

By the Lake

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By the Lake

by [Meret](#)

Summary

Ilya encounters a surprise visitor while on a walk at the cottage, and has feelings about it.

Notes

Thank you to my wonderful beta reader, Ilexa! :)

This takes place between the end of Heated Rivalry, and the beginning of the next book.

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

“Shane! Shane!”

He shoves his phone in his pocket, and jumps up from the adirondack chair, hurrying towards Ilya as he runs full out from the woods. “What is it?!”

Grabbing Shane’s arm, Ilya pulls him inside, barely even slowing down. He slams the cottage door shut, securing both locks, and turns the alarm on, before looking outside intently.

“What happened?” Ilya’s sweating and out of breath, but Shane can’t tell what’s wrong. He’s been quiet for days, but keeps telling Shane he’s fine.

“You have a gun?”

A gun? “No.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t hunt.”

Ilya rolls his eyes, and swears in Russian.

“Did you see a-a prowler? Do I need to call the police?” Is that why he wants a gun? He would have expected Ilya to be angry about that though, instead of whatever this is.

“Yes! Many police with many guns. Hunt the thing in the woods.”

A *thing*? What is going on? Shane slips his shoes off by the door, and gently guides Ilya to sit in the kitchen. “You didn’t fall, did you?” he asks, pouring him a glass of cold water. Shane tries to check his pupil size as he gives him the drink. Ilya was gone on his walk a long time.

“I don’t have concussion! I was on the shore, and giant sushchestvo came out of the lake!” He gulps down some drink. “I ran into the woods to get away.”

“Oh! You must have seen a moose.” Shane smiles in relief. He understands now.

“A los’?” Ilya frowns, and looks out at the yard like he suspects one will crash through the window any moment. “I thought that was a type of deer.”

“It’s the largest in the deer family. They can be scary if you’re not expecting one.”

“That was *not* a deer,” Ilya says, shaking his head vehemently. “It was taller than me. At the shoulder!”

“Don’t they have moose in Russia?”

“I am from Moscow! You think I was in Siberia wrestling mooses?”

“The plural of moose is also moose. I think it’s a First Nations word.”

“Thank you. That is very helpful. ‘Oh, please, Mr. Moose,’” Ilya says in a high-pitched whine, “‘do not kill me with your horns as long as I am, because I know the right word to use when your friend shows up to help murder me.’”

“They’re not that long.”

“Were you there? No.” Ilya goes to the refrigerator, and pulls out the Beluga Vodka he keeps there.

“And they’re antlers,” Shane says quietly, over the sound of Ilya’s muttering in Russian as he fixes a drink.

Ilya takes a swallow of vodka, and gestures at Shane. “You didn’t call the police?”

“Uh, no. That’s not really their area.”

“Whose area is it?” Ilya asks, frowning impatiently.

“No one. I know they’re big, but unless it’s a mom protecting their calf, or a bull during breeding season, they’re generally fine if you leave them alone.”

“When is breeding season?”

“It’s in the fall.”

“So only most of the year they’re dangerous. Wonderful.” He downs the rest of the drink, and stalks off to the back of the cottage.

Shane follows him, concerned. He’s not sure what’s going on, but there’s definitely something still wrong. “Are you okay?” Shane walks into his office to see Ilya taking a hockey stick off the wall. “What are you doing with that?”

“For protection when we go outside.”

“You are not fighting a moose with my signed Guy Lafleur playoff stick! It still has his tape on it,” Shane says, taking it from Ilya, and gently setting it back in the holders on the wall. “He’s one of the best Metros players ever, and was the first MLH player to get 50 goals and 100 points in six consecutive seasons.”

“You are right. Sorry.”

“Good,” Shane says, turning back in time to see Ilya grab another stick.

“I will use this one instead.”

“What? No! Jason Spezza signed that for me at one of his last OHL games when I was a kid.”

“To Shane,” Ilya reads, “‘keep up the good work, Jason Spezza.’ Hsst! I am better than him. I will sign mine for you, and tape a knife to this one.”

“No. You’re not doing that.” Shane takes that one too, and puts it to the side. He’ll put it up later.

Ilya sits back against the desk, head bent. He looks...lost.

“What’s going on?” He’s never seen him like this. Shane steps between his legs, putting his hands on Ilya’s waist.

Clenching his fingers in Shane’s shirt, Ilya pulls him closer, and buries his face against Shane’s neck.

He trails his hand along Ilya’s back, letting him take his time.

“Call from my agent. They announce the move in three days.”

Shane stills. Is Ilya regretting it? Does he want to stay in Boston after all? Does he regret all of it?

“She would be 50 today,” Ilya whispers.

She...”Your mother?”

Ilya nods against him, and takes a deep breath “I hate Russia. Putin must rot in hell for all he has done. The plan is good.” He pauses, rubbing his thumb against Shane’s ribs. “But Russia is still a part of me. It’s part of her. The park she took me to, and the bakery we got pirozhki from as a special treat. Many things I can never see again.”

Shane can’t even imagine giving up everything he’s ever known, much less losing his mother so young. “The memories are of Russia, but they’re not in Russia.” He pulls back slightly, and puts his hand over Ilya’s heart. “You’ll still have those.”

“But there will be no one to take care of her grave, no one to put flowers on it. I was thinking that when the moose came out of the water like a vodyanoy to attack me for being a bad son.”

“You aren’t a bad son. She would be proud of you. She loved you.”

Ilya covers his hand and holds it tight, resting his forehead against Shane’s. They share each other’s breath for a few moments, before Ilya finally pulls away, wiping his eyes.

He stands up, and starts to step away when Shane touches his arm.

“Wait. What about Alexei? Won’t he take care of her grave?” There must be something they can do.

“Alexei will take care of Alexei.” Ilya touches his mother’s cross, and looks out the window. “Maybe if I pay him, ask for proof in pictures he would do it. But...”

But it’s not the same, Shane thinks. There must be something he can do to help. “Have you spoken to other players?” He hates seeing Ilya hurting like this.

Ilya shakes his head.

“I don’t think you’re the only Russian player going through something like this.” Shane can immediately think of two others who are married to American women, and have been vocal against Putin. “You can’t go public with it yet, but at least it would be people to talk to who feel the same way.”

Ilya strokes Shane’s face, looking at him with a quiet wonder that’s almost painful. “My boyfriend. Mr. Smartypants,” Ilya says, brushing soft kisses along his jaw.

Shane tilts his head as he embraces him. He can’t solve all of Ilya’s problems no matter how much he wants to, but he can give him this. He feels his desire growing with each touch - a languid, golden warmth, so different from the sudden, fierce, heat this morning in the gym.

Shane squeezes Ilya’s ass, and kisses him, slowly exploring his mouth. He can never get enough of this taste, never get enough of Ilya. He sucks in a breath as Ilya thumbs his nipple. It’s a light, feathery flick, but it still goes right to his cock.

“I love you,” Ilya murmurs against his lips.

No matter how often he hears that it still sends a hat trick thrill through him. “Ya tozhe tebya lyublyu.” Shane still has trouble, especially with the grammar cases, but this phrase he has down.

A loud growl emanates from Ilya’s stomach, and Shane snorts in surprise.

“Really, Hollander?” Ilya raises his eyebrows at him. “You laugh when I say I love you.”

“I said I love you too.”

Ilya’s stomach growls louder than before, and Shane can’t help but laugh out loud this time. “Maybe we should eat lunch first.”

“Yes,” Ilya says, pulling their hips together so Shane can feel his arousal. “You’ll need energy for what I plan to do later.”

“I’m looking forward to it. What do you want for lunch?”

Ilya gives Shane a quick kiss, and grins. “Mooseburgers.”

End Notes

Thank you to Inlovewithhockey for suggesting Jason Spezza. :)

Sushchestvo – creature

Los' - moose

Ya tozhe tebya lyublyu – I love you too

A vodyanoy is a mythological water creature. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/monster-mythology-vodyanoy>

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