This Could Be Our Thing

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This Could Be Our Thing

by RikuNghts

Summary

Shane had always loved Christmas.
Ilya had stopped caring after his mother died.
This year… they do something different.

Notes

Hello, I'm breaking out of my usual fandom for this. With Christmas coming I had to do something for Hollanov because I can't get these boys out of my head. Also, I love tourtiere so being able to write it into something logically made me feel giddy. Anyway, this is my first time writing in such an active fandom. Enjoy something soft!

Shane had always loved Christmas. Growing up he was always the first out of bed, running down the stairs to see the Christmas tree lit and sparkling with presents left in piles around it. He wouldn't say he was *spoiled*, but looking back he could see why some people might think that.

Ilya, on the other hand, had never really cared for the holiday. At least, not after his mother had died when he was twelve. It was always just a day with an overbearing father and a brother who couldn't be bothered to hide his hatred. After he'd been signed to his Boston team, he'd spent the three day break alone. Sometimes, rarely, with Svetlana.

He hadn't told Shane about this, but when Shane asked what he had planned for Christmas and Ilya had responded with "nothing," the way Shane's eyes lit up should have been an indication.

"You're coming to the cottage," was all he said, and there was no room for argument.

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Ilya was set to arrive on Christmas Eve, and they would spend that day, Christmas, and the day after together. Shane's mother, Yuna, had already made plans for Christmas Day, insisting her two sons would be spending it at *their* cottage, eating and opening gifts. Yuna always went all out for holidays, Shane had warned Ilya:

The snow had already started falling when Ilya's car pulled into the driveway. Shane, wearing a ridiculous reindeer sweater that lit up across the chest, opened the door before Ilya even knocked.

"You are wearing that in public," Ilya said flatly, brushing snow off his shoulders as he stared at the monstrosity.

"I wore this to the grocery store," Shane replied, stepping aside. "An older woman told me I brought her joy."

Ilya snorted but didn't argue. He handed over the duffel bag slung over his shoulder and stepped inside, pausing as the warmth and scent of cinnamon hit him all at once.

A fresh tree stood in the corner of one room covered with strands of lights but no ornaments. When Ilya turned to ask, Shane's cheeks were delightfully pink. "I thought, uh, I thought

maybe we could decorate it together."

"You have decorations, yes?"

"Of course! I just thought…it might be nice…"

Ilya stared at the tree with its twinkling lights and then at Shane, who looked so earnest standing there in his hideous sweater. "Yes. It will be nice."

Shane grinned and pulled him into the open room. "My mom has kinda planned out the entire day for us tomorrow. I hope you don't mind. I know she can be a bit of a manager even when she's trying to just be mom."

"I do not mind. I like your mother."

"The decorations are in that bin," Shane said, pointing toward a plastic tub shoved in the corner. "I went a little overboard, maybe, buying some new things." The redder his face grew, the more the freckles stood out, and it warmed Ilya to the idea of doing this silly thing together.

Ilya crouched down and opened it, lifting the lid like it might bite him. Inside were neatly wrapped ornaments, tangled ribbon, and at least three packages of miniature lights still in their boxes. Some of the ornaments were clearly new, the boxes still taped together. Others…

Ilya pulled out a clay disc that looked like it could have been a hockey puck and held it out for Shane.

"Don't laugh. I made that when I was like, five."

"Is good ornament. Heavy like a puck, too." Ilya grinned as he tried to place it on the tree and the branch dipped down.

By the time the last ornament was hung — a felt monstrosity Shane claimed was a snowman he'd made as a kid but looked suspiciously like a decapitated potato — they were both sitting on the floor, backs to the couch.

Ilya had been quiet since Shane turned the lights off overhead and plugged in the tree. The entire room was cast in a soft gold glow, which lit up Shane's already beautiful face.

"I know it's cheesy," Shane said, voice lower now, more careful. "But I always loved this part. When everything's done and you just sit there. Feels like time slows down. I used to lie under the tree and look up at the lights."

Ilya didn't answer right away. Instead he enjoyed the quiet of the moment as the snow fell outside. Shane cleared his throat and got up, leaving the room only to return a minute later with a wrapped box.

Ilya blinked. "We agreed, no presents."

Shane grinned sheepishly. "Okay. Technically, maybe, but it's small and it's Christmas. Our first Christmas, really."

Ilya sucked in a breath and stood. Shane made a noise behind him as he rummaged through his bag then returned with his own small, wrapped box.

Shane stared. "Ilya."

"You said no presents," Ilya muttered, crossing his arms. "But you have one."

"Yeah. But we said no presents. So why do you have one?"

"Well, is lie, I think. Neither of us meant it."

They stared each other down across the living room, tree blinking between them. Then Shane huffed and dropped back onto the couch with a small laugh as Ilya sat beside him.

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"My mother is very excited to have you here," Shane said for the fifth time as they pulled up to his parents cottage. "And I'm sorry if she gets to be a bit much."

There was a fresh layer of snow on the ground from the night before, and the air smelled crisp and clean. "Your mother is wonderful. Will not he too much," Ilya responded as Shane opened the door.

Warmth billowed out, and as Ilya stepped inside he was transported to another time and place.

The scent of burning cedar filled the air along with gingerbread, cloves, and something that smelled like home.

Ilya froze in the entryway. He had been expecting whatever food it was boring Canadians ate during Christmas. He was not expecting the scent of his childhood to overwhelm him. He blinked rapidly as Yuna enveloped him in a hug.

"Ilya! Merry Christmas. We're glad you could come," she said, drawing back to smile at him. Ilya offered as much of a smile as he could without tears flowing from his eyes.

"Yes, Merry Christmas," he responded and shook David's hand when it was offered. He was pulled into another hug and Shane, standing behind his parents, looked utterly delighted.

"We hope you're both hungry," she said as David took their coats. "I decided to try something new this year, and I hope it turned out well."

Ilya followed, dumbfounded, as he was led to a dining room laden with dishes—far too much food for just the four of them to eat.

“You are expecting more company?” he asked.

“No, just us. I wanted to try some more traditional Russian dishes this year, since you’re part of the family.” Ilya glanced over at Shane whose cheeks had turned an alarming shade of red.

“Mom, this is way overboard.”

“So we have leftovers,” she shrugged.

If anyone was privy to the emotions battling inside Ilya, they ignored them as they sat down to eat. Under the table, Shane took his hand and he squeezed it, hoping the trembling didn’t come through.

There were the typical Christmas dishes of mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, and ham, but they had been made the way he had eaten in childhood. There was also baked fish that tasted like his mother’s recipes and a meat pie (*tourtière*, Shane had explained). Ilya ate until he was ready to explode, and even then didn’t want to stop. Who cares if it was during the season? He could afford it.

After dinner they’d sat in the living room, old Christmas cartoons on the screen as David and Ilya worked on a puzzle he had dragged out. Shane and his mother talked quietly.

It was perfect.

At one point Ilya had to excuse himself, not because he needed to use the bathroom, but because he needed to step away before the tears started falling. Shane must have known something was wrong because he’d followed behind a moment later.

“You are like stalker. What if I was using the bathroom?” Ilya said as the door shut behind Shane.

“Well that would have been a surprise for both of us, I guess. Are you ok?” Shane asked. Ilya was leaning against the counter and staring at his reflection.

“It is… a bit much,” he admitted, taking a deep breath. “Your mother…”

“Are you upset?”

“No. Not in a bad way. I…miss my mother,” he admitted, and Shane pulled him into a hug. “Your mother…she did not have to make this food. Being here…it would have been enough.”

“Pretty sure my mom likes you better at this point,” Shane said with a small laugh. He pulled back to look up at Ilya and brushed a soft kiss against his lips. “Let’s go back out there. We can go back to the cottage if you want?”

“No. No, I am good. This is…ok.”

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The drive back to the cottage was quiet. Not awkward, just full.

Snow had begun falling again but the roads were still clear, so Shane kept one hand on the wheel and the other resting on the center console. Ilya took it without looking, though he saw the quick glance Shane made.

By the time they got inside, the tree lights were still twinkling faintly, casting shadows across the living room like the day hadn't ended yet. Ilya dropped his coat on the floor, mostly to mess with Shane, and stared at the blinking star at the top of the tree.

"I like it here," he said softly.

Shane was behind him in a second, arms looping around his waist, face pressed against his back. Ilya could feel the warm puffs of his breath through the fabric.

"I'm glad," he whispered. "Because I was kind of hoping… this could be our thing. Christmas, here. Us. Obviously Mom and Dad are just ten minutes away, but it's so quiet here, and we wouldn't have to hide…"

Ilya didn't respond right away. Then he turned and kissed him. "Next year," he said, brushing his fingers through Shane's hair. "You let me do food."

Shane grinned. "I don't know. My mom might have something to say about that. Maybe, maybe, she'll let you help her."

Ilya grabbed his face and peppered it with kisses, slowly backing him towards the couch. "Do you want to open your present?" Shane asked, only to find himself tumbling backwards over the back.

"What do you think I am doing?" Ilya said with a grin. "Opening my present."

"Ilya, that's not—Ilya!"

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