Butt Cream and Sprankle Glitter

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Butt Cream and Sprankle Glitter

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Summary

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>
> Shane pinches the bridge of his nose. “*Buttercream*, Ilya. Butter-cream.”

A sprinkle-shot challenge, a toddler-esque fight with JJ, and a fake fireplace later, Shane realizes this might be the best birthday ever.

Shane spends the afternoon leaning against the kitchen counter with loops of icing ideas running through his brain, because he knows Ilya has been pacing for ten minutes straight. Pacing is not new in their apartment—post-game pacing, pre-game pacing, pacing whenever Shane leaves a stray sock on the floor—but this pacing is special. Ilya mutters words in Russian, then French, then some mashed-up bastardization that probably counts as a new dialect. His phone screen glows in his palm, speaker volume turned up so loud the hold music hisses thinly through the kitchen.

"'Froosteenk,'" he snarls at the air, rolling his eyes to the ceiling like the light fixture personally offended him.

Shane leans on the island and smirks. "It's 'frosting.'"

"That is what I say." Ilya swipes his hand through the air. "Froosteenk."

"Listen, it's froooosting. Lengthen the vowel."

Ilya scowls harder and jabs the phone screen. "Do not correct me. I know words. I am four languages."

"You are four languages," Shane says. "You are also saying 'frosting' like it murdered your mother."

Ilya spins, the cord on their kitchen window blinds tangling around his forearm as he walks. The operator finally picks up—some cheerful woman whose voice sits at the pitch only golden retriever puppies can hear.

"Hello, this is Kara at Sweet Slice Bakery. How can I help—"

"I want big cake with…with…" Ilya loses it, hand waving, brows furrowing. "You know. Happy birthday Shane. Chocolate inside. White…" He hesitates. "White…froosteenk."

There is a tiny pause from Kara. "I'm sorry?"

Ilya huffs out a breath, glances at Shane, then stomps toward him with the phone held out like it might catch fire. "They make me talk nonsense. I have NHL contract but cannot say cake." He thrusts the phone at Shane's chest.

Shane takes it, biting his lip to stifle laughter, and switches to the smooth, effortless tone of a man conquering cake orders. "Hi, sorry, uhm, he wants a chocolate cake with vanilla frosting, twelve-inch round, simple 'Happy birthday, Shane' in blue piping." He listens, nodding, wraps an arm around Ilya's waist when Ilya leans against him like a scowling oak tree. "Pickup Friday morning works."

Kara sweetly confirms and the call ends. Shane hangs up, sets the phone on the counter, and turns toward Ilya with blatant glee. "There. Cake secured. And no one accidentally ordered 'frosted sin'."

Ilya's eyes narrow. "That is what she thinks I say?"

"You mangled it so hard it sounded like 'frosted sin.' Which...honestly sounds delicious. Maybe you invented a new dessert."

"I am terrifying athlete. I fight bears in Siberia." Ilya grabs Shane by the waist and lifts him until his butt hits the counter. "Little stubborn Hollywood boy should fear me."

The smug retort Shane stored up dissolves when Ilya leans in and kisses him, a smooth mouth pressing against Shane's and humming softly. Shane curls his fingers in Ilya's hair and nips his lower lip. "My big, scary Russian," he murmurs against the kiss, tone thick with affection, "defeated by buttercream."

Friday morning rolls in with the bakery's doorway chime squealing like a bird with a sinus infection, and Ilya ducks his six-foot-three frame beneath the string of paper cupcakes hanging across the ceiling. He announces himself to the bewildered teenager behind the counter by slapping both palms on the glass and declaring, "We are here for froosteenk doom."

Shane, who is still rubbing sleep out of his eyes, takes a leisurely half-step forward. "We're picking up the Hollander order." He flashes the employee a smile so easy the kid practically levitates to the back room.

Ilya folds his arms, eyes on the cake boxes lining the counter, chest puffed like the bakery is his arena. "Ask them for extra…sprankle glitter," he says under his breath.

"Sprankle glitter?"

"You know. The crunchy little sugar people."

"Sugar…people."

"Yes. You put on top. Sprankle glitter." Ilya nods with solemn conviction.

Shane has no idea what sprankle glitter might be, but he would arm-wrestle every pastry chef in the city if that is what it took to keep this glower directed at desserts. "We'll see what they have," he says, palms up, when the box is presented like a sacred relic. The design is simple, blue script gliding over white icing, perfect for the team dinner they'll hold later. Ilya stares at the words, the corners of his mouth twitching upward, his thumb rubbing over the cardboard lid like he just landed a hat trick.

The kid looks at Ilya the way people look at grizzlies in national parks. "Do you, um, need anything else?"

Ilya clears his throat. "Do you sell sprankle glitter?"

Shane can't help himself. "He means sprinkles."

“No, I mean sprankle glitter.” Then, with absolute certainty, “They go on frosting. Make it sparkle.”

“I have two kids, mister, I know sprinkles when I hear them.”

“You call me mister?” Ilya repeats, scandalized and delighted. He slaps the counter like it’s a friendly teammate’s shoulder. “You are good child. Give us sprankle glitter.”

They leave ten minutes later with a bag of rainbow sprinkles, a box of cake, and a cashier who will talk about the tall Russian hockey husband until the end of time.

By evening, Shane’s condo is bustling with teammates, all carrying beer or chips or nothing at all because freeloading is their moral code. The cake sits in the center of the island like a glittering crown, because Ilya dumped the entire bag of sprinkles across the top when Shane wasn’t looking.

“You can’t even see the message anymore,” Shane says, balancing a plate in one hand, a knife in the other.

“It now says ‘Happy birthday sugar glitter.’ That is absolutely message,” Ilya insists, leaning against the fridge, arms crossed. “Also, I tell them my English sexy, they do not believe me. Now it is sexy cake.”

“You told the bakery your English is sexy?”

“I tell everyone. It is one of best facts about me.”

JJ leans over the counter, elbows planted, eyes narrowed at the cake with the intensity of a critic at a modern art exhibit. “This thing looks like a unicorn exploded.”

“It is artisanal,” Ilya declares, dragging out the word with dramatic flair. Except it comes out “arti-SEE-anal,” the emphasis folding neatly around the last syllable until JJ is choking on laughter and Shane is covering his face.

“Artisanal,” Shane corrects gently.

“That is what I say. Arti-SEE-anal. Fancy word. Cake is from butt cream bakery.”

The room erupts. Plates rattle on the counter. Someone nearly spits beer across the island. JJ doubles over, wiping tears from his eyes. “Please repeat that.”

“Arti-SEE-anal butt cream cake,” Ilya says, louder, stubbornly proud. “What? Why you laugh? They say it is arti-SEE-anal butt cream frosting. I say same thing.”

Shane pinches the bridge of his nose. “*Buttercream*, Ilya. Butter-cream.”

“Right. Butt cream.”

JJ wheezes. “Ilya, my guy, you just told us this cake is artisanal butt cream. I’m never eating dessert again.”

“You are unrefined. Shane understands high culture.” Ilya scoops a fingerful of icing and smears it across Shane’s cheek, then licks it off with deliberate slowness. “See? Butt cream. Delicious.”

JJ throws his hands in the air. “Fine. If we’re doing culinary crimes, let’s make this interesting. I challenge you to a sprinkle shot.”

“Explain,” Ilya commands, because obviously sprinkle shots are not part of any Russian birthday tradition.

JJ snatches one of Shane’s whiskey tasting glasses, pours in a full serving of sprinkles, then pushes an identical cup toward Ilya. “On three. No water. First to swallow without choking wins.”

Shane nearly drops the knife. “Absolutely not.”

Ilya’s eyes light up. “I am ready. I have throat of steel.”

“Please don’t.” Shane is already reaching for the cups, but JJ slaps his hand away with the speed of a goalie glove.

“One…two…three!” JJ tips his glass back and inhales a rainbow avalanche.

Ilya mirrors him with zeal, jaw working like a wood chipper. The crunch echoes through the kitchen, sharp and ridiculous, a sound their neighbors will try to identify for hours. Thirty seconds later they’re both coughing, eyes watering, rainbow grains exploding across the counter like confetti.

“What is wrong with you?” Shane demands, grabbing a wad of paper towels and wiping the sugar sludge off Ilya’s chin. “You can’t just—oh my god—is that blood?”

“It is not blood. It is…pink sprinkle,” Ilya hacks, spitting a trail of glitter into the sink.

JJ thumps his chest, wheezing. “Worst idea ever. My esophagus is crying Skittles.”

“It is worth it,” Ilya croaks proudly, voice shredded. “I win.”

“You both lost.” Shane shoves water bottles into their hands. “You’re idiots.”

The team applauds anyway, because watching a pair of elite athletes nearly die on sprinkles is worth cheering for.

JJ recovers first, of course. He wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and leans into Ilya’s space, smirking. “You know what else about this cake? It tastes like surrender.”

Ilya’s head snaps up, the kind of slow, ominous tilt that usually precedes penalties. “Explain your trash words.”

“I’m just saying, big guy, frosting isn’t something you wrestle into submission. Iced cakes are about finesse. Maybe we should’ve let Shane handle it.”

“Maybe we should send you to minors so you can learn to spell ‘finesse,’” Ilya counters.

“Maybe you should stop saying butt cream like it’s sexy.”

“Maybe you should stop tweeting your own highlights.”

They’re nose-to-nose now, two oversized toddlers snarling over dessert. Someone flicks the lights off and on like a hockey rink brawl warning. Shane wedges himself between them with the plate knife held perpendicular like a referee’s stick. “Nobody fights with knives in my kitchen,” he says, which only leads to both of them lunging for the bowl of sprinkles.

In seconds, JJ is shaking the bowl over Ilya’s head like he’s salting a driveway, and Ilya retaliates by scooping handfuls into JJ’s shirt collar. Sprinkles rain down in the kitchen, coating the floor, sticking to sweaty forearms, crunching under sneakers. Shane groans, leaning against the counter.

“Stop it. Ilya, JJ, I swear to god—”

JJ gasps. “He just licked me!”

“You put sugar product on my neck,” Ilya announces. “I am cleaning.”

“Your idea of cleaning involves your tongue,” JJ sputters, flailing backwards.

“Only because you are clumsy, like toddler confuse spoon for shovel.”

“You’re the toddler, buddy. You bought a cake and called it butt cream.”

Ilya lunges again, and the room cheers as if they’re octagon fighters. Shane surrenders to the absurdity, glances around the chaos, and finally cuts into the glittering cake. “Eat before the entire kitchen becomes a candy graveyard,” he orders, sliding slices onto plates and handing them out like a crisis aid worker.

Dessert disappears. The chaos continues. Ilya clings to Shane’s back like a backpack made of muscle, dropping kisses on his neck while still taking potshots at JJ. JJ calms down only when Shane hands him the plastic knife and declares him official sprinkle referee, which he takes far too seriously.

The night stretches long. The cake dwindles down to smears of icing and a handful of surviving sprinkles. JJ vows revenge, Ilya vows further eductions in pronunciation, and Shane just wants to live in a world where frosting is only eaten, not weaponized.

Eventually, the teammates filter out, stepping carefully around sticky puddles of sugar. Shane keeps his hand in Ilya’s hair as they watch the door close behind the last departing player. “You nearly died on sprinkles,” he says softly.

“It was noble death,” Ilya replies, mouth curving. “Also, I now understand why children get sugar buzz. My heartbeat like techno club.”

“You’re impossible,” Shane murmurs, though he presses a kiss to Ilya’s temple.

“I am gift,” Ilya says, smug beyond reason. “Tomorrow, more gifts. Prepare yourself.”

Shane wakes on his actual birthday to an empty bed and the smell of coffee. He walks into the living room in nothing but plaid pajama pants and finds Ilya arranging two folding chairs in the middle of the floor. The curtains are drawn tight. The overhead lights are off. The entire condo appears abandoned.

“Ilya?” Shane asks, baffled, but he does not get a response. He does, however, get a thump on his arm as one of their cats streaks past like a fur torpedo.

Behind him, a low, crackling sound fills the room. Shane turns around and sees a flatscreen playing a fireplace video on loop. There is no real fire, only digital flames licking the screen, soundtracked by gentle pops. Ilya emerges from the kitchen wearing a red satin robe Shane has never seen before and carrying a tray with two mugs and a plate of toasted pop tarts stacked like a Jenga tower.

“What…is happening?”

“I give you full Siberian birthday experience,” Ilya declares. “We camp in tundra.” He sets the tray on the coffee table and adjusts the folding chairs so they face the fake fireplace. “I buy these chairs last night. Very authentic. And this,” he gestures at the television, “is fire. We do not leave home because tundra has wolves, but we pretend.”

Shane bites his lip to keep from cracking up. “So my birthday is…camping in the living room with store-bought pop tarts?”

“They are frosted,” Ilya says solemnly. “And I learned it is pronounced exactly the same. Listen carefully: ‘Frosted.’” He pronounces it perfectly, enunciating every letter.

“You nailed it!”

“Of course. I practice all night with YouTube video.” He points at the mugs. “There is hot chocolate with marshmallow. We will sit here, and I tell you stories from youth when we skate on frozen river. It is very romantic and also educational, you will learn about survival.”

Shane loses it and laughs so hard his stomach hurts. “You bought folding chairs. You set up a fake fire. You planned a tundra camp in our living room.”

“Yes. Only big scary Russian husband knows how to do real romance.” Ilya sits, patting the chair beside him. “No one else would dare. Sit, birthday boy. Drink hot chocolate. We will wear hats later.”

“Hats?”

“Matching ushankas. They arrive in afternoon. Shipping delay.” Ilya’s grin is bright enough to rival the fake flames. “Until then, we rough it.”

Shane sits, accepts the steaming mug, and watches his ridiculous, devoted husband gesture at the pixelated fire while launching into tales of childhood winters in Novosibirsk. The pop tarts crumble sugary and sweet, the hot chocolate is scalding but perfect, and Ilya’s accent thickens with nostalgia, every sentence punctuated by a proud grin.

“Only you,” Shane says softly, leaning sideways so their shoulders touch, “would surprise me with a tundra simulation in our condo.”

“Only you,” Ilya murmurs, pressing his lips to Shane’s temple, “would love this insanity.”

Shane laces their fingers together, heart full and face aching from smiling, and the two of them sit in their makeshift campsite, backs pressed together, long legs stretched out, basking in the glow of digital flames and domestic bliss that tastes like frosted pop tarts and sounds like laughter echoing through a life they carved out themselves.

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