of assorted goods from what David called is a Russian shop, and Ilya did

recognize some of the things, like sunflower seeds, or specific wheat bread, or chips. He opened a bag of garlic bread chips and threw a handful into his mouth despite protests from Shane who insisted he still wanted to kiss him today. Ilya said that a lover sees no obstacle. Shane smacked him, this time successfully – Ilya was too busy with his bread chips.

Lastly, David gave him a card, and Ilya expected anything from just a few lines written in neat letters to money, which would be so uncalled for, giving millions in his bank account, but when he opened it, a paper flew out.

“Whoops, I forgot to tape it down,” David sighed, although Ilya could not care less about it.

The paper was thick, and Ilya knew the word for it sounded like *vanilla* but couldn't remember, not in the moment. The back was just an intricate print, but on the front, in bold letters of some overly fancy font, clearly to make it look more funny and serious at the same time, was just three lines:

“SERTIFICATE

for ___ session(s) of puzzling

with David Hollander”

A date and a signature, and in the blank space David simply had drawn an infinity symbol.

Ilya noticed his cheeks were wet only when his next heaved inhale came with a sniffing sound. He quickly wiped his nose and sent David what he hoped looked like a blinding smile. From her chair, Yuna made a snarky comment about how she now had twice more puzzle pieces to take out of the roomba filter, and Ilya had no idea what a dance had to do with it, but he saw how her eyes were wet as well. Behind him, Shane made a small noise and discreetly wiped his face off the back of Ilya’s shirt, not quite letting him go, only tightening the grip.

Something told Ilya it was much more of a gesture coming from David. Which, well, only made him tear up more.

And as if he didn’t know his heart would explode if one more happy thing happened to him in the span of minutes, Ilya turned back and cocked a brow at Shane, saying:

“And where yours, sweetheart?”

“My present requires solitude,” Shane murmured quite cheekily.

“Requires a what?” Ilya raised his brows.

“Privacy,” he reiterated, rolling his eyes, and smacked Ilya’s side before he even had a chance to make a comment this situation really begged for.

Bold of him, now his parents would think he went to give Ilya a quick blowie in lieu of the Christmas present, but while Shane dragged him out of the room to the balcony Ilya had a good look on Hollanders’ knowing smiles, so maybe it wasn’t an innuendo at all. Or Shane

told them about the blowie, which would be batshit insane. Or Shane finally, after all those years, would murder him, and not that he did not deserve it for a million things, but not at Christmas!

But he still went willingly, and he always would.

*

Shane feared every second of it.

Of the hours of practice and a myriad of tries he did before his parents who could only check him against a monotonous recording of the voice button on the translator app. Of the countless times he contemplated just reaching out to Svetlana to check the translation but chickened out before actually sending a message, because he hated the idea of him being the one who laid the cards before her to figure this entry-level puzzle out, and not Ilya, or the idea of her, out of all people, seeing these words first. Of walking Ilya to the balcony by his big, warm hand and reciting the whole thing for a billionth time, and still dreading to forget something, or be completely off with the pronunciation, or start crying in the middle of the speech. He'd hate starting crying in the middle of the speech. He rewrote it twenty-three times!

What also didn't help is the fact that the presents his parents gave to Ilya were so good. Thoughtful, and tangible, and perfect, and Ilya has already teared up a bit. The fact that he had to deliver a speech *now* did not make it any more easy on Shane's anxious brain.

He took it upon himself to position Ilya the way it would be perfect in his head, on the right side of the balcony, farther from the door. Not so he has no chance to escape Shane's horrendous Russian, but because *Shane* might have needed a chance to flee. So, he put Ilya where he wanted him, shook his hands, stepped back a bit, and breathed in. It was only then he realized the balcony was quite significantly colder that their living room.

Ilya definitely had something to say about it, so Shane blurted the perfected start of the speech before he could have opened his mouth.

"Может, ты не разберёшь ни слова, но, я думаю, до тебя дойдёт посыл." It took only one sentence for Ilya's jaw to fall to the floor. He caught up immediately. Well. It meant that Shane spoke at least intelligible words. "Что я хотел раскрыть тебе всё моё сердце на языке, который значит для тебя гораздо больше. Что я хоть раз хотел побыть на равных. Так честнее, правда? И что я хотел сказать тебе, что люблю тебя, и полностью имею это в виду. Я люблю тебя," Shane stopped for a second to just exist for a second in a world where Ilya genuinely looked dumbfounded and so, so lovestruck. A lone tear spilled down his cheek, and Shane secretly loved the way Ilya even cried like a movie star of sorts. Fucking perfect man. "Как-то даже правильно, что это были первые русские слова, которым ты научил меня, не находишь? Я люблю тебя. Больше, чем ты можешь себе представить. Я хочу, чтобы ты был частью моей жизни. Я хочу, чтобы доверил мне своё сердце, как я доверил тебе своё. Я хочу любить тебя до конца своих дней, хотя я могу тут немного перебарщивать. Я просто…" he tralied off on the word he somehow had the most problem with. He learned what it meant and tended to insert virtually everywhere, so he forgot for a second what came next. The pause gave him a chance to take a deep breath and

find the willpower to take Ilya's shaking hand. "Я очень хочу, чтобы ты знал, что даже за закрытыми дверями я люблю тебя до безумия. Так что, я хотел, чтобы ты помнил, что у тебя есть эти закрытые двери и наша любовь за ними. Что тебе всегда есть место у меня дома, в моей жизни, в моём всём, в любое время. Я люблю тебя, Илья."

After a beat, he handed out a palm of his hand with a key ring and three keys on it. Each one with its own respectful keychain clearly stating which one is it: for the cottage, for the Montreal building, for his house. He thought of adding the ones for his parents' house, but it seemed more fitting for their own present.

Ilya took some time before reacting at all. For what felt like ages he just stared at Shane, evidently struck by the speech, and if Shane learned something about this man he could tell he was more terrified than anything else, most likely by the fierce wave of feelings Shane outpoured on him just now. His own heart got stuck somewhere in his throat in the very beginning of the practiced speech and only fluttered back to the place when Ilya carefully took the keys, not ever moving his eyes off Shane's, not even blinking.

Oh, God, it was embarrassing. Was it too much? It was too much. Shane promptly dropped his gaze and made himself stop spiralling. Didn't quite work.

"Was it, um," he blushed. "Was it any good?"

"What?" Ilya whispered, flabbergasted.

"I don't know if I butchered it, I had to memorize everything from text-to-speech feature, and I'll die if you didn't understand a word of it, so tell me if it was any good," Shane blurted in one breath, not quite looking up from the floor. He felt Ilya taking a sharp inhale and saw his hand moving like he scratched his head.

"Well, your accent was awful," he deadpanned.

Shane's neck clicked so fast he raised his head to look this dickhead in the eyes, but before he could flip him off with all the outrage in the world he noticed the glistening on his cheeks and the brightness of his earnest grin.

"Shane, love, do you hear yourself? *Any good*? Are you crazy? That's–" He choked on his own breath and blinked a tear away. His voice was so wet and thick *Shane* almost couldn't make out any of the words he was saying. "That's the best thing anyone ever said to me. Done for me".

"Really?" Shane asked in a small voice. Ilya brushed his fingers through his hair and left his hand on his cheek.

"Shane. Я люблю тебя," he said and leaned in for the most earnest, most careful, most maddening kiss in Shane's life, and he already had a record of those with Ilya to think that nothing would ever top the previous one. Ilya always found it in him to dumbfound Shane just by the caress of his soft, thick lips. "You're gonna drive me fucking crazy like that".

"You already have".

“Drove crazy?”

“Driven *me* crazy”.

“Yeah, you learned Russian. And asked me if you were *any good*. Of course you’re crazy. No one in their right mind would do it. Even me,” Ilya tried to joke, but it was so obvious he felt nothing less than what Shane did – all the love, all the care in the world.

So Shane didn’t feel embarrassed anymore when he planted another kiss on Ilya’s lips and said, “I would do anything for you”.

Ilya grinned. Simple, but it was enough.

"Please stop being so perfect, I'm jealous," he said and then shook his head. "Well, no. Don't stop. I like it".

*

David knew he would never forget any second of it.

Just the way these two held hands when they entered the room again sent him back years and years into the firsts of his and Yuna's relationship. They never stopped loving each other, but the start is always something else. It's stars. It's sunshine. David saw it right there, in the tears, and laughs, and touches his son gave Ilya and got right back.

The day was somber after that. They ate the leftovers from the dinner, they watched a dumb Hallmark movie (Ilya wouldn't stop inserting unwarranted but hilarious comments every two minutes), they played Cluedo. Ilya was a nasty cheater, but Shane somehow always knew.

“Oh, can I cook for the New Years?” Ilya asked, way too eager for it to be an innocent offer, somewhere in the evening over the dishes he was drying.

“Sure,” David shrugged. “Is there, like, something traditional? Like turkey, or some casserole…”

“Yes,” Ilya confirmed with such a shit-eating grin Shane visibly started actually worrying, which didn’t go unnoticed by Rozanov himself. “Disgusting, fat salads with a gallon of mayo each. Shane, sweetheart, you’ll love it”.

Shane made a retching noise and recoiled when Ilya came to him to envelope in a bear hug and nuzzle into his nape.

“Wait till you hear about the meat jelly, sweetheart”.

David would surely never forget the meat jelly.

End Notes

Shane's speech in English:
"Maybe you won't understand a word, but I think you'll get a message. That I wanted to lay my heart out for you in the language that means more to you. That I wanted to be on par for once. It's fair, right? That I wanted to say that I love you and I mean it. I love you. How fitting is that these were the first Russian words you taught me, isn't it? I love you. More than you can imagine. I want to have you in my life. I want you to trust me with your heart like I trust you with mine. I want to love you till the day I die, but I might be reaching way too far ahead here. I just… I need you to know that even behind closed doors I love you like crazy. So I wanted you to know that you have these closed doors with our love behind them. That you're welcome in my home, my life, my everything, anytime. I love you, Ilya".
I wanted to run it through the translator to make it look genuine, like the botched russian Shane would actually get from the app, but nope. I wrote it in russian first because i believe the power of love would fix the translator and make it faithful to proper russian speech.
was it sappy? yes of course it was. i have no intention to create a place for them to be anything but happy and over the top in love. you want angst you read the long game idk idc
If you want to learn something that was not clear in the text and also because im acoustic like that:
Knocking on wood and spitting over the left shoulder – a superstition about not wanting to jinx something.
Flicking a coin into a body of water – a superstition about wanting to return to the place.
Svetik-semitsvetik - a wordplay on a title of a russian tale "seven-coloured little flower", as Svetlana's nickname sounds close to the word 'flower'. In my head he would name her contact like that back in like 2008 just because she would hate it desperately and his love language is ragebaiting.
Gifting men shaving cream is a meme stereotype, usually for like the men's day (which is a different thing completely with terrible undertones here in russia so i support not giving anyone anything for the day)
Surrounded but unbowed – another russian meme, "окружён, но не сломлен", like, being in a stalemate situation but not surrendering, ironically
Bread chips – like, small pieces of either white or wheat bread, fried to the point of being ten times harder and crunchier than a crouton, with different flavours, like, garlic, or fish, or bacon, anything you can imagine. I love the one with pickle flavour. And caviar.

thank you for reading it!! it was my first english fic ever haha.
please leave comments if you liked something i thrive only on comments.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!