

I'm hearing your voice in a strange foreign language (if only I learned how to speak)

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by [sinesolesileo](#)

Summary

Where Shane exactly knows where he's heard Ilya saying "I love you" in Russian before. He's the weird kid, after all.

(inspired by hattrickhailey on Twitter!!!!)

Notes

This is the closest i'll ever get to a social experiment.

Or maybe not. I mean, English is not my first language, but I'm getting a Languages degree. Let's make it worth it or something. Just.... Ignore the mistakes. Or have pity for me in your own, private house.

AGAIN, thanks to the really sweet @hattrickhailey on Twitter for the prompt!!!! No, I don't know them, yes, I just asked permission to use their idea. That's basically how I function on a daily basis: some scenes haunt me until I write them. Ah-ah.

(This was the Tweet: shane asking ilya to tell him he loved him in russian and he immediately realized he had in fact heard that phrase before. on a long distance phone call. in a stairwell. holding back tears.)

Two quick notes: for this Shane, I highly recommend listening to Nothing New by Taylor Swift ft. Phoebe Bridgers. It was a great help for his character. I don't know if that's a good thing. And second: the title is from Halloween by Noah Kahan. Completely different vibe. I just love the song and it fitted.

Enjoy !!!!! and feel free to reach out to me on twitter !!! @abooutbibi

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

Shane always had a talent for saying the worst things on the worst times.

When he was nine, a kid fell during practice. His name was Ryan— Of *course* Shane remembers it was Ryan.

And unfortunately for Ryan, Shane was the closest teammate. Shane skated next to him, hitting the breaks with quiet *aplomb*. Ryan was shamelessly crying and holding his arm, situated in a very strange position against his covered chest. The coach was close by, but Ryan was still on the ice, Shane still above him. Every other kid would have probably tried to help him, to get him up on his legs (they were fine, after all), even to comfort him. Shane didn't. Because Shane was nine and he had already a clear idea of hockey, and schemes, and techniques, and strategies, and *injuries*. And also because hockey was the very first thing that sounded really natural to him. More than breathing, or walking, or talking: in all honesty, Shane really hated talking. He also really hated when all the other kids seemed so confident and happy in doing stuff he *despised*. Like going to themed parks, or trying new clothes, or listening to high volume music in the car. Things Shane knew were normal. Maybe that was precisely the point.

He reviewed the fall behind his eyes, before taking a second look at Ryan's arm. He blurted, efficient: "It's probably broken."

Ryan stood still, looking at him. At least he stopped crying, and Shane felt quite proud, hopeful he had been a good friend for once. He was about to demonstrate Ryan how he effectively broke his arm, when Ryan started sobbing against his good arm, louder than before. In the meantime, the coach had reached them. "Hollander, why are you standing there?" he barked "Help him!"

"He said my arm is broken", Ryan whined, eyes puffed, mouth trembling. The coach stared at Shane, clearly accusing:

"Seriously, Hollander? You think *this* is the right moment?"

"I—", he stuttered, before gulping. His cheeks were burning. "Sorry."

"Jesus. Take his hand— He needs to see the doctor."

Ryan never wanted to be his friend, by the way.

When he was sixteen, he was hanging out with some friends. Shane was even more involved in hockey, like it was his second skin (the one everyone saw, the strong one, the accepted one): they were waiting for his debut, after all. And in all sincerity, being sixteen, apart from hockey, was a living Hell. All the boys wanted to talk about girls, sex, expensive cars, models, smoking, parties, night clubs, alcohol. Forbidden fruits beyond reach, fascinating and irresistible *exactly* because they were forbidden, sweet reveries. Shane always forced himself to think about those. Even when he broke down in the quiet gloom of his room just because he had a noisy day. Where everyone was talking too loud and he had heard every squeak of the bus wheels, or where someone was standing too close to him in the cafeteria, and a

scratchy jumper was touching his bare arm, again and again and again, brushing. That was noisy too. It was for Shane.

Just like when you skip a very important lecture and you have to keep up with the rest of the class. Shane had to follow that thread, even if it was slipping from his fingers. *Yes, Mary Donovan is so hot. Hotter than her sister. I'd totally go for a Maserati instead of a Porsche. I can't wait to try shots.* Almost like a very well written script, words printed in an unknown language. Shane was only exercising the sounds of them, without really understanding, hoping his ear was good enough.

They were at Jackson's place. Stuart and Noah were playing some game on the TV. The endless clicks of the controllers were disturbing Shane, and the screen was too bright. He hadn't said any of it, though. He never did. Kane was curled up on the armchair, sipping a Coke. He was quiet, too. That was weird. Shane had always categorised all his friends' personalities, in order to understand when they were upset, or mad, generally off-centred. It was a good method, and no one had caught him yet.

Jackson noticed too, because he said: "You're okay, Kane? You're quiet."

Kane immediately loosed his legs: "Fucking Hell, bud. It's Stacey."

Stacey was Kane's girlfriend. Shane tilted his chin: he had started noticing that, for his friends, it was always really easy to open up. You asked, they talked. Shane wasn't like that. Shane felt shame (it was always shame) crawling his back in cold shivers and lips sealed like an armoured door. And where *the fuck* was the key? Or maybe he was afraid that they wouldn't have understood the concept of feeling time moving between his fingers. Heaven knows. "What about Stacey?", Noah asked, but he was still very focused on the game. He was almost hitting the controller, a blessing for Shane's skin and ears. Kane shrugged, then scoffed, kicking a pillow:

"I don't know. That's the point! She's, like, super-avoiding. And I'm starting to think she's lying to me."

Jackson whistled: "Fuck. Like in an innocent way or in a bad way?"

"Bad. I wanted to surprise her at her place, yesterday. Her mom opened the door. She thought Stacey was with *me*."

"Because she—"

"Yes, because she fucking told her so."

A strange silence filled the room. The game was still playing, but both Stuart and Noah looked nervous, like they didn't know how to keep going, or if. Jackson was torturing his hangnails. Shane blinked at all of them: he was confused. And even if it happened several times a day, and always in some social occasion, he hated being confused. Judging by Jackson's flustered cheeks and Stuart quick puffs, they were all thinking the same thing. So why no one was *saying* it?

He did: “She might be cheating on you.”

Kane immediately covered his face with his hands, while Jackson forced a laugh. Stuart finally paused the game and looked at him, exactly like the coach did when he was nine:

“Dude, what the fuck?”

When he was twenty-one, Hayden had invited him in a very fancy bar. Dimmed lights, glass tables, well studied cocktail names. Shane was grateful for the quiet room, the chairs wide enough to not scrub against his elbows, no weird textures coating the menu’s cover and discrete waiters, every table distant from the other, so distant that Shane couldn’t hear the conversations building around them. “It’s perfect here”, he beamed, and Hayden proudly smiled. He loved Hayden because he was simple. Genuine. He probably knew all too well that Shane was weird and that he had his *things*, and it was definitely aware that their team thought that of Shane, too. That bit wasn’t really important, not when he was *the* Shane Hollander, prodigy of his generation. At least, one of the prodigies. And Shane was fairly acquainted with the other one.

But if Shane’s team sometimes looked at his captain like he was some weird creature from another planet, maybe because Shane was folding his clothes to put them back in his bag always in the same order, or maybe because he always had salmon on Tuesdays, or because he had flinched at the arena’s roar before a game, Hayden didn’t. He studied, and adjusted. He tuned himself on Shane, like they were instruments on the same orchestra. Like if following his needs wasn’t that big of a deal. No loud music in their shared room? No problem. No underwear tossed on the floor? Noted. Volume of the tv always on even numbers? Fine. Shane felt safe, his back covered. It was nice to have a friend like Hayden.

(Every time he met up with Rozanov, he always used the bathroom first, after... Well, *everything*. And every time he came back, he said: “The towels are okay.”

Or: “Bad material. You don’t like. You can use mine.”

Shane quickly tossed that thought away.)

They softly spoke about the season, about some expositions Shane wanted to attend in Montreal — they honestly were Hayden’s limit —, they even did some gossip. Hayden was trying to convince Shane that gossiping was fun. When no one you care about is involved, at least. Shane chuckled, playing with an ornamental umbrella popped on his drink. It was bright pink. Shane liked bright pink.

Hayden was nervous, just like Kane was, back at Jackson’s house. Like he said, he has a well studied technique. Before he could ask if Hayden thought that Jackie was cheating on him, his friend muttered a fuck it and almost thrown a velvet, squared box on the glistering table. Shane felt his jaw collapsing, but he kept it together. *He’s not asking you to marry him, you idiot*, a voice said in his ear. A voice with a familiar Russian accent. If that wasn’t the case, then—

Shane quickly glanced at him: “You’re not asking Jackie to get married, are you?”

His best friend froze, then said: “I’m sorry, what happened to *I’m so happy for you? I have to be your best mate? When are you asking her?*”

“Why should I beg to be your best mate? That’s lame. And up to you.”

Hayden chuckled: “Shane, that’s so much not the point.”

“Okay” Shane took a quick breath “Hayden, I’m so happy for you. I have to be your best mate. When are you asking her?”

This time, Hayden properly laughed: “Jesus, Hollander! You’re something else, I swear. What’s wrong with getting married? Everyone gets married young here!”

Shane never understood the statement *everyone is doing it, so be it*. Probably because he hadn’t done a lot of things all his friends did. And also because he was doing a thing no one could have ever imagine him do it. The *thing* had a very weird tattoo. “You met her six months ago”, it’s all he said. It sounded numb, and childish, to his own ears. Hayden shrugged, unimpressed:

“Who cares, dude? Love has not a settled time and stuff. I love her. She loves me. We’d love to have a family...”

“*Whoa*. Have a family? Hayden, you’re twenty-one!”

“And we feel like we’re ready. Listen” Hayden stretched himself on the table “I understand it might sound weird to you, and I’m grateful for your concern. But I need you to trust me on this one, okay? I know what I’m doing. I wouldn’t propose to Jackie if I wasn’t sure she’d say yes. Imagine being rejected while you’re on your knee” he tried to joke, and Shane forced a smile. It was far from amusing. Humiliating, he would’ve said.

He couldn’t lie to him. “I’ll try my best” and Hayden welcomed him with the warmest smile, clearly thankful for his honesty “And... Well, there are a lot of positive sides. Jackie will be beautiful and happy, and I’d love to be an uncle.”

“Yes! Uncle Shane, everybody!” he cheered, clapping his hands once “Oh, bud, thank God. I can’t wait. And you’re right, Jackie will look almost *edible*. But you’re not allowed to say it! Even if you’ll definitely think it”, he assured, amused. While he was busy showing Shane the ring, Shane himself fixed his best relaxed expression, a well-trained mask put on to not upset Hayden. He would’ve never thought of Jackie as *edible*, as Hayden had said. Because they were about to get married, and because of something much more deeper than that. Something Shane hated even touch, like a dangerous, sleepy animal, always on guard, never completely defeated, with a refuge in his stomach, his lungs, threatening for his heart.

He’s quite used to it. To himself. He knows it’s a weird way to phrase it, but it’s true. *Being used to yourself*. Shane learned the technique several years ago.

And it’s really tiring.

It's like Shane himself is a big, full room. There's a table and some chairs, a sofa, a window, curtains and a carpet, ornaments and portraits on the wall, a faint trace of his perfume, the whole lot. And Shane is always trying to rearrange it at his best, moving stuff, making space, finding it for something new, even if it's the tight gap between the lamp and the armchair. He never stops, even if he feels like everybody else just *has* the room ready, while he's endlessly trying to make it better. In this room there is another Shane, always around: he sips from a mug and looks at him, constantly, with big, brown, sad eyes. He's slipping off his fingers like a floating balloon, but he never leaves. And he's always bitter, and confused, because he finds so unfair that everybody else in the world just has the room settled, while the two of them are pressed there, co-existing. He's the Shane that doesn't understand, or doesn't want to. Even if he spent a good part of his life listening to doctors who were trying to explain him how to live through a single day, how to tidy up the room. The room in which Shane was utterly, completely alone.

Well. Up to very recent developments, at least.

Maybe *recent* is not quite right. In different times and ways, there had always been some place for Ilya in his room. Sometimes he was in the corner, as something that Shane hadn't the strength to deal with. Sometimes he was sit at the table, relaxed, just because he wanted some attention, or maybe because he was already at the centre of Shane's, and he was just manifesting it as he pleased. Sometimes he had almost been kicked out, but he was good at fighting it. He was good in his glorious comebacks. And now, *now*, they're pressed together while Ilya is muttering how much he likes, he loves, the room arrangements. And Shane is loose in his arms, and happy.

They're at Shane's cottage, and it's morning. Still pale, somehow young. The last few hours had been a lot: the night before, Ilya had muttered nonsense about marrying Svetlana for citizenship, and Shane had just stared, eyes watery, on the verge of saying *And I could burn this place down with both of us in it. Are you really testing my patience on the matter?* Instead, he just sniffed and begged like a kid, which was not better, or ideal, or collected, but he couldn't care less. They needed another solution, Shane would have thought about it, and Ilya had promised to wait for his help. That was enough.

And Ilya might or might not be one of the people who knows him best in the entire universe, but he's not familiar with Shane's problem solving skills. Anxious, restless, *demanding* ones. But he had noticed a change: Shane's head was almost *fuming* in search for ideas, in spite of shutting the rest of the world out. Ilya didn't interrupt. He put a documentary on the TV, instead, and made some tea. He then tangled Shane in his arms and joked about penguins' weird way of walking. "That one almost looks like Pike", Ilya noticed, gesturing at a swinging penguin, clearly unable to walk on the ice. Shane poked him in the ribs with his elbow, a couple of seconds too late:

"Shut up."

"You are right. It looks more stable than Pike. Montreal should call him for the line-up."

"You are so mean, I swear."

Shane felt a light kiss on the temple: "Mhm. You do know I am not, *dusha moya*."

The foreign language on Ilya's sure tongue shut him up (he had in fact turned his face on Ilya's chest, defeated even if he had no idea of what he had just said), but couldn't stop his thinking. Even in bed, Ilya clearly had tried to stay awake, maybe to make him company, or to corner him into saying what was Shane reasoning about, what had made him so quiet. He eventually fell asleep facing Shane, mouth relaxed, breath even: the bare sight had the power to ground him, put him in place, until Ilya turned in his sleep. Shane had caressed him between his shoulder blades for a while, smiling fondly at the other's satisfied shiver.

He was still seated, back against the bed, lamp off, when the idea had hit him. Shane was already circling around the concept, but he needed to reason it with Ilya. The charity, Ottawa, the friendship narrative— It all made sense to him. He just needed to know he wasn't being crazy, that Ilya would have been up for it, which wasn't granted at all, not when Ottawa had a really bad team and not when their rivalry had still the power to light up the headlines. It was a lot to deal with, a lot to handle, a lot to sacrifice. For Shane, for them. The weakness of the word terrified him. Shane wasn't even sure there was a them.

There *is*, though. There is because Shane had admitted that there was nothing he wanted more than to be with Ilya, no matter the difficulties, or the time passing by. There is because Ilya had pinned him against the bed, muttering in Russian against his skin (and the sound of it, fond and endearing and devoted, tingled his ears with familiarity, even if Shane can't pinpoint why), before shushing him with a broken *I love you*. And there's no doubt Shane loves him back, even when it's monumental, and frightening, and dangerous, when it takes all the space, fulfilling it with the same colour of the first summer's dawn. There is nothing easier than love someone like Ilya, who cried on his shoulder before falling back asleep on him, almost like a blanket. He had previously murmured in Shane's neck about the charity, the idea of being only two hours apart, the future. Ilya couldn't wait to see him in a tux for the opening night of the foundation. "You'll be breathtaking, *zolotse*. And the best part is that everyone will be looking at you, because of course they will, so no one will notice me doing it, too. And they will be really jealous of whoever will fuck you later. Me, by the way."

Shane had openly laughed at that.

And now, after the unthinkable threat of Ilya marrying Svetlana, the idea of the charity and their heartbreaking confession, Shane is spread on the bed, tangled in his favourite sheets (*all* the sheets at the cottage are his favourite, since he carefully chose every set), head nested in the crease of Ilya's elbow, an hand playing with his necklace, body relaxed after, probably, the best morning sex he had ever had. Or maybe it's just the fulfilling sensation of making love with Ilya, who had briefly escaped him to see the sun rising on the lake. Shane had reached him with a blanket, and they both looked at the orange, welcoming light with some sense of hope. Like the world was settling around them, for once, instead of creating a maze in which they had to fit somehow.

Shane should really get some sleep. Ilya had a couple of hours; he didn't. He was too excited, too afraid of seeing that night disappear from his grip, like a vivid dream Shane eventually had to wake up from. He just can't believe Ilya loves him. He knows Shane, he really does, he knows the nine years old kid who terrified his teammate, the awkward teenager who judged Kane's girlfriend and the young man who almost blew up Hayden's proposal to

Jackie. His mind almost screams *You were there all this time. You love them all. And they all love you. So much it hurts.*

He tilts his head, kissing Ilya's shoulder, barely biting. Ilya seems distracted, too: he's staring at the ceiling, hands firm and possessive on him, the forefinger gently circling on Shane's nape, an absent movement. Yes, Ilya is absent, sometimes. You knock at his room and no one answers. Maybe Shane is imagining things, or maybe it's a glimpse too brief to be caught. Except for the litany of his own voice saying *he loves you, it's all true, for once in your life everything is fine, you're fine, you're really fine, maybe the world is not burning anymore*, he should be sleepy, but of course he's not.

He's thinking about the charity. So close that it could be touched, he wants to arrange everything. He wants to smile at reporters while narrating whichever stupid excuse they will invent for their *recent proximity. Brand new friendship* and all. Like if Shane wouldn't kill to have the power or the courage to grab a microphone and screaming at the world that he's dangerously and irremediably in love with Ilya Rozanov, his rival who the media *built* because they needed meat to sacrifice and they were both just eighteen. Break the news to his parents, or Hayden, will be an Hell, on the long run. Shane doesn't even know how he will explain their so-called friendship, or maybe he hates that he *has* to. Even if it hurts. Even if his favourite people in the world should know they've been slightly replaced, they should know how much in love and loved Shane is. The fact that it would be complicated and scandalous not only because Ilya is a man, but also because they're the living fortune of the League, makes him livid. He wishes he hadn't to worry about an excuse in the first place—Because an excuse is needed for something it *needs* to be excused. A crime or a mistake, a false step. And Ilya is not any of that. They both aren't. So, he throws the implications away. For now.

Not the idea per se, though. He has a new one, actually. "What was your mother's name?", he wonders, as soft as possible. After hearing about her (and always piece by piece, like if that was the only way Ilya remembered her, fragmented), Shane feels a pinch in the heart at the certainty of never meeting Ilya's mother. Never thank her, hug her. *I'll take care of him. I'll try to come as close as possible to your love.* He hates picturing how Ilya feels about this.

Ilya drifts back to him. Maybe it's Shane's voice, maybe the word he said. Mother. He smiles, tugging briefly his hair: "Irina", Ilya mutters, just like everyone would mutter their mother's name. Like it was coated in honey and roses. "Why?"

It's a truly beautiful name, but Shane would have proposed it as the name of the foundation in any case. He's just not ready to say it yet. They will have time to discuss it: it will be up to Ilya, after all. What Shane says instead is, after another light kiss on his arm:

"I was thinking... We could start a hockey school. Like a summer camp for kids" and he's still playing with Ilya's necklace. Shane knows it's a good idea, especially when Ilya is so fond of kids in general. They would love him, and Ilya would love to teach them, but that's not Shane's main goal right now. He adds, after a pause: "And give the money away to mental health organisations. Like suicide prevention. It was just an idea" Shane quickly points. He genuinely can't say if he overstepped. If Ilya could ever be okay with it. Donating to mental health organisations doesn't imply revealing any personal reasons behind the

gesture, after all. And Shane would never oblige Ilya to do it, far from it. Truth to be told, Ilya could tell him to mind his own business right now.

He softens, instead. Staring and studying Shane like he's witnessing an exploding star. "She would have loved you" he says under his breath, mesmerised "Like I love you."

It will probably never get old, that sensation on Shane's skin, like he's blooming under his gaze. He cups Ilya's cheek, lifting his own warm body: "Say it again in Russian, please", he pleads, probably with the same hopeless look on his face. Ilya lifts an angle of his puffed lips before pointing at his own chest: "*Ya*" and then points at Shane "*Tebya... Lyublyu.*"

And *here* we are. The whole point. Shane should probably melt in his arms, especially when Ilya's thick Russian is so hot and confident, *especially* when it glistens with love for Shane and Shane only. He should try to repeat it— He's fully intended in learning Russian, now that Ilya's English is so good, now that he can't stand any other barrier between them. But Shane doesn't do any of this. Because his timing fucking *sucks*.

Something clicks in his head, instead. He lifts himself up on his own elbow: "I've— I've heard this before."

Ilya chuckles, using a thumb to stroke his bottom lip: "Because I just said it, *solnyshko.*"

"No, that's not... That's not what I meant. You've said it before— After Tampa. When your father died and I called you and you spoke Russian to me. On the phone. You said it, it was the same sound" Shane gulps, trying to sound casual "Right after... Right after Svetlana's name."

Ilya blinks, then almost stutters: "You translated it?"

"Wha— Oh my God, Ilya, I would never! No! It's just... It was so important to you and... I'm so sorry I don't speak Russian, y'know?" he admits, and it's true. Ilya's face softens immediately, while a hand convinces him to lower his body, just until their chests firmly touch. Shane keeps talking with his chin rested between Ilya's collarbones: "I was so focused on you, and... You know how I am" he tries, biting his lip. Ilya encourages him:

"How *are* you, Shane?"

He'd rather not say it. Because Ilya might think it, but hearing it from his voice could be completely different, in ways that Shane doesn't want to imagine.

But that's *Ilya*. To whom, if not to him? "I am weird. Different. Don't do that face" he prays at Ilya's frown "It's true. You know it's true, and I do too, and I can adjust. I already do. I don't like noise and I have my routine and my... Well, *fixations*. I often don't know what to say and I don't get sarcasm and sometimes I think everyone attended a preparatory class I skipped. Textures disturb me. I always have to focus during every social occasion, and none of it comes natural. I *folded my clothes* when we first had sex", Shane points, and Ilya quietly laughs, caressing his hair "The point is... I am what I am. It's too late to change anyway—"

"Do not dare, Hollander."

“... And what is done is done. I really wanted to understand you that night, Ilya. I kinda needed it. Not because I was curious — that, too, probably —, but because you were sad and I *needed* to be helpful. I wanted to help you like no one else could. I still want to.”

Ilya clicks his tongue: “You already do, *sladkiy*.”

Shane smiles, slowly kissing his neck: “So... That’s it. I memorised the sound of what you said because that’s what I do with everyone, and because I was feeling... Uh, guilty, maybe. You were asking for help and I hand’t the power to come save you, or... Comfort you. I felt it was important. Then I heard Svetlana’s name, and I wondered...”, but he really doesn’t have the strength to finish his thought. He doesn’t think he could stand knowing that Ilya chose between him and Svetlana at some point. Yes, they weren’t exclusive, and yes, Ilya always had many lovers, and yes, Shane *tried* to find someone else too, but none of this stops the acid leaking from his lungs and into his stomach. Especially when Svetlana is... Well, normal. Svetlana probably likes clubbing and loud concerts and really doesn’t care how clothes are made. Svetlana is also a woman, someone Ilya could hold in the light. A *Russian* woman whose love doesn’t rip Ilya away from his own country. They’d be acclaimed as a couple, Shane is sure of it. Technically speaking, Svetlana has much more advantages than Shane. He looks away, eyes suddenly watery, but Ilya swiftly places a firm hand between his chin and his Adam’s apple:

“What is going on in that pretty head of yours?” he coos, and Shane sniffs. “Nothing” he swears, but the lie slips easily out of his lips, into his trembling voice. Ilya shakes his head, curls floating on his forehead, up behind his ears:

“No, no. I will not have any of this. Shane, I do love Svetlana. It’s true, I said it, I do not lie. She is a good friend. And yes, we were intimate. And you have all the right to be jealous, but there was nothing more. It was just sex, and Svetlana knows the shit I had with my family. She is Russian, she understands, and thank God you don’t, because I love my country, too, but they can’t have you. That is what I said during the call. I love Svetlana, but not like I love you. Not when you are all I want, always. I can be friend with Svetlana, and she is a very important part of my life, and I think you two would like each others. But don’t compare her to you. Don’t compare *anything* to you. Okay? Say yes”, he commands, but Shane has only the energy to nod before muttering his name in a plea and nuzzling against his shoulder. Ilya gently soothes his back:

“Very good, *solnyshko*.”

Shane can’t help a smile against Ilya’s jaw: “This means you already loved me? When you were in Russia?”

“Ah, yes. I don’t know when this mess happened. I probably realised it when you ran away from my house. With a t-shirt I never had back” he points out wisely, while Shane is too busy covering his eyes with a palm (and totally avoiding the matter of the t-shirt, by the way. That’s his favourite pyjamas now. Very efficient when Ilya is away. Nice cotton.)

“Oh, my God. Ilya, again, I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, my love. That was so dumb and problematic and selfish and... And *childish*. We should have discussed what was going on. It took us so long it’s ridiculous.”

Ilya tangles their fingers together, freeing Shane's eyes. He's welcomed with the sight of a flustered Ilya, looking at him almost *pathetically* lost. "Is okay. We are okay. Is all good" a quick kiss to his knuckles "And, I don't think you are weird. It's really important you know that. I find you — and brace yourself, I learned this very recently — *endearing*" Shane giggles, impressed "Endearing is a very nice word, very useful. Or maybe I'm too... Ah, how do you say? Like, cream? For desserts?"

Shane tilts his head to look at him (they're a probably inextricable maze of limbs and Shane would rather die than pull away): "What are you talking about? Is this a sexual joke?"

"Weird, but no. The white, soft cream you put on ice cream. And strawberries! Strawberries, too."

"Ilya, I— Wait. You mean whipped cream?"

"Yes! That. *Whipped*. Svetlana said it's used for hopeless people when they're in love. I am hopeless. You can be the strawberries for my whipped cream. You have the seeds" Ilya purrs, nipping at his freckles. Shane's face is probably burning. "You are a freak", he whines, hiding in the sheets. Immediately, Ilya pins him on the mattress, sliding away from Shane's grip. "Ilya— *Ilya!*", Shane squeaks, but Ilya keeps biting his jaw, his chin, his cheeks, the tip of his nose. He breaths:

"Shush, *solnyshko*. My strawberry is quite delicious."

End Notes

ilya whipped cream x shane strawberry hear me OUT. And in my world, Ilya is FOND of pet names. Send tweet.

Well, that was all. Really stressful. Equally fun. Wrote this during an exam preparation. I'll probably never do this again. Nothing New is even more unbearable now.

Hope you all liked it!!! One last big thank you to Hailey for the prompt!!!

Let me know what you think etc. feel free to comment !! love you stay safe drink water xoxo

(ps: was hayden really 21 when he got married? because i don't care that much)

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