

## Bedtime stories

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# Bedtime stories

by [kafkavkolonii](#)

## Summary

“Once upon a time,” Ilya couldn’t believe he was actually doing this, “an old man and his wife had no bread. They scraped the last flour from the corners of their house and made a round bun. And they called him Kolobok.”

“Kolo—”

“Ko-lo-bok,” Ilya repeated.

“It sounds cute,” Shane said. “Can I call you that?”

“Only after I retire and gain weight,” Ilya said.

## Notes

I had to take a small break after writing these paragraphs about Ilya's mom

у меня чуть ебало не треснуло в процессе написания, поэтому даже если вы на всей странице понимаете одно это предложение, пожалуйста, воспользуйтесь переводчиком. спасибо!

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“This is us,” Shane said while lying next to him.

Ilya was never a fan of conversations before going to bed. They had other things they could be doing, but sometimes Hollander needed these stupid small talks. Rozanov was still bad at small talk even after all these years in America.

“Why?” That was Ilya’s main problem—he always wanted to get straight to the point. One of the few straight things in their dialogues.

“Because they’re cute animals and they’re cuddling,” Hollander explained, showing a picture on his phone. “See, I’m a raven and you’re the fox.”

“There is nothing cute about foxes,” Ilya said immediately. “They’re sneaky and evil.”

Shane stared at him for a couple of seconds.

“What?” Ilya asked.

“Nothing,” Hollander shook his head. “I just never expected my husband to be a fox racist.”

“Fox is not a race!” Ilya was hurt. “At least it wasn’t the last time I checked.”

“Come on, it’s just as cute as you are.” Shane zoomed in on a fox with light, probably very soft fur covered with a few snowflakes.

“In Russia, kids are taught never to trust a fox,” Ilya explained. “They’re always the villains.”

“I thought that was from *Zootopia*,” Shane said doubtfully. “Or do you want to say that everything you told me about problems in Russia is the fault of the foxes’ shadow government?”

“Shut up, Hollander,” Ilya said. He hated when he did that. “Stop pretending you misunderstand what I want to say.”

“But you’re such a mysterious man from far, far away,” Shane said, fake drama in his voice.

“I’m a man from the other side of the bed,” Ilya said, already tired of this whole dialogue. “I was talking about fairy tales. Foxes are always the villains in ours. That’s why in Russia, if you meet someone sneaky, you can compare them to a fox.”

“Okay, I actually got it when you just started shitting on foxes,” Shane laughed. “I guess there’s something similar in Japanese mythology called a kitsune. It’s a fox spirit that usually tricks people.”

“Wow, thanks, professor,” Ilya said sarcastically. “Hope I’ll get an A in Japanese mythology during our next class.”

“Only if you do the homework,” Shane laughed and kissed Ilya’s cheek.

He rested his head on Ilya's chest and started scrolling again. Ilya ran his fingers through Shane's dark hair and closed his eyes for a second.

"Can you tell me a fairy tale?" Shane asked as he put his phone on the bedside table.

Ilya never expected that, after all these years, Shane could still find ways to confuse him.

"I'm a bad storyteller," he said.

It was true. His niece was the only person he could have told a bedtime story to, but she was way too young when he still kept in touch with his brother. Not to mention that he used to spend most of the year across the ocean, and sometimes she didn't even recognize her uncle when he visited.

"It's enough for me just to listen to your voice." Shane made himself comfortable on Ilya's chest and closed his eyes. "Tell me about these sly foxes."

"Okay, if I don't have any other choice," Ilya said, trying to remember something from his childhood.

His mom was good at bedtime stories. His father always stayed at work until late, so she was the one who helped Ilya fall asleep. They had an old Soviet book of fairy tales from which she used to pick one to tell him. Maybe in another life, where she didn't marry his father, she could have become an actress. Her voice was beautiful, and she was so good at playing different characters.

Father told Ilya that he was a big boy now after he started playing hockey. "This sport is for real men only," as he always said, and fairy tales were probably not. Even after Ilya claimed that he wasn't a baby anymore, his mom still used to sit by his bed, telling him about her day. These stories were always positive and funny. No sign of apathy. Maybe she made them up—just fantasies about good days she could have had.

Sometimes Ilya was so exhausted after training that he didn't even want to have dinner and was ready to fall asleep in the hallway. She helped him change his clothes and made him a hot meal. His room was always clean, full of fresh air, and the bedsheets were soft and smelled like lavender.

It all came to an end when he was twelve. No one stopped him from falling asleep in the hallway anymore. Father hired a housekeeper after his trainer complained about Ilya's dirty uniform. What a shame. After all, there was a national flag on his jersey.

"Are you still with me?" Shane looked him in the eyes.

"Yes." Ilya was grateful for being pulled back from his memories. "Okay, Hollander, I can tell you a bedtime story about a round, talking bread."

"About what?" Shane said, clearly expecting something else. "I was thinking about princesses and dragons."

“Dragons in our fairy tales have three heads,” Ilya tried to sound scary. “You need to grow up a little before hearing about them.”

“Okay, then let’s start with a bread,” Shane said, trying to hide his disappointment.

“Once upon a time,” Ilya couldn’t believe he was actually doing this, “an old man and his wife had no bread. They scraped the last flour from the corners of their house and made a round bun. And they called him Kolobok.”

“Kolo—”

“Ko-lo-bok,” Ilya repeated.

“It sounds cute,” Shane said. “Can I call you that?”

“Only after I retire and gain weight,” Ilya said. He didn’t want to think about that day. “Would you still love me?”

“I would be so happy to grow old with my Kolobok,” Shane said, touching Ilya’s nose.

“Pay attention, Shane. I’m sharing a piece of the same culture that gave Dostoevsky to the world,” Ilya continued. “So Kolobok decided to escape and rolled out of the window, singing about how he ran away from Grandpa and Grandma.”

“How is he conscious?” Shane asked. “And why does he call these people his grandpa and grandma? I thought they wanted to eat him.”

“That’s why he ran away—the healthiest example of separating from family I’ve seen in this country’s history,” Ilya said. “After he ran away into the woods, he met a hare. The hare wanted to eat Kolobok, but he rolled away, singing the same song about how he ran away from Grandpa and Grandma. After that, he met a wolf, who also wanted to eat Kolobok, but he sang about how he rolled away from Grandpa, Grandma, and the hare, and then ran away from the wolf as well. Then he met a bear, who also wanted to eat—”

“Why would a hare, a wolf, and a bear eat bread?” Shane interrupted with another annoying question.

“There is always some kind of crisis in Russia,” Ilya said. “Kolobok rolled away from the bear too, singing the same song. Then he met a fox.”

“That’s where it gets heated,” Shane said.

Ilya smiled, remembering that this man was his greatest hockey rival.

“Kolobok was planning to roll away from the fox, singing the same old song, but the fox complained that she couldn’t hear him well and asked him to sit on her nose. Kolobok jumped onto the fox’s nose and began to sing. The fox ate him. The end.”

“That’s all?” Shane asked. “The main character goes through such a long development, avoiding death at every corner, just to get eaten in the end?”

“That’s how kids are taught about the impossibility of escaping death,” Ilya said. “And what did you expect? His brain is literally made of bread.”

“Yeah, right. That’s why Kolobok’s name would actually fit you, like I told you before,” Shane laughed.

“Shut the fuck up, Hollander,” Ilya said, thoroughly annoyed by how ungrateful people could be. “I wanted to have sex tonight—or just go to sleep...”

“We can still have sex,” Shane said, breathing heavily into Ilya’s neck. “I was talking to Hayden recently, and he said it would be good to share responsibilities before we have kids. Guess you’ll be the one telling bedtime stories.”

“What?!”

“What?”

## End Notes

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