

let love rearrange us

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by Anonymous

Summary

At first Ilya thinks it's some kind of deformed bear. Then he sees the weird little claw-things it has instead of paws, and realizes it's a massive stuffed sloth.

“Looks like someone’s going all-out this year,” Bood says from behind him.

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Or: Ilya and Shane might be spending their first Valentine's Day as a married couple apart, but Shane's not letting that stop him.

Notes

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

The doorbell rings while Ilya is getting out the ingredients for dinner.

He sets a bell pepper on the counter, and looks at Anya, who, sweet little thing she is, has whipped her head around towards the doorway but hasn't made so much as a peep. "Who do you think that could be?" he asks her. Her tail wags like a helicopter rotor.

When Ilya opens the door, he finds it's a teenager with a Door Dash food warmer. "Hollander?" he asks, and Ilya nods and accepts the two massive brown paper bags of food the guy hands him.

"Here you go. Man, your place was hard to find. Sick house, though."

He turns to leave and Ilya calls, "Wait, tip."

"Nah, you tipped enough on the app, man," the guy says. He shoots a quick salute Ilya's way. "Enough for me to go home and see my girlfriend now, so thanks for that. Have a good Valentine's!"

Inside, Ilya tears open the bags to find half a dozen dishes from his favorite Thai restaurant. Khao soi, tom yum, massaman curry, papaya salad. At the bottom of one of the bags, there's even a couple of Ilya's favorite imported Thai beers and, written on one of the styrofoam containers in sloppy black sharpie, a message.

It's short and sweet. *Happy Valentine's, xoxo your husband.*

Ilya thinks this time, his heart might really burst.

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It figures that, their very first Valentine's Day as a married couple, Ilya and Shane are apart.

And, okay, Ilya understands he's being a bit dramatic. He and Shane have spent plenty of Valentine's Days apart over the years—more apart than they've spent together, really, and it's not like Valentine's Day was ever a holiday that held much appeal for him, at least not before he fell in love with Shane.

But he had envied it, he supposed. These last few holidays, when he was with Shane but wasn't allowed to tell anyone about it—he saw all these happy couples shining the bright spotlight of their love in everyone's faces, brandishing massive teddy bears and red chocolate hearts, and he wanted it. Something that obvious, that open. Maybe not teddy bears, specifically, but something that would make other people look at him, make other people look at Shane, and realize, *oh, he's taken. Oh, he's in love.*

He had this notion, when they got married, silly and ill-founded, that maybe this year would be different. Sure, he knew Shane, and he knew that he would never be the type to do something as garish as hire a singing candy gram or spill hard-earned money on frivolous jewelry, but Ilya thought they would do something, maybe. A nice dinner together, perhaps. An exchange of homemade cards. Maybe wake up a few minutes early for some extra-hot

morning sex, which would have their teammates ribbing them for being late in the locker room, yeah, but even that sounded lovely to Ilya.

For everyone to *know*. For people to ask him what he and Shane were doing together and for it not to be a jibe or a chirp but just casual conversation. He imagined the rookies chatting about trying to pick up sad lonely girls at bars in the evenings and hearing them say something like, *well, Roz and Holly are out, they're boring married men*. Boring married men. Ilya loved being a boring married man, though he'd rather die than admit as much to Shane.

But then, a week before Valentine's Day, Shane got a nasty hit on the ice during a game against Seattle. Ilya, who was on the bench at the time, had to content himself with screaming insults on the sidelines, but later, when the X-rays showed Shane had a cracked rib, Ily had wished he had vaulted onto the ice and decked the dumb Washingtonian defender anyway.

"I'll be fine," Shane had huffed, as, that evening in their bathroom, Ilya examined the peeling edges of the bandage and the mass of bruises crawling up his side. "It's just one rib. I'll be back in two weeks, max. Hey, at least it means I can go to our conference for the Irina Foundation, eh?"

So that's where Shane was now, off in San Diego chit-chatting with a bunch of mental health advocates over fresh seafood, while Ilya was here, alone in his cold, depressing house in Ottawa on what should be the first Valentine's Day of the rest of his life.

Well, not *totally* alone. Anya, who has taken to sleeping in the bed with Ilya since Shane left, wakes him up in the morning with her hot, doggie kisses, then rolls onto her back and demands five minutes of belly rubs before she'll deign to rise from the bed.

"Are you my Valentine this year?" Ilya asks her as she obediently follows him down the stairs, tail wagging so hard it smacks against the wall. "Are you the best Valentine ever?"

Anya barks agreeably.

Ilya checks his phone for messages from Shane as he makes his breakfast, but of course there's nothing. There's a three hour time difference between Ottawa and San Diego, and Shane is strictly prohibited from doing any sort of running until his rib is healed, so there's no reason for him to be up before dawn. He had sent the conference schedule to Ilya, the day he arrived: nothing starts until ten in the morning. "I think they want people to try to enjoy the city," Shane had said, some sort of initiative about stopping to smell the roses etc. etc. etc., which was all well and good for a mental health conference until you considered the fact that they had apparently not cared enough about the wellbeing of their happily partnered attendees to schedule the conference any time other than the week of Valentine's Day.

Ilya considers sending Shane a message—something simple, demure, a quick *happy valentine's day* and a kiss, maybe a picture of his cock—but he doesn't want to risk waking him. Sleep is the best thing for recovery, Shane has told Ilya a million and twelve times, and Ilya would like his husband to recover sooner than later. So Ilya takes a brief moment to be sappy and re-read his and Shane's last couple text exchanges (a picture of Anya counter surfing, and a grumpy kitten face from Shane; a very sexy clip of Shane undressing in his

hotel bathroom and half a dozen tongue emojis from Ilya) then locks his phone and tries to get his head in the game.

It's just another normal day, he tells himself.

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Except it's not, because when he gets to the locker room, he finds his stall completely obscured by the largest stuffed animal he's ever seen.

At first he thinks it's some kind of deformed bear. Then he sees the weird little claw-things it has instead of paws, and realizes it's a massive sloth. Delicately, he reaches out and brushes it with one finger. He's half-expecting it to blow up when he touches it, but actually, it's very soft. And, okay, if he turns his head and squints, it's kind of cute, too. It's got this mysterious little hard-to-read expression that reminds him of Shane when he's trying not to laugh.

"Looks like someone's going all-out this year," Bood says from behind Ilya.

Ilya spins. "What? Did you put this here?"

Bood snorts. "Dude, I have a hard enough time remembering to get my wife Valentine's presents, I'm not tacking you onto the list." He nods towards the sloth's neck. "I think there's a card."

There is a card. It's tied around the sloth's neck with a piece of twine in a way that is suspiciously reminiscent of some shibari that Ilya showed Shane a while back. It takes him a few tries to unknot it. His hands are suddenly, inexplicably shaky.

The message is in Russian. It's amateurish but neatly written, and says:

Hey, sweetheart. I thought you might be getting lonely without me, so I got you a friend. I wanted you two to have something in common, so I picked the slowest animal I could think of. He's never beaten me in a speed skate either <3

I love you.

Xoxoxo your husband

"This is the rudest thing anyone has ever sent me," Ilya says finally. He's aiming for irritated but even to his own ears, he sounds a lot more helplessly besotted.

"Ugh," Young sighs, from the other side of the locker room. "You two are sickening. I'm gonna die alone."

"Sickening is the twenty-minute bag skate I make you do after practice for insulting me," Ilya says, without looking up from his card. *Your husband*. It does something special to Ilya's heart, to see it in print. He wonders if he could get away with framing it or if Shane would mock him forever.

Probably the latter, but he's gonna do it anyway.

“Jesus Christ,” Wyatt says, as he steps into the doorway and sees Ilya’s sloth. “What is that monstrosity?”

“My new friend,” Ilya says, shoving Shane’s card away in his bag where it’ll be safe. “His name is Bogdan.”

“Oh, like that guy from those old people murder books?” Wyatt asks, and Bood says, “The old people *what?*” And Ilya lets the chatter fade into the background so he can start to change for practice, but he leaves Bogdan right where he is.

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Everyone on the team has something to say about Bogdan. “That’s the ugliest fucking bear I’ve ever seen,” Dykstra says, which earns him a sock thrown at his head by Ilya and a long lecture from Wyatt on the evolutionary history of the sloth.

“That is a very...pretty...sloth?” Luca tries, when he arrives to find Ilya hoisting it onto his hip like a baby.

“Tell me it isn’t Valentine’s Day,” Troy demands, staring at the sloth with the sort of pale terror usually reserved for muggings or horror movies, then spends the next fifteen minutes frantically scrolling Google, looking for last-minute flower deliveries.

All in all, Ilya is quite proud of the ruckus, even though he didn’t really play much of a role in it, and after practice, when Young is doing his bag skate—ten minutes instead of twenty, Ilya isn’t *that* much of a terror—he gets Bodgan from the locker room and snaps a picture of him sitting on the ice, smiling his weird little smile, Young huffing in the background.

He sends it to Shane with a handful of kissy-face emojis. Shane doesn’t respond immediately, but that’s fine. He’s probably listening to a speech or, worse, a *panel*.

Ilya snaps a few more pics of Bodgan, just for posterity, before he tucks him back away into his stall and heads to the gym for their post-practice strength workout. All in all, it’s been a more successful Valentine’s Day than he hoped.

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He’s halfway through his third set of bench presses when someone calls his name from the doorway.

It’s Katy, from the front desk. “You’re needed in the front office,” she tells him.

Ilya makes a face. “Uh, right now?”

“Right now,” Katy says. “Your muscles will wait for you. Hustle up, big boy.”

Ilya frowns, but obeys. He can’t imagine what it would be. If it was a normal meeting he had to be involved with, he would have been invited already, and if there’s something Coach Wiebe wants to talk to him about, he’d wait until the end of the strength training session at least.

“Ooh, Rozy is in *trouble*,” Dykstra says, and Ilya turns and glares at them in his best scary Russian way, which does absolutely nothing to stop all the hooting.

When Ilya gets to the front office, there’s no one there but Katy, back at her desk sipping an iced matcha, and a long-suffering delivery man holding a massive box.

“Are you Ilya Rozanov?” he asks. Ilya nods, and the delivery man thrusts a clipboard at him. “Sign, please.”

Mechanically, Ilya obeys, and a moment later gets the box thrust at him for his troubles. “I have been instructed to tell you happy Valentine’s Day,” the delivery man says tiredly. “And also to go fuck yourself.”

He’s out the door before Ilya can do more than blink at him. “Well,” Katy says, looking at the box. “Are you going to open it or not?”

Ilya is tempted to take the box back to the locker room just to spite her, but then god knows what’s in it and what the other guys will say. He steals a pair of scissors from her desk and slits open the clear tape.

The whole box is absolutely stuffed with Russian snacks. Caviar-flavored potato chips, chocolate covered young pinecones, half a dozen different flavors of zefir, mini pryaniki, salmon and cheese breadsticks, tarragon soda, even Ilya’s favorite brand of salted sunflower seeds, which Ilya knows Shane thinks are dumb to buy imported, since they have plenty of Canadian sunflower seeds here for a third of the price.

They’re just not the same, Ilya had insisted once, as he threw a \$9 bag of sunflower seeds in their cart at the imports store in Montreal. *Russians are just better at sunflower seeds, you will see.*

Shane had tried the Canadian and Russian varieties side by side and declared them identical, and yet here he went and spent money getting them for Ilya anyway.

Ilya’s heart beats a little too fast in his chest.

On top of the stack of snacks is a folded white card. Ilya flips it open.

I couldn’t get you your favorite snack, it reads, but I thought you might like these.

Ilya scans the box for a second, wondering what Shane couldn’t find—and then he realizes.

That little *shit*.

Love you lots, the note continues, *xoxo, your husband*

“Not to ruin the moment or anything,” Katy says, from beside Ilya, “But are those chips caviar flavored?”

“Yes,” Ilya says. “Is best flavor of chips in world.”

Katy looks at them doubtfully. “I don’t know how I feel about that,” she says.

Ilya, because he really is at heart a kind and giving and generous person, as evidenced by the number of times he has eaten his husband out and definitely not gotten any benefit from it himself, tears open a bag and offers her a few. Her first chews are cautious, but eventually she seems to get used to it.

“It’s okay,” she decides. “No ketchup, but still good.”

Ilya presses a hand to his heart. “In Russia, you could get arrested for saying this,” he says. “Is treason. Ketchup is not better than caviar.”

Katy waggles her head. “Well...”

And then Ilya has to share the chips with all the other Centaurs, because he needs to get their opinions. “Too salty,” Young declares; “Too fishy,” Boon says; “They’re fine, I guess?” Luca offers guiltily.

“More for me,” Ilya declares, shoving an entire handful in his mouth.

He hears the camera snap before he sees it. Wyatt is laughing at his phone. “Sexiest Man in the NHL, 2022,” he says, and shows Ilya the photo of him, cheeks bulging, lips covered in crumbs.

Ilya scowls. “You are just jealous,” he says. “None of your girlfriends send you expensive Russian treats.”

Dykstra rolls his eyes. “Oh, yeah, what a loss.”

Ilya peers over Wyatt’s shoulder, looks at the picture again. “Send it to me,” he says.

Wyatt raises an eyebrow. “You know it’ll still be on my phone then, right? It’s not like snail mail.”

“I am not idiot,” Ilya says, even though he has no idea what snail mail is. Why are snails sending mail? “Send it.”

Wyatt airdrops it and Ilya doesn’t even edit it before he forwards it along to Shane. *I am making all the boys jealous with my special snacks*, he writes.

Still no response to his first message, but that’s okay. Ilya imagines Shane talking animatedly with a professor about depression in different cultures, and his heart does a little twisty sashay.

He contents himself with sending Shane a block of heart emojis.

—

The rest of the team filters out about noon, and then Ilya gets to go to a long meeting about marketing the team that he mostly tunes out of, given that it’s not at all relevant to him. There

is catered lunch, at least—salads and beef kebobs and sugar cookies cut into heart shapes—and he’s mostly focused on stabbing a piece of lettuce when he hears his name.

He glances up to find Harris staring back at him from the front of the table. “Sorry?” he says.

Harris sighs. “I said, Shane talked to me about how you guys are pivoting your public relations approach, and we think it’s a great idea. We’ll support you and adjust our strategies accordingly.”

“Er,” Ilya says. “That’s—what public relations approach?”

Harris is a professional, so he doesn’t raise his eyebrows, but it’s clear he wants to. “Shane said you two were going to be more open on social media,” he says. “Or maybe just he is? That wasn’t totally clear to me from his email. But in any case, we’ll certainly be happy to feature more photos of the two of you together on our platforms. We’ve been wanting to do that from the start, but of course, wanted to respect your boundaries.”

“Uh, right,” Ilya says, hoping it comes across as confident and totally in the know.

“And, obviously, we don’t need to approve everything you two post, you’re adults and these are your personal social media accounts, but we’re happy to look drafts over whenever you want us to,” Harris adds. “Shane showed me his Valentine’s post a couple days ago and it was great. I think that went live maybe an hour ago, and we’re planning to repost on our story to get in the holiday spirit, show some queer solidarity. Then, maybe we’ll do something special with the two of you after your next game together, but really, it’s nothing too different from what we’ve already been doing.”

“Uh huh,” Ilya agrees, even as his brain swirls through a washing machine cycle of *Valentine’s Day Instagram post Valentine’s Day Instagram post Valentine’s Day Instagram post??*

Luckily, the meeting is almost over, or Ilya would have had to pretend to take a bathroom break to look at his phone. As it is he barely makes it the ten minutes until Harris claps his hands and declares, “All right, that’s good for today, have a lovely evening, everyone,” before he’s scrambling his phone out of his pocket and pulling up his Instagram app.

He doesn’t use it that much anymore, at least not as much as he used to, and he’s unprepared for the wave of notifications waiting for him. He ignores them all and skips right to Shane’s page, where a brand-new post gleams at the top of the page. There, the last in a string of grainy hockey screenshots and high-def advertising photos, is a picture of Ilya cuddling Anya, a massive smile on his face.

Heart in his throat, Ilya clicks.

He flicks through the photos quickly: here is Ilya hoisting the Stanley Cup in the air in 2014, here is Ilya and Yuna chopping vegetables together in Shane’s parents’ kitchen, here is Ilya fast asleep on the couch at the cottage. The last picture is black and white and shows Shane and Ilya at their wedding, standing at the altar, foreheads pressed together.

Happy Valentine's Day to the love of my life, the caption reads. I am so lucky to have found you.

Ilya resists the urge to press his face to the table and scream, but it's a close thing.

—

After that, there's a bunch of roses waiting on the front doorstep when he gets home, with a note taped to the side of the vase directing Ilya to a hidden polaroid in Shane's protein powder featuring Shane, bent over in the shower with not a scrap of clothing on him. Then there's the Thai food, delivered at just the right time so Ilya doesn't waste any time making dinner; and after that, another delivery, an hour and a half later, of a very discreet package containing a pink feathered pair of handcuffs.

It's probably a joke. *Because we've got everything else*, the note had said, *xoxo your husband*, and Shane is right that their sex toy collection hardly needs additions, but. *But*.

Joke or no joke, Ilya can't stop thinking about what they would look like wrapped around Shane's wrists, and eventually he has no choice but to take himself in hand and jerk off unsatisfyingly while staring at the new Polaroid.

Finally, at nearly nine, Ilya's phone buzzes. He almost trips over himself to pick it up, and there's Shane, with his beautiful flushed little face, a bland hotel headboard in the background, his bare shoulders visible, smiling.

"You demon," Ilya says, and Shane grins.

"So you got my gifts," he says.

"Yes I got your gifts," Ilya says. "You are crazy. How much did you spend on all this?"

"Not that much," Shane lies.

"Uh-huh."

"Okay, a little bit, but not crazy," Shane says. "Practically nothing compared to, oh, I don't know, a new SUV."

"That was practical Christmas gift," Ilya argues. "Your old car had terrible brakes. You would die in snowstorm."

"Says the man with half a dozen sports cars."

"Not anymore," Ilya argues, because he sold those off when they started the Foundation, to free up cash to get the ball rolling.

Shane's expression softens. "Not anymore," he agrees.

"I saw the Instagram," Ilya pivots. "Very sappy."

Shane rolls his eyes. “Yes, because you’re just a big stern Russian who never shows his emotions.”

“It’s interesting, though,” Ilya continues as if Shane hadn’t spoken. “Because I have meeting today, with marketing team. Harris tells me that you want to post online all the time now.”

“Okay, Mr. Dramatic, not *all* the time—“

“And then you spend all day sending me romantic gifts,” Ilya goes on. “Very public gifts. Which is not like you. So I wonder, what is up?”

Shane shrugs. Even through the grainy FaceTime video, Ilya can see his blush.

“I wanted to do something for you,” he says. “You know, we didn’t really do Valentine’s Day stuff before, and now we can.”

“But you are very private person,” Ilya reminds him, like Shane has forgotten.

“Yeah,” Shane agrees. “But you’re not. I don’t know, I just—I thought you would like it. Is it too much?”

Ilya shakes his head, smiling so hard he knows his eyes are doing that thing that Svetlana mocks him for, saying it makes him look like an infatuated cartoon character. Right now, he couldn’t care less.

“No, my love,” Ilya says. “It is perfect. I love it.”

Shane brightens. “Yeah?”

“Yes,” Ilya confirms. “It—I was missing you a lot this morning. And this, it all made me very happy.”

Now Shane’s in heart-eyes land. The expression looks much better on him. Those freckles. Ilya wants to lick them. “I’m glad,” Shane says. “It’s—I always want to make you happy.”

“You do,” Ilya says softly. Then, after a moment: “Except when you insult my skating skills.”

Shane rolls his eyes, leaning back from the camera, moment broken. “Oh, come on,” he says. “When did I insult your skating skills?”

Ilya huffs incredulously. “Bogdan?” he demands.

“What?”

“Bogdan,” Ilya says again. “My big sloth.”

“You named the sloth,” Shane says, shaking his head. “Of course you did.”

“Well, he needs name, what else am I going to call him, just sloth all the time? Is rude, Hollander. And you are missing the point, which is that you said I am a *sloth* on the ice? Me,

Ilya Rozanov, two-time NHL MVP, Stanley Cup winner, first-pick rookie draft, a sloth!”

Shane shakes his head again. “I’m sorry, Rozanov,” he says, “But what else am I supposed to think, when you’re so much slower than me? I mean, 1.2 seconds! That’s obscene.”

Ilya gapes. “I’ll show you obscene,” he says, and Shane laughs and laughs and laughs.

It is the most beautiful sound in the world. Until Ilya pulls his cock out. And then Shane starts moaning. And Ilya decides, maybe this is the most beautiful sound in the world, too.

Any sound from Shane, he decides. Even if he’s on the other side of the continent. Any sound from Shane will do.

End Notes

this week's episode fed me so well but the yeaRNING is going to kill me. I simply had to contribute to the well of established relationship fluff that exists in this fandom since I myself will be sipping from it very aggressively for at least the next week

title from strangers by mt. joy which ive been listening to on repeat since I first watched heated rivalry two weeks ago

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!