Cookies and Cream Melt(down)

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by Anonymous

Summary

Shane is very pregnant. Ilya has ice-cream. Shane eats said ice-cream and has Big Feelings about the sensory nightmare that is having an almost full-term baby cavorting inside of him. Ilya tries his best to help.

Notes

This is PURE self-indulgence but I felt it needed to be done. The biology works because this is fan-fiction, baby.

Inspired by this drawing of a pregnant Shane stealing Ilya's ice-cream done by @Medrawawi on Twitter (thanks for the inspo!)
https://x.com/medrawawi/status/2096395141745410143?s=46
Of course I had to go and add angst :)

“Shane? Have you seen my ice-cream?”

Ilya is sure he had bought a tub yesterday. Cookies and cream; his favorite flavor. There’s a muffled sound from the corridor, and Ilya rounds the corner to find his husband face-deep in the tub, eyes glassy and staring into the distance.

Despite himself, Ilya grins. Shane had been adamant that he was going to keep up the “wholegrain and lean protein grind” his entire pregnancy. It had lasted maybe three minutes before Shane succumbed to violent cravings for marshmallow fluff, something he usually purported to hate. Throughout the last eight months of his pregnancy, Ilya has dutifully catered to every single one of his husband’s gustatory whims. There had been the crackers and salted butter phase. The “everything must be sour” phase. The red-velvet cake mixed with crunchy peanut-butter fiasco. And now, coming into the home stretch, Shane just wants **sweet** things. All. The. Time.

So, it’s not really a surprise to see him raw-dogging a tub of ice-cream while in a spaced-out sugary haze. What *is* a surprise is the way gaze flicks up to meet Ilya’s, face creasing in shame. What *is* a surprise is the way his bottom lip starts to wobble and those brown doe-eyes start to feel with tears. Then he heaves in a big inhale and bursts into tears.

“S-sorry,” he gasps. “I was hungry and I j-just, I just needed…something. I’m fucking disgusting, ‘m’sorry!”

Shit. Ilya stands frozen in place, his palms up in appeasement. He didn’t mean for this to happen. He only intended for a moment of light-hearted teasing, intended to provoke Shane into giving him the irritated huff and arched eyebrow that always sends a frisson of delight jolting through him. Instead, his husband is now sobbing about how huge and out of control he feels while clutching a tub of rapidly melting Ben & Jerry’s. And yes, there is a distinct creamy dribble trailing out the side of his mouth, and no, Ilya is *not* going to mention that to him.

“Shane,” he murmurs softly. “*Malysh*. Is okay. I promise- is okay.”

But Shane just shakes his head and honest to God *wails*. Ilya blinks. If he had ever doubted that pregnancy was a kind of violence on the body, he has more than enough proof standing in front of him now. The third trimester has been treating Shane like its own, personal punching bag.

“Come here,” he says, then he steps forward to guide Shane’s head into the crook of his neck.

“Is good,” he mumbles, nuzzling into Shane’s hair (slightly greasy, but that’s another thing Ilya would rather die than mention).

“You needed ice-cream so you got yourself ice-cream. You did it for the baby.”

He tries to make it sound kind of like a noble sacrifice. Which, in Shane's case, it actually is.

"S'not just ice-cream," Shane heaves snottily into his shoulder. "I, I put Nutella and peanut butter on it as well…"

He's engulfed by a fresh wave of sobs.

"This is excellent idea," Ilya soothes, "Why did I never think of this?"

Shane cries harder, if that's even possible. At this rate, he's going to give himself a nosebleed.

"Just breathe, *malysh*," Ilya sways Shane side to side a little, keeping his head nestled in the crook between his shoulder and neck. "Breathe. I absolve you of all ice-cream related crimes, okay? You have uh...what's it called? Exemption. You have special exemption."

Shane gives no indication of having heard him. Ilya gently takes the ice-cream carton from his grip and sets it down on the coffee-table for later. Then he pulls Shane closer into a bone-crushingly tight side-hug, made awkward as fuck by Shane's large belly. He trails his fingers up and down the knobs in Shane's spine, because his back is sore all the fucking time now, and murmurs all manner of ridiculous, soothing nonsense until it seems like maybe Shane has cried himself out.

Then he guides Shane to sit down on the sofa and fetches a warm wash-cloth to run over his sore, swollen face, hands Shane a glass of water and watches him drink.

"What are you feeling?" he asks softly, rubbing his palms firmly up and down the meat of Shane's thighs.

"I don't know," Shane admits. He looks tired in a way Ilya's never seen before, dark smudges pressed like fresh bruises beneath his eyes. A good night's sleep is a distant memory for him now, and probably will be for some time. Ilya feels guilty for how easily *he* is still able to swan-dive into bed and be fast asleep in minutes. Shane's complicated, ever-evolving arrangement of props and pillows buy him maybe 45 minutes of comfort before the pain shifts from his back to his hips, or vice-versa, and the whole set-up needs to be reconfigured. Ilya's taking the night shift as soon as their baby girl is born.

"Do you," he leans forward to kiss the tip of Shane's nose, moist from all the crying, "Do you want to finish your ice-cream?"

Your ice-cream, he wants to make clear. Shane can have absolutely anything he wants right now. Shane nods, chin wobbling slightly again.

"Okay, is no problem."

He hands over the tub and spoon, although the spoon is hardly necessary now. The contents have melted into a creamy, chocolatey sludge, and Shane just drinks it like a milkshake.

"Can I have my uh, my special blanket please?" Shane asks in a small voice.

Ilya tilts his head, trying to make sure he understands. There's the weighted blanket Shane purchased off of Amazon years ago, smuggling it covertly into the house like a shameful secret. Then there's the blush-pink linen swaddling blanket that they sleep with in their bed so their baby will have something that smells like both of them in the first few hours of her life.

"My weighted blanket, please," Shane clarifies, sensing Ilya's confusion. "I just want it on my legs. She's kicking a lot today and it's making me feel…too much. It's too much."

"I will bring," Ilya says and stands up to fetch it from upstairs.

"Little one please," he says, putting on a fake stern voice, "Your Daddy gives you rest and ice-cream and you still keep on battering him? Where are your manners?"

Shane smiles weakly.

"She has your manners."

"Rude."

He fetches Shane's blanket and one of his foam pillows, slots the pillow behind Shane's lower back and drapes the heavy warmth of the blanket over Shane's outstretched legs.

"Ankles are so swollen," Shane grumbles, and Ilya makes a discontented sound and kisses his ankle-bone. "No slandering your beautiful ankles, Hollander. You want curtains shut for a bit?"

Shane relaxes his head back into the sofa with a little sigh.

"God, yes please," he hums. Ilya envelops them in comforting darkness and sits on the other end of the sofa, tangling his legs with Shane's under the heaviness of the blanket. He listens to Shane breathe, feeling him shift every now and then, hearing him purse out a sigh when a hand or a foot must make especially hard contact with an internal organ. Shane's stomach gurgles loudly and he groans, but Ilya doesn't mention it. He's just starting to think they might have cleared this particular rough patch when Shane starts to sniffle again, so softly that Ilya takes a while to catch it.

When he does, he hums gentle and low, his foot rubbing against Shane's. He doesn't ask what's wrong. He's learned by now there doesn't always have to be a reason. Except:

"She's kicking so much," Shane snuffles, his voice cracking. "She won't stop. I wish she would go to sleep, but she won't stop."

He whimpers softly and Ilya feels his heart twist.

"It really hurts, Ilya. I know I shouldn't say that, but it does. It ***hurts***."

It does terrible things to Ilya to hear his poor husband cry in the dark, overwhelmed with the sensory horror of having a living creature twirling and bouncing inside the squished cavity of his womb. It hurts to hear Shane chastise himself for acknowledging the discomfort he's in. There's this unrealistic standard Shane sometimes holds himself to that if he's not beaming and posing bump-out in paternity photoshoots then he's somehow *doing* pregnancy wrong, failing their unborn daughter. It takes a lot for Ilya to be able to convince him that the swelling, the stretchmarks and the downright *inconvenience* are all valid parts of pregnancy too. That the pain and the joy can coexist. That nobody's failing anyone. And right now, hearing Shane's crying pick up speed as he careens into crash-out #2, Ilya thinks he might need some backup.

He pulls out his phone and finds Elsa, their birth coach and doula's number. Shane had really gone full-out with the support system in preparation for the birth, going to eight Lamaze classes and flying through a self-paced hypnobirthing course. Plus, countless one-on-one sessions with Elsa who also specializes in "pre-natal and post-partum holistic wellness."

Shane's planning to deliver at Elsa's birthing center, adamant that he doesn't want the stirrups and noise and fluorescent lights of a hospital labor. Given the low-risk nature of his pregnancy and Shane's absolute hatred of medical settings, it's the right decision for him. And although initially Ilya had felt all the classes and phone calls and courses were a tiny bit overkill, he's glad now for Shane's foresight in making sure they have a supportive professional to call when everything just gets too much. Like right now.

"Sweetheart, can I call Elsa?" he asks gently. He seizes the small jerky nod he receives as permission, and presses her contact. She answers quickly. Now that they're only three weeks out from Shane's due date, she's told them to call her for anything. Ilya really hopes she does mean anything.

"Ilya?"

He can never quite place her accent, but if he had to put money on it, he'd say it's vaguely Scandinavian. It's comforting nevertheless. He's grown to trust her now, although to be honest, she wouldn't have been his first pick. She's very into breathing and reconnecting with the primal self and just a bit too '*kumbaya'* for Ilya's Slavic sensibilities. But Shane clicks with her, feels safe with her, and that's the main priority. He'd even stammered out to her during their first meeting that he was "probably neurodivergent," and asked how that could be accounted for during the delivery process. It had made Ilya still beside him, because that was the first time Shane had labelled and voiced out loud what had been an implicit knowledge between them for years. Later, when Ilya had brought it up, Shane had shut down, snapping that he couldn't be "the gay, Asian, pregnant, *autistic* hockey player, God Ilya, I just **can't!**"

Which is something Ilya feels they should probably address at some stage. But not now, not when Shane has returned to fully-fledged bawling on the sofa and Ilya has to rush to reassure their doula that no, he's not in labor, he's just having a mental breakdown because their unborn baby is using his insides as a trampoline.

"He…we are overwhelm," he says tightly into the phone. He had meant to say 'overwhelmed,' but figures this description is probably more accurate: his husband is in

sleep-deprived, hormone-addled hell, and Ilya feels helpless to comfort him.

“Okay hon, put me on speaker.” Elsa sounds way too casual about this, but Ilya’s hoping she can pull something from her granola-fueled consciousness to soothe Shane.

“Hey, Shane,” Elsa’s voice drops to a softer register, although it’s still disarmingly relaxed. “It’s all a bit much at the moment, huh?”

Shane gives a couple of breathless gasps and nods. His eyes are squeezed shut the way they do when he wants to bury deep inside himself.

“He’s nodding,” he informs Elsa, figuring he may as well keep himself useful here.

“I can really hear your stress, Shane,” Elsa continues as Shane lets out another pained whimper. “There’s a lot going on inside of you right now. A lot of sensations, a lot of feelings.”

“A lot of ice-cream,” Ilya adds helpfully. Shane groans at a sudden, bulging protrusion on his belly from a particularly strong kick. Ilya winces. That’s got to feel overstimulating as hell right now. Ilya feels an irrational wave of guilt over impregnating Shane with his stupid, restless, Russian genes. Shane could have had a demure, little fetus sitting politely inside his womb. Instead, thanks to Ilya, he has a feral hooligan.

“Ilya tells me she’s been very active today. Kicking the shit out of you,” Elsa drops, and Ilya snorts because *that* was unexpected. Even Shane gives something that could almost be considered a huff of laughter. Almost. Ilya’s unreasonably glad to hear it.

“Why don’t we try some breathing exercises together?”

“K-kay,” Shane manages, and Ilya shuffles off the couch and onto the floor in front of Shane.

“Take my hands, sweetheart,” he murmurs, and Shane grabs them with his characteristic intensity. Elsa starts talking them through some recentering breaths, and Shane squeezes the ever-living fuck out of Ilya’s hands whenever the baby squirms or Shane’s own breath snags on an exhale. At one point, Ilya pries one hand free so he can move it in firm, soothing sweeps across the dome of Shane’s belly, trying both to give Shane another sensation to focus on and to soothe the little person inside. He feels a flurry of tiny hands and feet rushing to meet his palms and he shushes them gently, tapping against them and imploring them to give their temporary home some grace. He wonders if their baby knows she’s going to be born soon, whether she feels ready to leave her shelter, all safe and snug, whether she’s afraid to come into the world. He blinks rapidly and shakes his head. Two bawling people is not going to make the situation any better.

Elsa keeps going with her counting, all murmurs and reassurance, and it does actually seem to be working. Shane’s death grip on Ilya’s fingers has loosened slightly, his gummy palm now resting comfortably against Ilya’s. There are still tears clinging to his lashes, but they’re not streaking down his face anymore. His eyes are still shut, but his forehead isn’t furrowed so tight that it looks like it’s going to implode. He’s breathing, slowly and deeply, and their baby isn’t going as crazy anymore. Maybe, just maybe, she’s finally tired herself out.

“Good job, Shane,” Elsa says. “You’re here, and you’re doing really well.”

Ilya nods emphatically, even though he knows Shane can’t see him right now. It’s true. Shane **is** doing really well. He’s handled this pregnancy like a trooper. From the bouts of morning sickness to the uncertainty of each ultrasound, from sprucing up and baby-proofing their home for the arrival of their little girl to his truly formidable reading on sleep training and superior swaddling techniques, Shane has given himself up to the whole process, ceding control of his body with an astonishing amount of grace for someone as control-oriented as Shane Hollander.

And despite the indignities of the third trimester, Ilya still hears him speaking to their daughter like she’s the most treasured thing to ever exist.

“My beautiful Shane,” he says thickly, kissing Shane’s knuckles. “I’m so proud of you. I’m so grateful for you.”

He hopes Elsa does 2 for 1 couples breakdown sessions, because he’s definitely on the verge right about now.

“Those are some great affirmations, Ilya,” Elsa chips in, and Ilya huffs in consternation.

“S’not ‘*affirmations.’* Is just the truth. He is the bravest, most beautiful, everything. He is already so wonderful for our girl.”

Shane’s eyes flutter open, meet Ilya’s for a brief, overwhelming second, then slip closed again. Ilya strokes his reddened cheek.

“Shane, I’m wondering if you can take some of what Ilya’s telling you and say it for yourself. Sometimes it can be really powerful to acknowledge ourselves in these moments.”

“I can…*try*,” Shane looks distinctly uncomfortable.

“Go ahead.”

“Um, okay,” Shane clears his throat and his eyes open to meet Ilya’s again. Ilya nods, trying to inflect as much encouragement as he can into the movement.

“I’m brave, I guess. I mean, I **am** brave,” Shane amends as Ilya frowns. “Because uh, this is really hard sometimes but I’m doing it anyway. And I’ve been growing a baby, **our** baby, which is…which is amazing.”

“So fucking amazing,” Ilya murmurs, reverent. “You are best ever at growing baby.”

“Yeah, okay,” Shane rolls his eyes, finally looking a little like his usual self, and Ilya feels like he can breathe again.

“And um, I’m proud of myself,” Shane swallows and blinks. “I’m proud of myself for getting here.”

“You forgot, ‘*I am beautiful, sexy and gorgeous,*’” Ilya pouts.

“Okay, that too,” Shane smiles.

“Hm, no. You must say it. Otherwise, it does not work.”

Another eye-roll. His Shane is back.

“I am beautiful, sexy and gorgeous,” he parrots, but there’s the beginning of a twinkle in his eye. “Happy?”

“Yes. Gimme kiss.” And he pulls Shane in for an obnoxiously loud smooch that has Shane pointing at the phone with wide, indignant eyes. But Ilya doesn’t care because he’s too busy kissing him.

“I think I can leave you two for the time being,” comes Elsa’s wry voice and Shane shoves Ilya off his lips and clears his throat.

“Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Elsa- so much.”

“No problem. Ilya, thanks for calling me. Shane, hon, you’re almost there. I’ll see you both at the finish line.”

“You will,” Shane confirms. Then they’re saying their final goodbyes and Elsa hangs up.

Ilya looks at Shane, face still blotchy and tear-stained.

“I have some more affirmations,” he says slowly. Shane blinks.

“You do?”

“Yes. Repeat after me. ‘*My ass is so full and sexy and gorgeous it makes my poor Russian husband insane.* ”’

“Ilya,” Shane flushes.

“Shane. Repeat.”

“My ass. Is so full, sexy and gorgeous…” Shane finishes the rest of the sentence with Ilya’s lips covering his own. Then their tongues are in each other’s mouths.

“I have another one,” Ilya says, pulling back slightly. He cradles Shane’s face in both hands.

“Is very important one. Listen carefully. ‘*I have made such a good, safe home for our daughter, and she will always know how loved she is.*’” Ilya’s voice trembles more than he wants it too, but it doesn’t really matter. They’re about to have a fucking baby. Tears feel acceptable.

In the dimness of the room, Shane’s eyes grow impossibly soft, and he melts once more into Ilya’s kiss.

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