

Blanket Fort

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Blanket Fort

by [leiascully](#)

Summary

Shane learns to build a blanket fort with a little help from four small friends.

Notes

Timeline: around the time of The Long Game. I didn't bother to verify whether it actually works with canon timelines, just wedge it in there somewhere

Author's Note: Here you go, buddy. Russian endearment borrowed from [here](#).

Shane makes sure that every single outlet in the living room has one of those little plastic blockers in it before Hayden and Jackie bring the kids over. He's crawling on his hands and knees, evaluating the furniture for its potential to do damage to fragile little kid heads, when Ilya slaps him gently on the ass. Shane backs up from under the table behind the couch. Ilya offers him a hand and pulls Shane up into his arms.

"It will be okay. No one is going to hospital today."

"You don't know that," Shane says.

"I do," Ilya says, and kisses Shane softly. "You are so careful, my sweet Shanya. Hayden's horrible children will be safe in our house."

"You don't really think they're horrible," Shane smiles.

Ilya shrugs and does that kind of duck-lips face he makes when he's saying something he doesn't really mean. "Okay fine. They are good kids. It is not their fault that their father plays very bad hockey."

"You know that's not true either," Shane scolds. "Be nice."

Ilya sighs exaggeratedly. "Okayyyyy. Hayden is not the worst. But he could support you better on the line."

"Shut up," Shane says, pushing Ilya away playfully as the doorbell rings.

"You know I'm right," Ilya says, following him to the front door.

Shane opens the door and the twins rush in, followed by Arthur. Hayden passes Amber to Shane, who holds her on his hip.

"Thanks so much, buddy," Hayden says, looping the strap of the diaper bag over Shane's free shoulder. "Why the house painters had to come the day before we're leaving for my parents' place anyway I'll never know, but I guess that's just how it goes."

"Seems like it," Shane says.

"I'll be back in a few hours," Hayden tells Amber. "In time for dinner. Be nice for Uncle Shane and Uncle Ilya."

"No!" she says and giggles a lot.

"Aww, you're always good," Shane tells her. He jiggles her gently up and down. "Aren't you?"

"No," she says, shaking her head, still giggling. Her pigtailed whack Shane across the face. It stings a little.

"Have fun with that," Hayden says. "Bye, honey!"

"Bye!" Shane says when Amber doesn't. He carries her into the house. "What do you think we're gonna do today, huh? Play princesses?"

"No!" Amber says.

Shane tries not to sigh too loudly. He thought she was over this phase, because she's been out of the Terrible Twos for a while, but it's not like he sees her day-to-day. They walk into the living room, where Ilya already has a twin wriggling gleefully under each arm and Arthur on his shoulders. One of Arthur's hands clutches Ilya's jaw in a way that looks kind of painful; the other is a fist in Ilya's hair. Ilya is roaring like a dinosaur.

"All right, all right," Shane says, swinging the diaper bag down by the couch. "Dinosaurs stay outside."

"It's too cold!" Ruby protests.

"Dinosaurs are cold-blooded, they don't like the snow!" Jade adds.

Arthur just bellows, which Shane assumes is his best impression of a dinosaur.

"Dinosaurs have to go outside because your uncles have too much pointy furniture," Shane says firmly, staring at Ilya.

Ilya pouts at him. "Okay, okay." He puts down the twins and bends forward so that Arthur can tumble safely onto the couch. "No dinosaurs inside. What should we do instead?"

Shane sets Amber down. She leans against his leg. "Where is your dog?"

Ilya crouches in front of her, meeting her at eye level. "She went to the doggy spa to get so beautiful for you, but I don't know if she will be back before you go to dinner."

Amber's lip trembles. Ilya glances at Shane. Shane sees the glint of panic in Ilya's eyes.

"But! No Anya means we can do something very special," Ilya announces.

"What?" Arthur asks.

Ilya gathers the kids in with his arms, beckoning until they have all come close. Shane leans in too over the back of the couch. "We can build a pillow fort!"

The kids cheer and immediately begin pulling the cushions off the couch. Ilya looks at Shane again and shrugs, just a little bit.

"Maybe they will become architects."

Shane smiles at him. "Maybe they will."

Ilya tips his head. "Come. Help." He holds out his hand to Shane and Shane comes around the couch and takes it. "Have you ever built a pillow fort?"

"No," Shane says. "A, I'm an only child, so it probably would have just fallen down because who was gonna help me hold it. B, I was always playing hockey, and if hockey wasn't an option, I was playing video games." He squeezes Ilya's hand. "You?"

"Oh, yes," Ilya says. "Not with Alexei. With Svetlana, and Sasha sometimes. A few others."

"Interesting pillow fort," Shane murmurs, quietly so the kids won't hear. "What did you do in it?"

"Kid stuff," Ilya insists. "Innocent." He turns to the kids. "More cushions on that side! Ruby, hold it steady for Jade to put the next one on." He points. Amazingly, the kids obey. Ilya turns back to Shane. "I'll teach you everything I know."

"I'm looking forward to it," Shane says.

The blanket fort rises, slowly, after multiple false starts. The dining room chairs are deployed as reinforcement. Ilya assures everyone that this is a normal part of fort construction, approved by the Pillow Fort Committee, and that actually all pillow forts are supposed to have solid parts. The chair backs turn out to be excellent scaffolding for the fort's ceiling, a lacy blanket draped over the top that lets little glints of light through.

When the cushions have all been used, including the ones that were scavenged from the rest of the house, Shane and Ilya and all four kids cram in for juice boxes and Goldfish crackers. The floor of the fort is a nest of cozy blankets and pillows. They light a fire in the fireplace and turn out the lights and enjoy the ambiance. It's surprisingly comfortable, even with the sharp elbows and knees of multiple children jabbing Shane in the ribs. Amber crawls onto Shane's stomach and stretches out, her head on his chest.

"What's this?" Ruby asks, picking up Shane's hand and twisting his wedding ring around on his finger.

"That's my wedding ring," Shane says.

"Like Daddy's," Arthur says.

Shane nods, though Ilya can see he's trying not to laugh. "Yeah, but I'm not married to your dad."

"Thank God," Ilya says very, very quietly so only Shane hears.

Shane rolls his eyes at Ilya over the kids' heads. "Your dad has a wedding ring because he's married to your mom. And your mom has one, but hers is kind of more sparkly."

"Hey, Uncle Ilya has one that looks the same as yours," Jade says, examining Ilya's hand and pulling it across to compare.

"Your fault," Ilya says. "You made us get married, remember? Now we are husbands forever."

"Yeah, you dressed us up and we got married in your living room," Shane says.

Ruby scoffs. "That was *pretend*."

"Well, after that, we did it for real," Shane tells her. "Not in the living room though."

"For real?" Arthur says, his eyes round. "In suits?" It kind of sounds like "soups" in his little voice.

"In tuxedos," Ilya says. "That is a word for a fancy suit."

"Whoa," Arthur says. He touches Shane's ring with one hand and Ilya's with the other, carefully like he thinks he'll get a shock. Amber reaches out too and puts her little hand on Shane's.

"Where are you sparkles?" she asks, frowning.

"Your mom has them all," Ilya tells her. "There weren't any more."

"I want to see your suits," Arthur says.

"Tuck-see-bo," Amber adds.

"We'll show you pictures next time," Shane says. "Right now it's fort time."

"Tell us a story," Jade says to Ilya.

"What kind of stories do you like?"

"Adventure," Ruby says, and Arthur says "Animals!" at the same time.

"Adventure and animals," Ilya muses.

"And magic," Jade says. Amber says nothing. She has her thumb in her mouth. Shane has some vague idea he's supposed to discourage that, but she looks so happy.

"Okay, okay," Ilya says. "Once upon a time, a long long time ago, there was a big bear and he lived alone in the woods." The story unfolds, adventure and magic and animals, with frequent additions from the kids. Ilya manages to weave it all together somehow. By the end of the story, all the kids are asleep. It's kind of a miracle.

"Happily ever after," Ilya murmurs. "Storytime is magic."

"I think you're the magic," Shane says to Ilya, so quietly.

Ilya blows him a kiss.

The kids don't sleep long, but it's peaceful while they do. When they get up, there are diaper changes and potty breaks to deal with. Ruby and Jade squabble briefly, but nobody hits their head on any furniture. When Hayden and Jackie come to collect the kids, there aren't any major meltdowns. Ruby and Jade cling briefly to Ilya, but allow themselves to be peeled away with promises of what kind of treats will be waiting at their grandparents' house. Arthur tugs at Shane's shirt until Shane crouches and gives him a big hug. But then they're gone, and the house is quiet again.

Ilya exhales. "Wow."

"You're so great with them." Shane leans against Ilya. Ilya puts his arm around Shane's shoulders and kisses Shane's forehead.

"You are good with them too," he reassures Shane. "One day, you will be an amazing dad."

"You think so?" Shane asks. He wishes he didn't sound so wistful about it.

"Yes," Ilya says firmly. "Father of the year in your rookie season."

"I think it'll be a tie," Shane tells him.

"Okay," Ilya says, sounding happy. "It can be a tie."

Shane checks his watch. "When do you have to get Anya?"

Ilya cranes to look. "I should leave in half an hour. Should we take down the fort?"

Shane shakes his head. "I'll do that while you're gone. Let's just hang out for a little while."

He leads Ilya back to the blanket fort. They crawl in and cuddle up in the nest the kids made. It feels nostalgic, somehow, even though Shane's never done this before. He curls up on Ilya's chest. The fire's still crackling away. Every so often they kiss softly, without urgency. In a way, it's a nice change of pace. The blanket fort wouldn't survive any vigorous activity, but it's restful and intimate anyway.

"We're going to be good parents, right? Someday?"

"Yes," Ilya says. "We are going to do our best and our best is very good. And we'll have your parents to tell us what to do, and Jackie."

"And Hayden."

"Of course."

Shane taps Ilya on the chest. "Be nice."

Ilya sighs. "Fine, yes, he is a good dad." He looks at Shane. "Shanya, солнышко, why are you crying?"

"I don't know." Shane wipes his eyes with the corner of a blanket. "I just never thought I'd have this. And then after I met you, I thought that we'd never have it together, and I wanted it so much. And now here we are."

Ilya smooths Shane's hair. "It's a story with adventures. And magic. And two extremely handsome princes."

"And animals," Shane reminds him. "You'd better go get Anya."

Ilya looks at his watch. "Oh, shit!" He scrambles out of the fort after one last kiss, knocking down a wall on the way. "I love you! Anya, I'm coming, my princess!"

Shane sighs and laughs and cries a little more all at the same time, and then he disassembles the blanket fort and restores the house to order, or all the order it can have when there are dog toys and beds everywhere. He's glad he knows how to build a blanket fort now. It'll be a while before they're ready for kids, but he likes feeling like he's gaining skills. Co-parenting a dog has helped too.

One day, they'll be ready. One day, they'll be dads. It's like his life is a house, and doors keep opening in front of him to beautiful new rooms he didn't know existed. He's excited to walk through that door with Ilya, hand in hand, to find their happily ever after.

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