

there's no pretending

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/63018880) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/63018880>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , Wyatt Hayes , Zane Boodram
Additional Tags:	Temporary Amnesia , Pining , Medical Inaccuracies , True Love's Kiss , Angst with a Happy Ending , Sexual Content , suspension of disbelief required i fear , ilya can be an unreliable narrator as a treat
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-02-13 Words: 13,179 Chapters: 1/1

there's no pretending

by [moonsock](#)

Summary

The term, he's told, is temporary retrograde amnesia. Ilya doesn't need the direct translation to understand: he forgot things. Ten years of things.

Notes

they say to write the fic you want to see in the world, and i'm always a sucker for an amnesia fic. also i don't know how a hospital or the brain works and i actually don't care. if you're a doctor look away

title from clairo's juna. enjoy <3

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

Ilya wakes up disoriented.

The first thing he registers, other than the intolerable ache in his head, is the fluorescent light. His thoughts are molasses slow, half-formed, slipping through his fingers before he can catch more than the tail-end. He's in a hospital; that much he can gather from the rhythmic beeping of the monitor and the sterile white of the walls. He's not sure *why* he's in a hospital, but he'd like to find out.

"Mr. Rozanov," a nurse says, followed by a string of fast English. He blinks up at her drowsily.

"What happened?" he manages, throat scratchy. She looks around helplessly— he must've said it in Russian— and says something again in English, slower this time. It takes a few beats for him to translate, brain muddled.

"You — mild concussion," she tells him. "You may be a little sore, and — confused."

"What happened?" he repeats, this time in the right language.

She writes something down on her clipboard, then offers him a bottle of water. He takes it with shaky hands. "You took a hit in your game and landed on your head. We'll keep an eye on you for the rest of the day, and you can leave with your team tomorrow."

Leave from where? The details escape him. He doesn't remember a hit, or who they were playing. He hopes he's not out for too long: winning the cup last season has only strengthened his drive. It had been surreal and amazing and fucking empty — but he can fill whatever's broken inside of him with another one. He wants a repeat. He thinks they have a shot.

"You have people waiting to see you," she says as he stares at the wall. The condensation from the bottle chills his fingers, but it feels good. Grounding. "If you're up for it."

He must mumble some sort of affirmative because when he zones back in, a man is in front of his bed. He assumes this must be one of the friends in question, but he only recognizes him vaguely— it takes him a second to place the face. Everything feels like slow motion.

"Hello," he says, uncertain. Why a Centaurs player is here, he has no idea. Maybe that's who they were playing. *Where the fuck is my team?*

"Roz," Boodram— that's his name, Ilya remembers from an All Star Game— greets, with no small amount of relief in his voice. The familiarity startles him; he's not sure they've ever really spoken, outside of chirps. Ottawa is so bad, though, sometimes Ilya didn't even bother. After a while it just feels like punching down. "You had us worried, man."

Ilya doesn't say anything. His confusion is gradually mounting; he had hoped, upon waking, that he would have less questions and more answers, but it's proving to be the other way around. "I do not remember the game," he says. "Did we win?" Maybe it was Boodram who

hit him, and coming to see him was a show of sportsmanship. Maybe this is some weird, fucked up dream. He should have dreamed himself a hot nurse.

Boodram grins. “Yeah, barely. We missed you out there.” Ilya accepts that silently.

“Are we in Boston?” he asks. A plane ride home would fucking suck, and all he wants to do right now is lay in his penthouse with the lights off. Ottawa to Boston shouldn’t be more than an hour and a half, though.

Boodram pauses in a way that feels ominous. “Um, no. We’re in DC.”

What is in DC? He stares at Boodram blankly.

“The nurse said you might be confused. We were playing the Caps, and you took a dirty hit. You’ll fly back to Ottawa with us tomorrow, and be out for a bit while you recover. Nothing to stress about.”

Back to... Ottawa. Alarm bells go off in his head— something is wrong. He wants to ask, but he doesn't exactly trust his English right now. This isn't right.

The door opens abruptly and a blur of dark hair rushes in, holding a cup of coffee. Ilya stares at the man for a long, long second, certain he must be hallucinating. But no: it's Shane fucking Hollander, in the flesh. Flushed and freckled and looking so goddamned worried— looking at Ilya like he'd never looked at him before.

“Fuck, Ilya,” he says, and isn't *that* a shock to the system, his first name falling so affectionately from those pink lips. “I’m so sorry, I went to the cafeteria, and then Boodram texted you were awake, and I just...God.” He pauses his frantic rambling to sit next to Ilya, placing a hand on his arm. Boodram is still *right there* . “I was freaking out. We knew you were going to be okay, but I was still...oh, thank God, Ilya.”

Ilya just stares at him, his arm burning where Hollander's fingers touch. He can't think of one reason Hollander would be here, miles from Montreal, hand on Ilya's body like he owned it. They haven't spoken in months, and the last time they did they hadn't even kissed. It's making his chest hurt. “What the fuck are you doing here?” he asks, shaky English be damned.

Hollander freezes, eyes wide. Even startled he's gorgeous, but Ilya can't find it in himself to appreciate it. Instead, it's just pissing him off. “What?”

“That is what I am asking you.” He squeezes the water bottle tighter. “Why you are not in Montreal.”

Hollander just stares at him stupidly, slowly removing his hand from Ilya's arm. Boodram makes an odd noise; Ilya'd forgot he's still here. “I haven't been on Montreal in years, Ilya. I play for Ottawa now, with you.”

Ilya goes still. What Hollander is saying doesn't make any sense. None of this makes any fucking sense. He just won the Stanley fucking Cup a few months ago – with *Boston* . He

won MVP and fucked Hollander in his huge suite for one of the hottest nights of his life then flew back to Moscow to go deal with his father's illness because no one else would. He tries to force down the panic that has taken hold of him, but it's not working.

"I do not understand," he says, breathing in slowly.

"He's our teammate," Boodram says. "You're an Ottawa Centaur. You're our *captain*."

"No," Ilya says through gritted teeth. "That is not true, for me. I play with Boston. We just won the Cup."

"I'm going to get the doctor," Boodram says in what he probably thinks is a calm tone, but it's belied by the way he sprints out of the room. And then it's just him and Shane fucking Hollander, who's still looking at him with an expression like his world is crashing down all around him.

Ilya can't take those dark, anguished eyes. "Get out," he bites out, then turns to face the wall so he doesn't have to watch Hollander walk away from him. The water bottle is leaking all over his hands—he wipes them fruitlessly on the thin blanket and tries not to think about everything he's lost.

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The term, he's told, is temporary retrograde amnesia.

Ilya doesn't need the direct translation to understand: he forgot things. Ten years of things. It's 2024: he's thirty-four, not twenty-four, and he plays for the Ottawa Centaurs, not Boston. Apparently, so does Shane Hollander.

"It's not uncommon, after a head injury," Dr. Reed is saying. Ilya has been mostly silent during the exchange; the panic is paralyzing him. This has to be some sort of mistake—but he knows, grimly, that it's not. It's impossible not to be reminded of his father and his twin broken brain. He thinks of the English phrase about the apple and the tree. "The only thing to do in situations like this is wait. Certainly don't add any additional stress on top of the concussion."

"For how long?" Boodram pushes. In Hollander's absence, Boodram seems to have appointed himself Ilya's second in command, guarding the foot of his bed loyally.

"These things take time," Dr. Reed says, which isn't a fucking answer. "I would avoid overwhelming him, but feel free to catch him up with the necessary information." To Ilya, she says, "Go in for a check up after a week if you're still having trouble remembering things or severe migraines. Until then, take it day by day."

"*Fuck*," Boodram says, for some reason. "I...am going to make someone else do that." So much for a guardian.

"Do what?" Ilya demands. He hates feeling helpless like this, so out of the loop on his own life. He's largely indifferent to most things; he can't imagine what would make Boodram

react like that. He has the sinking feeling it has to do with Hollander.

“Hollander,” Boodram is saying through the open door, “Get your ass in here. This is above my pay grade.”

Ilya hears, “He doesn’t *know*- ” before Hollander’s face appears again, paler than before. He gnaws on his bottom lip, not meeting Ilya’s eyes. Nothing like his previous entrance, when he busted through the door like he owned the place. He was so happy to see Ilya.

“Hi,” he says, cautiously. Ilya doesn’t return the greeting, tempted to bare his teeth. He hates that Hollander is seeing him like this, laid out so vulnerable in bed.

The door clicks closed as Dr. Reed and Boodram exit, leaving him and Hollander staring at each other. Well, Ilya staring at Hollander— Hollander can’t seem to move his gaze away from the wall next to Ilya.

“I’m sorry if I’m not the one you want to see right now,” he says. “I— fuck. I just figured that you should hear everything from me.”

“Everything,” Ilya repeats blankly. The way Hollander says it makes it sound like a burden.

Hollander lets out a shaky breath, and then squares his shoulders, determined. He finally meets Ilya’s eyes. “Everything.”

Ilya studies this thirty-four-year-old Shane Hollander, with his longer hair— almost to his jaw— and developing laugh lines. He wonders who’s making him laugh, if he’s with someone for real now. The thought makes him want to puke, or maybe bang his concussed head against the wall. There’s no ring on his left hand; that should mean something.

“Okay, Hollander,” he says. “Tell me what I missed.”

As it turns out, he missed a lot.

He left Boston for Ottawa, has been the Captain for the past few years, and led them to a recent Cup win. Scott Hunter is gay (what), and so is Troy Barrett (*what*), who is also on their team for some reason. Hollander left Montreal for Ottawa, but they play on different lines (he has no idea how Ottawa affords both of them. Maybe Hollander got really, really bad in the past decade). They run a charity with hockey camps, which explains the familiarity in public.

“We’re together on the power play,” Hollander confides with a small smile.

“And we’re good,” Ilya says, making an educated guess.

“We’re the best,” says Hollander firmly.

It’s too much to digest at once; he doesn’t respond to much of it. His father is dead— the fact is unsurprising, but it hurts in a way that’s unexpected. Like pressing on a bruise. His father has been unwell for a long, long time; he wonders what their last conversation was about, if he even remembered Ilya.

“Well,” he says, after they’ve been sitting in silence for several minutes. “That is—”

“And we’re married,” Hollander blurts, then immediately looks like he wants to die. “You’re my husband.”

...What?

“*What?*” Ilya says. Fucking what? His English is still mostly eluding him, but he’s 99% sure he knows that word. Husband. As in, married. To a man. To *Hollander*.

Hollander, who is mortified, his face pink and turning pinker. He soldiers on. “For three years now. Um, we’ve been together, officially, for around seven. But obviously, before that, you know.”

Ilya doesn’t know how to respond. Very rarely is he at a loss for words like this. “You do not wear a ring,” he says, somewhat nonsensically. Husband. *Married*.

Hollander reaches into his shirt collar and pulls out a chain with a plain ring dangling. “We don’t wear them during games,” he explains. “But, um, we like to have them on us somehow.”

We. He and Hollander have always been distinctly separate from each other— in teams, in lifestyles, in personalities. They were opposites in almost every way imaginable, intense attraction to each other aside. Not once has he thought to group them as a “we.”

“I am tired,” Ilya says, unable to continue this conversation any fucking longer. “Has been a long day.” His brain is a dark tangle of thoughts and questions he’s not sure he wants answers to.

“Oh, yeah, of course,” Hollander says, taking it for the dismissal it is. “It has been a long day. I’ll, um,” he makes an aborted motion with his hand, as if he were about to reach for Ilya. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Okay.”

“Goodbye,” Hollander says, tightly. Ilya just nods at him, and pretends not to notice the look of heartbreak that creases his stupid, gorgeous face.

Fuck, he thinks, leaning back into the pillows. *Fuck, fuck, fuck*.

No chance in Hell he’ll sleep tonight. He’s going to spend the next few hours the way he so often does: mad at Hollander for existing, and mad at himself for needing him.

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The plane ride is almost unbearable in its awkwardness.

Ilya pulls the concussion card just to get away from the prying eyes of people he doesn’t remember and can’t bring himself to care about. Hollander reads his mood correctly and sits across the aisle from him, which Ilya resents— he doesn’t need to be babysat. When the plane

takes off he notices a few pale faces but chalks it up to a team of nervous flyers, and, not being one of them, slips on his eye mask to avoid having to look at anyone anymore. Also because his head still aches like a bitch.

“Take it easy, Roz,” their coach, Weibe, tells him when they get off on the tarmac. “We need you in one piece.”

“And go easy on Hollander,” the one with curly hair says lowly. Hayes, maybe. Ilya gives him a half-assed salute instead of saying *Mind your own fucking business* like he wants to and follows Hollander silently to their car— an SUV, of all things.

“It’s good in the snow,” Hollander says, when he sees Ilya’s disgusted expression.

“You would say that,” Ilya scoffs.

Hollander side eyes him. “You picked it, not me.” It’s such an unbelievable statement that if Hollander were capable of pranks, Ilya would think he was pulling one. He scowls and pulls his toque over his eyes. Thirty-four-year-old Ilya has yet to impress him.

It’s not long before they pull into the driveway of an enormous, gated house in the suburbs. It’s admittedly beautiful, with a four-car garage, semicircular driveway, and a spacious front yard. The October chill is starting to affect the trees, and red and orange foliage covers the grass. It looks like a fairytale— Ilya can’t believe he would ever live here. It’s nothing like his sleek and sexy penthouse.

Hollander, meanwhile, has removed Ilya’s bag from the trunk and is carrying it toward the house, as if Ilya is a visiting aunt.

“I can carry my own bag,” Ilya says irritably, wincing at the sunlight as he exits the passenger seat.

He’s ignored. “How’s your head?”

“Fine. I can carry the bag.”

“I’m sure you can,” Hollander says, unlocking the front door. “I just need to— *Anya!*”

Ilya’s mood lifts immediately as a blur of brown and white and gray leaps at him. A dog! A beautiful, perfect, sweet baby of a dog, who is licking Ilya’s face and wagging its tail at the speed of light.

“I guess my parents dropped her off early,” Hollander sighs. “I’ll let you two get reacquainted.”

“Are you mine?” Ilya gushes in Russian. “Are you my puppy, pretty girl?” Anya— it’s a cute name.

Anya barks once, as if to say, *yes!* Maybe the future isn’t all bad, if he has the cutest dog in the entire world. When he glances up Hollander is gazing at him, smiling softly, but he turns away immediately when he notices Ilya’s eyes on him.

“Come on,” he says, clearing his throat. “I’ll...give you the tour, I guess.”

He takes him through the living room, the kitchen, and the bathroom (and avoids the office, Ilya notices). It’s homey, with framed pictures everywhere. Ilya doesn’t get the chance to study them too much, because Hollander’s nervous babbling distracts him. It’s annoying.

It’s only a little past noon, and he slept on the plane, but he’s exhausted down to his bones. “I think I will take a nap,” he says. They haven’t reached anything upstairs, yet, because Hollander won’t stop talking about the tile of the kitchen or some shit, like he’s a realtor trying to convince Ilya to buy.

“Okay,” Hollander says, after a beat. “The master is the one on the left.”

The master. Where he presumably sleeps with Hollander. Where he fucks him, too. No, he can’t sleep there. “You take the master. This is your room; I’m a guest.”

Hurt flashes on Hollander’s face. “You’re not a...” he trails off, and sighs. “Take the master. Please.”

Usually Ilya would be game to continue arguing, but his head is throbbing, and he’s never heard Hollander sound so defeated. He doesn’t like it. “Okay,” he agrees quietly, a little taken aback by the emotion on that freckled face. “Can I bring the dog?”

Hollander hesitates. “*Fine*. Just this once. She can’t think it’s a normal thing.” Whatever. Ilya gets to snuggle his awesome dog; he’ll take his wins where he can.

The master itself is a classy, open room with a king sized bed. Ilya takes the opportunity to snoop, noting the pictures of he and Hollander, like, everywhere. His concussion means he can’t be on his phone for the first few days, but he assumes, looking at all of the physical proof of their relationship, that his camera roll is something similar.

He stares at the picture closest to the bed: Hollander in a suit and beaming at Ilya, who looks happier than he thought possible. As crazy as it is, he can only assume it’s from their wedding day. He studies the man in the photo. It’s like looking at a stranger. His jaw is more square, and his hair is longer. His face has matured and aged (Christ, he has crow's feet) .

The problem is he doesn’t remember it happening.

This Ilya moved to Ottawa for Shane Hollander. This Ilya married him in the backyard, surrounded by loved ones. This Ilya got to fuck him, to hold him, to stay with him. Hollander looks so happy, freckles bunched up and his eyes squinty. Somehow, Ilya made him happy.

Damn it, he thinks, and his head starts pounding. Hollander’s the wholesome Canadian sweetheart, and he’s the obnoxious rock star. They’re polar opposites. This doesn’t make sense.

Sleep is impossible, as tired as he is. The sheets smell like Hollander– clean. Like citrus, like mint, like skin. The same way he smelled in Vegas, when they presented the award together; when Ilya had taken those selfies, convinced it would be the only picture he’d ever have of

Hollander. Now he's lying in a bed surrounded by pictures of them both. He wonders what side of the bed Hollander prefers, or if he snores. He probably likes to be the little spoon.

Ilya's not sure how long he lays there with his eyes closed and a sweet dog curled up at his feet, but he doesn't feel any more rested than when he started. He squeezes his crucifix for comfort, hyper aware of the worn wedding ring on his finger. They'd given it to him before he got on the plane and, not knowing what else to do, he slipped it on; it fit perfectly.

When he emerges some time later, cautiously walking down the stairs, Hollander is nowhere to be found. Anya, however, is glued to his heels. She probably needs a walk, but Ilya is in no condition to take her on one. This, he tells himself, is why he goes looking for Hollander. No other reason.

He has a pretty good guess where he might be, and, after checking, is proven right.

Hollander's on the treadmill in the gym, running at a pace that Ilya is tempted to call irresponsible, given that he's worth millions of dollars. Maybe it's creepy to stand silently and watch him run, but Ilya can't really bring himself to care. He's in a dead sprint, chest heaving, eyes flinty; he hasn't noticed Ilya yet, even though there are wall-to-wall mirrors and Ilya's not exactly hiding.

Anya, the friendly girl that she is, wanders in behind him and barks, excited to hang out with both of them. Hollander's eyes shoot up and meet Ilya's in the mirror. "*Fuck,*" he shouts, startled, and slams the stop button. "Fuck," he repeats, softer as he catches his breath.

"Found you," says Ilya, like he hasn't been standing here the whole time.

"You were looking for me?"

"Of course not."

Hollander politely does not call *bullshit*. "How was your nap?" he asks, finally turning around. His cheeks are flushed, and his hair is wet and dark from sweat. Every time Ilya sees Hollander, whether on or off the ice, he hopes that maybe this time he won't find him so fucking irresistible.

It's a pipe dream.

"Was fine," Ilya lies, trying not to stare at the hollow of Hollander's slick throat. He wonders what the other Ilya would do— would he walk up and lick it, from collarbone to pulse point? Would he bite Hollander's red ears?

Hollander clears his throat, and steps back unsteadily. "Um," he says, "I can make dinner, if you're hungry."

Dinner. Jesus, how long did he lay in silence, mourning his stupid, busted brain? "Okay," Ilya says. "Anya needs to go on a walk."

"Okay."

“...Okay.” He turns on his heel and walks out; He can feel Hollander behind him, a respectable distance away.

Hollander disappears for a while with Anya, leaving Ilya to sit around with his thumbs up his ass. It’s stupid, and he feels scratching at the walls of his own skull. When Hollander returns, dog in tow, he refuses to let Ilya help with dinner in any way except for boiling the water, which is infuriating in a completely different way.

Dinner ends up being spaghetti – standard for an NHL diet, but one of the most memorable meals of Ilya’s life simply because it’s Hollander who made it for him. When was the last time someone cooked for him? He even put a fuck ton of parmesan, the way Ilya likes it. What is this life he’s stumbled into? Who the fuck does he think he is, playing house with Hollander?

“I think I will go to bed,” he says after cleaning his plate. The spaghetti had been delicious, but he doesn’t want to be in this kitchen, with Hollander’s worried eyes trained unflinching on him. He doesn’t want to be in this fucking decade, filling the shoes of himself.

Hollander nods, but not before Ilya can spot his poorly-concealed disappointment. “That’s good. You’ll need to rest a lot these first few days.”

He’s already halfway out of the room by the time Hollander finishes his sentence. *I just need to get the fuck out of here.* “Night,” he says, as an afterthought. He can’t breathe.

“Goodnight, Ilya,” says Hollander softly.

Ilya goes upstairs to the master and lies in the same position he did two hours ago. When he finally manages to fall asleep, he doesn’t dream, and when he wakes up the next morning, he’s curled around a pillow, cradling it close to his chest.

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Hollander, for all his anxious hovering, is apparently very good at making himself scarce.

So good, in fact, that Ilya has only seen him thrice in the past day and a half, and Hollander had barely stuttered out a rushed apology before disappearing again. Ilya can’t do much, because any movement or screens seem to give him a dull, horrible headache, so he’s using up all his words on Anya. In Russian, of course.

“What do you think, sweet angel face?” he asks her. “Where is Hollander hiding?”

He doesn’t even *want* to see Hollander, not really. Sure, he’s attracted to him, and sure, he’s apparently fucking married to him, but right now Hollander serves as a reminder for everything he’s lost. Also, he’s annoying.

That said, Ilya is alone with his stupid brain in this big house. Thinking too much about anything just makes him angry (there’s no point in asking if he’s been back to Russia. His father is dead and he’s married to a man), and he’s done nothing but wander around aimlessly and listen to the TV with the volume on low. He wakes up to find pain medicine next to him

on the nightstand (and, humiliatingly, antidepressants), so Hollander is *here*, he's just not around Ilya. It smarts; it would be nice to have some human company. No offense to Anya.

So, upon hearing the back door creak open, Ilya gets up from the couch where he's been listening to an old SVU episode and goes to investigate. Sure enough, Hollander is in the kitchen, trying and failing to sneak around. Ilya watches as he bangs his elbow against the island and bites back a curse.

"Do I have rabies?" he asks.

"What?" Hollander says, freezing guiltily. There's a green smoothie in his hand that looks healthy and disgusting. "Jesus, we need to get you a fucking bell."

Ilya ignores that part. "Like, sick. The one that makes you bite things."

"What are you *talking* about?"

"You are avoiding me."

Hollander sputters for a second, as if trying to land on a lie. "I'm...not," is his defense. Ilya scoffs.

"I am not a baby."

"I never said that."

"Then do not treat me like one. You do not have to tiptoe around me."

"Ilya," Hollander says, opening and closing his mouth as he works for something to say. He blows out a long breath. "Dr. Reed said not to overwhelm you. And, for you, we're not exactly best friends. I don't want to...you know, overstay my welcome. I can be a lot, and you don't like to be coddled. I just don't want to make things even worse. So if you want me to stay away while you recover, I will. "

Ilya scowls at him. He's not sure he's ever heard Hollander say that much to him at once in his life, and none of it is positive. "Your 'welcome'? Is your fucking house." *It's your fucking life.* Ilya's the one who doesn't belong here.

Hollander shrugs apologetically. "I thought giving you space was the best option, for now. I'm sorry."

Overcorrecting seems like a very Hollander thing to do. The worst part is, it's a good instinct. He *doesn't* like to be coddled; he's always been extremely independent. Ilya can't decide if he wants Hollander around or not— but what he wants is for that to be on his own terms.

(What he doesn't say is that whether Hollander is present or not, he'll consume Ilya's waking thoughts, so he might as well stick around. It's been true since the day they met, and it certainly hasn't changed now).

What he *does* say is, "You say sorry a lot."

Hollander smiles. A real one, Ilya thinks, and it kind of freaks him out that he can tell the difference. Nothing like when Ilya watches his interviews with his polite fucking manners; this one is boyish, adorable. “You tell me that a lot.”

“Well, I am very smart.”

“Perceptive.”

Ilya tilts his head. “I don’t know this word.”

“Lucky me,” Hollander says.

He chalks that up to some future nonsense. “Avoid me because you do not like me, not because you think I cannot handle this.” Ilya can handle anything, even being married to Shane fucking Hollander.

The corner of Hollander’s mouth twitches upward. “I do like you, believe it or not. I liked you enough to propose to you.”

Thinking about it– their *marriage* – he’s not *that* surprised he caved to his desires eventually. Their last hookup, in Vegas, he’d had to be careful; he’d fought the urge to pull Hollander against his chest so Ilya could bury his face in his hair and just breathe him in. It terrified him. What he’s more surprised about is that fact that *Hollander* gave in. Of the two of them, he was always waiting for Hollander to be the one to call it off. But apparently he’s the one who proposed. Who wanted him around.

What the fuck had Ilya done to deserve that?

Hollander gnaws on his lower lip, his face reverting back to a serious, boring expression. “Listen, I’ve been thinking about this since we got home. You’re twenty-four, in your head. I’m thirty-four. We’re at completely different stages of life. I don’t want to, like, trap you in this marriage you don’t have any memory of.”

There’s an ache in Ilya’s chest he ignores. “What are you saying?” he asks, with forced nonchalance. He’s been around for less than three days and already he’s fucking this up somehow.

“I’m saying that if you don’t want to stay here, or want to, you know, be with other people... until you remember...” Hollander’s voice is wavering, and his lip quivers. Ilya just – stares at him.

“And you want this,” he rasps.

Hollander has a terrible poker face. The worst, really. Ilya shouldn’t find it as endearing as he does. “If you want it, then yeah, I do.”

As confusing as the future has been, Ilya doesn’t *hate* the idea of being tied down to Hollander. This inconvenient longing he’s been carrying for so long...he doesn’t want Hollander to walk away from this. From him. Not yet. At the very least, it’s someone to talk to.

A very hot someone.

“I do not,” he says. “I have only been married to you for three days. And you are annoying, but you are a good enough husband, so far.”

“Wow, thanks.”

“As long as you do not make me drink that,” he gestures to the green monstrosity in Hollander’s hand.

Hollander barks a laugh. “Yeah, no. I’ve learned my lesson there.”

“Then we are good?”

“Yeah, Ilya.” There’s still so much sadness in those dark eyes; he resolutely does not feel guilty about it. “We’re good.”

That night, he pauses outside of the guest room, where Hollander has been staying. He hears a muffled conversation— he’s talking to someone on the phone. A woman.

He shouldn’t be listening, but he doesn’t give a fuck. He presses his ear to the door, holding his breath.

There’s a beat of silence before he can make anything out. “I miss him,” he hears Hollander say, and blood rushes in his ears. “He’s right here, but I miss him. He looks at me like...” he trails off and goes silent as the woman on the other end talks.

“I know,” Hollander says quietly. His voice breaks. “I’m just scared. I’m so fucking scared.”

He’s heard enough. He pads as quietly as possible to the master, where he dreams of a dark green lake and sun and freckled shoulders. When he wakes, it slips out of his fingers like sand, until he’s only left with a vague memory of light.

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“Hello,” he says, walking into the kitchen. It’s day four, somehow, which means he finally gets to go on his phone. He’s intent on scouring it for any hint as to who this future Ilya is, what else he’s missed.

“Hey,” Hollander says, soft, “Good morning.” He breaks off into a jaw-cracking yawn. “Sorry. I haven’t been sleeping great.”

Ilya pauses in surprise; Hollander’s wearing *glasses*. It’s...cute. He also has indigo bags under his eyes. Truthfully, he looks like shit, but Ilya’s not enough of a dick to rub it in. He can’t imagine he looks that much better. “Me too,” he says instead, and moves toward the coffee machine.

“Oh, here,” Hollander says, pushing a mug toward him. Ilya grabs it warily and takes a tentative sip. It’s cappuccino, his favorite.

“Is good,” he says, surprised. “Thank you.” And it *is* good; his stomach flutters at the thought of Hollander making him coffee, without him even asking. He doesn’t know Hollander’s coffee order.

“Also,” Hollander says, when Ilya sets down the mug. “Here’s your phone. I know you’ve probably been waiting to go through it. The password’s 2481.”

It takes a second for that to register— it’s his and Hollander’s jersey numbers. Barf. Future Ilya is disgusting.

He takes it from Hollander’s hand, ignoring the sparks as their fingertips touch. The lock screen is a picture of Hollander, smiling. Not at the camera, but past it, at the person taking the photo. There’s so much affection in his eyes, Ilya can barely stand to look at it. So he doesn’t, typing in the numbers and unlocking the phone.

His messages app is blowing up, a quick scroll showing dozens of well-wishes from various players. Boodram, Hayes, Barrett. Cliff Marlow, who he’s apparently still friends with, which is a slight comfort. Nothing from his brother. At least this life isn’t all new. There’s even one from of Hayden Pike, which feels like a cruel joke from the universe; future Ilya can’t be that much of a jackass, to be friends with fucking Pike. He pauses on one from Yuna Hollander, four days ago: **Worried about you honey. Shane is updating us from the hospital. Please call when you wake up** ❤️

He scrolls past it, heart in his throat. So he’s close with Hollander’s mother, evidently. At least enough for her to call him honey. An echo of grief chokes him, then, and he switches over to his camera roll.

It’s as he expected. A lot of Hollander, and Anya. An older, Japanese woman, who he assumes is Yuna, and a blandly handsome older white man, who must be Hollander’s father. Random shit, too, that means nothing to him. A puzzle on the ground, a bright red apple with a farm in the background. Selfies: him and Boodram, him drinking out of the Cup with Hayes, Hollander kissing his cheek in bed. He stares at that one for a long moment, looking not at Hollander but himself, with his huge grin and crow’s feet, and abruptly can’t do this anymore.

“Ilya?” Hollander asks, when he slams the phone down.

“Headache,” Ilya grumbles, rubbing his temples. It’s been getting better— the concussion is mild, after all— but he still can’t take too much screen time. It’s half a lie, anyway; his heart hurts more than his head.

“Do you want to lay back down?” Hollander asks. Then, as if that one question had been holding back a flood of others: “Do you want herbal tea? We have honey. I can make some for you. Or a smoothie, if you want that instead?”

“Hollander,” Ilya says. Jesus Christ. “Chill.”

“Sorry,” Hollander says, automatic. They both pause at that, and Ilya actually snorts. “Canadian,” Hollander reminds him with a self-deprecating smile.

“That, I did not forget.”

Fuck. He feels off kilter— he needs a fucking smoke. Future Ilya seems to have quit completely, but he knows he has a pack in this house somewhere. He can’t be *that* different. After a little scouring, ignoring Hollander’s worried “Ilya?” behind him, he finds one in the bottom drawer of the nightstand. At the end of the day, he can always rely on himself.

He wanders out into their backyard and smokes on the patio, savoring the sharp sensation as smoke fills his lungs. This is one thing that feels familiar. He figures he deserves it.

He thinks about what he heard Hollander say last night: *I’m so fucking scared*. Ilya’s scared, too. Years of hookups with strangers, trying to pretend like he wasn’t drawn back in to the one person he needed to avoid; pretending like he didn’t want anything more that was offered. This life is...he has so much of what he wanted— what he was too afraid to want. And he’s not the same person who got it. Right now, he’s a twenty-four-year-old super star whose life is empty, Cup win or not. The Ilya in those pictures has a family; a real family, who calls him honey and knows he fucks men and doesn’t care. He inhales angrily. It’s not fair, dangling this life in front of him, when he can’t fucking remember any of it. When he doesn’t deserve it, not really.

“Hey,” says Hollander, sidling up next to him. He doesn’t say anything about the cigarette, and Ilya hopes he doesn’t notice his shaking fingers as he brings it back to his lips. He fights the urge to tell him everything. “Mind some company?”

“Fine,” Ilya says, shortly, and they fall into silence. Hollander seems content to just stand there, so Ilya blows loud clouds of smoke, trying to incite a reaction. It’s not working.

Once he finishes, he stamps out the butt, grinding his heel into the patio pettily. He looks at Hollander, ready for him to challenge it, but he’s met with calm, understanding eyes. He cuts his gaze away, feeling exposed. Vulnerable.

“Last time we hooked up, we did not even kiss,” he says, after a while. “And now I wake up and we are married. And you say you love me, and we have a life together.”

“I do love you,” Hollander says, and the conviction in his voice makes Ilya’s breath catch, more than even the impossible-sounding words. He says it like he’s never believed anything more. “I get the feeling that you think of the you right now and the...I don’t know, *future you* as two different people, but you’re not.”

“What if I never remember?” Ilya asks, finally voicing his fear, the one that’s been lingering in the back of his mind, casting a shadow over him. “It’s been four days. I do not remember anything yet.”

Hollander looks him in the eyes, face open and honest. “I’m so fucking proud of the life we’ve built together, but it’s not the reason I love you. Ten years ago I was in love with you, too. We’ll make new memories. A new life.”

Ilya exhales shakily. He can’t bring himself to believe it. Hollander is impossibly beautiful, and kind, and it doesn’t make any fucking sense. “If you say so.”

“I know so.”

The sun is chased away by grey clouds and a bitter wind. Ottawa in October, Ilya thinks, tends to be kind in her sunshine and cruel in her cold, and right now she is especially spiteful. Hollander, however, appears unbothered. Cozy, even, as if the world bent the wind around him, the eye of Ilya's storm.

Ilya watches him out of the corner of his eye until his vision blurs. He doesn't understand the attraction that binds them together, but he wants to.

More than anything, he wants to remember.

-

Hollander leaves to go on a grocery run, which allows Ilya to explore the neighborhood. He's finally feeling like a real person again, headaches far lessened other than the screen time induced ones. It will do him good to get out of this fucking house. He brings Anya with him, because he loves her, and she's been an incredible cuddle buddy.

“Ilya!” he hears, the moment he steps out into the street. The driveway down the street is occupied by two children and a woman, who he assumes is their mother.

“Hello,” he says, walking over to them. Anya's tail is wagging with excitement, so he loosens her leash to let her go up and greet them.

“We saw the hit,” the woman says. “These two have been especially worried about it.”

“*Mom,*” the boy hisses. He looks back at Ilya. “We weren't that worried.”

“Well, that is good,” Ilya says, amused. He loves kids, and he seems to have some sort of rapport with these ones, if they know him and Anya. He doesn't talk to any of his neighbors in his Boston apartment. Yet another thing that's different. “I am fine. You should see the other guy.” He doesn't mention that he's only physically fine, and that he doesn't know their names at all.

When he gets back to the house, after chatting with the family and continuing on the street for two hours or so, Hollander is waiting for him. He looks anxious. Well, more anxious than usual.

“Where were you?” he asks, when Anya goes straight to her dog bed after their epic walk.

Ilya goes with the most infuriating answer. “Out.”

“You didn't tell me where you were going.”

“Because you are not my babysitter. Jesus, Hollander, calm down.”

“You should have told me. I thought you left.”

“I did leave.”

Hollander's face scrunches up. "I thought you *left*, Ilya."

Oh. He can't think of anything to say to that, other than, "Well, I didn't." He chews on his thumbnail, guilty. And then he's mad, for feeling guilty— he doesn't need to apologize. He's not a *prisoner*; he's allowed to leave.

"Yeah, well," Hollander says, gesturing at him.

They glare at each other, at an impasse. Hollander closes his eyes and, Ilya's pretty sure, actually counts to ten. When he opens them again, the spark of anger is gone.

"Do not say sorry," Ilya says before Hollander can speak. It earns him another smile— one of the real ones.

"What I wanted to say is that my mom wants to come over and see you. I told her, you know, you're not exactly up for guests right now, but she's being kind of pushy about it."

Ilya thinks of the text, and the pictures on his camera roll. "Sure," he says, like he doesn't care. "Whatever."

"Just, um," Hollander says. "Prepare yourself."

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Yuna Hollander is a force of nature.

She's short— shorter than Hollander, by a lot, and he's already four or five inches below Ilya. She comes with pans labeled lasagna and chicken parmesan, which means Ilya likes her already.

"You don't know me, honey," she says to him. "But I've come to know you pretty well." She holds up the chicken parmesan as if to say, *see?*

Ilya smiles at her, charmed. "Thank you."

She walks in like she owns the place (" *Sit*, Anya. Good girl.") and starts messing around in the kitchen. "David has work, but he wanted me to tell you that he misses you, and he bought a new puzzle for the next time you come over."

"Mom," Hollander complains, when she starts shuffling around things in the fridge. "You just got here. The fridge can wait."

"Leave me be," she clucks at him. "I also just brought you two dinners." He steps back, contrite, and Ilya watches in bemusement as the woman who raised Hollander does her thing. The Type-A personality makes more sense now.

"I couldn't *believe* that hit," she says, darkly. "Schultz is a dirty player. He should be kicked out of the league."

“Well,” protests Hollander. “He already got suspended. And fined. It’s the nature of the game.” Yuna shakes her head disapprovingly.

“It reminded me of your hit, Shane,” she says. “My heart can’t take it. It’s hard, watching you both get hurt.”

Wait, what? “You got hit?” Ilya interjects. As far as he knows, Hollander’s yet to get his bell rung. “When?”

“Oh, shoot. I’m sorry, Ilya, I didn’t realize you wouldn’t remember that. It was 2017, the year the Admirals won the Cup.” She says the word “Admirals” disapprovingly, too. Not a New York fan, then.

“Who hit you?” Ilya says. He’s angry, now, startling himself. The idea of Hollander splayed out on the ice, or unconscious in the hospital...he’s not a fan. Fear cramps his stomach.

Hollander sighs. “Marlow. And you chewed him out for it, believe me. It wasn’t a dirty hit, just a bad angle into the boards. I was *fine* .”

Yuna scoffs. “No, you weren’t. You had a severe concussion and got kicked out of the playoffs. I swear, I could have killed that man.”

“ *Mom.* ”

“ *Shane.* ”

“I am with Yuna,” Ilya says, for which he’s rewarded with an approving look. “That does not sound like *fine*.”

Hollander scrunches his nose. “You two always gang up on me.”

“Because we care, Shane.”

“Yeah, Hollander,” Ilya parrots. “Because we care.” In his self-wallowing, he’s forgotten how fun it is to make Hollander scowl at him, angry like a little kitten. His favorite thing to do, other than play against him and fuck him. (And, recently, make him smile).

Yuna does organize the fridge, which Shane seems to have realized is a lost cause, and she stays for another thirty minutes or so, catching them both up on the recent Book Club drama.

“Then why did Jessica even pick it if she did not want to read it?” Ilya asks, invested.

“I know! ” Yuna says. “It’s madness.”

“It’s a book club,” Shane says, nonplussed.

“You don’t get it,” Ilya and Yuna say at the same time, and his face hurts from the force of his smile.

When it's time for her to leave, she takes Shane into the living room, talking with him for a long time. Ilya tries to tamp down on his curiosity, but he knows that they're talking about him. When she re-emerges alone, it's his turn, apparently, for a Yuna Talk.

"We love you, Ilya," she says, taking his much bigger hand in her own. "You have so many people in your corner, who all love you. This won't change that."

Humiliatingly, his eyes start to burn. He looks away so he doesn't fucking cry. "Thank you," he says quietly.

She smiles at him gently. "I'm sure my son has been driving you up the wall. Don't be too hard on him, okay? Or yourself. You're good boys. You'll get through this."

He nods, swallowing hard. Once the danger of crying subsides, he pulls his hand away. He hasn't had someone hold his hand like that, for comfort, in years. Since his mother, probably. He's reluctant to let go.

"Call me whenever," she tells him. "I mean it. David, too."

"Yes."

"Okay. I love you. Enjoy the chicken parmesan."

"Goodbye," he says, and she hugs him tightly. He has to lean down a significant amount; she stands on her tip-toes and kisses his cheek.

"Let yourself have this," she whispers in his ear. He doesn't listen to what she says to Hollander, after, but he hears him snifle, and murmur something back.

"So," Hollander says, after she's gone. "That's my mom."

"You are lucky," Ilya tells him. He's been jealous of Hollander before, but never so much as now. "I like her very much."

"She loves you. You're her favorite son."

Ilya flexes his hand, thinking about the Irina Foundation. Everyone knows what happened to his mother now. He hasn't been anyone's son in a long time— certainly not his father's, dead or alive. "Then I am lucky, too."

They have the chicken parmesan for dinner, because it was an eventful day (which is pretty embarrassing, because Ilya only talked to two other adults that weren't Hollander). It does feel like a reward, though, and it's delicious.

"I can see you," Hollander says, when Ilya sneaks some to Anya. Good girls deserve chicken as a treat. "You're literally right in front of me."

"Do you want me to feed you some, too?" Ilya snarks, and Hollander rolls his eyes.

"Shut up and eat your chicken, Rozanov."

Ilya does, making a point of sucking his cheeks in and licking the fork clean. Hollander's cheeks turn as pink as he hoped they would.

"Not like that," he grumbles, looking down at his own plate. His freckles stand out against the tinted skin, and Ilya can't help but grin like an idiot.

He raids the freezer for desert, grabbing a half-eaten pint of chocolate ice cream for himself, and, on a whim, a frozen Snickers bar for Hollander. Hollander goes very still when he passes it to him, then beams at Ilya with far more affection than a candy bar warrants. He warms at the unexpected attention.

Maybe this marriage thing isn't so impossible after all.

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He's been having dreams.

Soft, flashing ones: a crowd roaring, blurs of red and black, a press of cold metal against his lips. It turns to the lake, again, and the sound of a strange bird. Laughter in front of a fire. Someone giggling, a pink mouth and dark hair. Sweat, and following a trail of sweat down someone's body. Someone gasping in his ear.

He wakes with a start. His cock is straining against his stomach, painfully hard.

"Fuck," he grunts, and takes himself in hand. It doesn't take long until he's spilling into his fist, the fleeting memory of someone moaning his name sending him hurtling off the edge. He pants, trying to lasso his thoughts before they scatter, but it's a fruitless task.

The clock reads eight a.m. Hollander has practice in the afternoon, and a home game in the evening. Ilya's not cleared to play yet, so he's going to be in the box with the WAGs. It's early enough that he can continue laying in, if he wants, but missing out on a game has him wired with a frantic, envious energy. He wants to exercise, get moving. He wants hockey.

What greets him when he walks into the home gym is not hockey, or anything like it. "What are you doing?" Ilya says, bewildered. The lights are dimmed and Hollander is in a complicated knot on the floor, hair tied up out of his face.

"Yoga," Hollander says in a *duh* voice. He moves into a position where his butt is in the air. Ilya is suddenly much more interested.

"You are very boring," he says, eyes on that perfect ass. He's fucking flexible, is what he is.

"I never hear you complaining about it," Hollander says flirtatiously, before freezing. Ilya's fragmented dream springs into his mind, unbidden. "Um, I mean. Uh."

"Relax, Hollander," Ilya says, even though he's anything but. "I know we have sex. Is like our whole thing."

"Right," Hollander laughs nervously, transitioning seamlessly into a much more strenuous pose. His face is flush with exertion and embarrassment. *God, he's cute.* Ilya wants to eat

him. He wants to roll on top of him and kiss him and peel those leggings off and make Hollander beg.

“I will let you finish,” he says, in legitimate danger of jumping him. He needs to get out of this room. He’ll work out after breakfast.

And maybe a cold shower.

But, he realizes, as they spend the rest of the morning orbiting around each other, he’s getting addicted to Hollander’s presence.

It’s embarrassing, is what it is. But he likes the way Hollander hums when he makes them lunch, or the way he squints in disapproval at Ilya’s dishwashing method (apparently, an argument they’ve had many times before). He likes that they can exist in the same space.

He can’t help but wonder if this is what it was like for the other Ilya, the first time— did he have the same floating feeling in his stomach? He takes a bite of his tuna sandwich, setting aside the pickle for Hollander mindlessly, and banishes the thought.

“The guys miss you,” Hollander is saying. They’re out in the backyard, throwing Anya’s slobbery tennis ball. “I don’t know if you’ve checked the group chat at all, but they’re being obnoxious about it.”

Ilya’s checked it, he just can’t think of anything to say to these strangers. It’s not like he’s ever very active in group chats anyway. “I am ready to meet them.”

“You’ll like them,” Hollander assures with a smile. “If I were them, I’d be grateful to have a break from your teasing.”

“I think you secretly like my teasing.”

Hollander laughs. “Said no one ever.” They share an amused look, and Ilya marvels again at how he ended up here.

Hollander drives early to the arena for practice, leaving Ilya with an hour to kill before Yuna and David pick him up to take him to the game.

He returns, inevitably, to his camera roll. He’s perused his Wikipedia page already, and Hollander’s, but it gave him nothing but cold facts: the foundation, when they married, their Cup win (he’d also watched the first minute of Shane’s hit, but he couldn’t stomach it and clicked away, nauseous). His photos app is something infinitely more personal. He looks at him and Hollander, sweaty after practice. Him and Hollander, with his feet up in Hollander’s lap. Him and Hollander, kissing on a beach. Hollander, beautiful in the morning light, beautiful laughing into his hands in the kitchen, beautiful as he lays in the grass with his head on Ilya’s hip.

And most damning of all, the folder labeled Boring: pictures that he took when they presented together in Vegas, still fresh in his mind. Pictures he’s looked at a hundred times since then, and are still on his phone, ten years later.

Who the fuck am I kidding, Ilya thinks, staring at Hollander's angry face until his phone turns off. He twists the ring on his finger, around and around.

The doorbell rings, and he swings it open to find Yuna and a taller man holding her hand—David. David turns out to be a kindly, easy-going man with Shane's jaw and smile. Ilya makes pleasant conversation with them on the drive, if a bit stilted, but he's in a good mood as they leave to go to their own seats.

He's just excited to see hockey, after all this time, even though he wishes he could be playing. He'd googled the Boston roster, and it's practically unrecognizable.

The world has moved on without him, his old team included. It's time he catches up.

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The Centaurs are...interesting. Ilya likes them.

"Wow, this is so *Jason Bourne* of you," Hayes says, after he tells them no, he still doesn't remember. Five days is enough for a mild concussion to mostly heal, but apparently not for his memories to return. "Jesus Christ, it's Ilya Rozanov."

"Wyatt, dude," Boodram sighs. "Read the room."

"Yeah, Wyatt." Dykstra chimes in. "Besides, it's more like *Memento*."

"*Finding Nemo*," says Chouinard.

"*50 First Dates*," offers Dillon.

"*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*." They all turn to look at Barrett, who hunches his shoulders defensively. "What? It's a classic."

Wyatt turns back to Boodram with an eyebrow raised. "The room has been read, and they all agree with me."

"Well, it's not a movie, it's real life," Hollander says, though his expression is fond. "Don't overwhelm him. Let's get moving, guys. We have a game to win." *There's* the uptight man Ilya remembers—back in familiar territory, save the A on his chest.

"Try not to get too jealous of my moves out there," Hollander says to him with a smirk.

"Your worse moves," Ilya says. "Which is why you have an A and I have a C."

"For now," Hollander threatens.

"Forever," Ilya says, as if he has any idea. "Because I am better hockey player and always will be."

"Aw," says Dykstra. "It's like nothing has changed."

In the box, Ilya meets all the wives and several children of the players, who are delightful, and also one boyfriend.

“Harris,” the man introduces himself, loudly. “I’m Troy’s boyfriend. Senior Director of Communications for the team, so I’m just popping in to say hello.”

“Hello,” says Ilya.

“We’re friends, you and I,” Harris tells him. “If you need anything, let me know. Apples, a dog, a hug. I’ve been told I give great hugs. Cuddling is a skill like any other.”

Ilya believes him. “Thank you,” he says, amused. Ottawa isn’t what he expected.

The game is against Colorado; the roster has changed a lot in the past decade, and Ilya only recognizes two or three players.

None of them are a match for Hollander.

Ilya watches him survey the ice, already three moves ahead of everyone else; he watches him skate with flawless, calculated grace. It makes his stomach pool with heat. This is his *husband*, somehow. Thirty-four years old and somehow better than he was at twenty-four; not more talented, necessarily, but more mature and unhesitating in his decisions. The Centaurs follow his lead: their passes are tape to tape, and their defensive line is strong. Wyatt makes an impossible save, Hollander nabs the rebound, and slings a beauty of a pass up the rink to Barrett, who slides it five-hole. Ilya finds himself out of his seat cheering, high-fiving the women around him. A DJ Khaled song starts playing, one Ilya actually knows.

The Centaurs win, 3-1, and Hollander finishes with two points, the second star of the game behind Barrett. Ilya remembers that they won a Cup recently. He can see why.

“Nice apple,” he says to Hollander in the locker room. “Too bad about your ugly goal.”

Hollander huffs. He’s freshly showered, and all the more tantalizing for it. “A goal is a goal. Who cares if it’s not highlight reel.” They start toward the parking lot, walking companionably close together.

“Mine would have been sexy. Awesome. Between the legs.”

“Oh, I bet,” Hollander says, one side of his mouth turning up. “Easy to say from the bench.”

“Not the bench! The box,” Ilya corrects smugly. “Is different. VIP, you know.”

“Riiight. You and the babies. Got it.” Hollander’s in the best mood Ilya’s seen in him since the hospital, five days ago. The air is humid after mid afternoon rain, and the sidewalk is wet underneath them. “I’m sure they know puck.”

“More than you, probably.”

They’re almost at the car. As they draw closer, their shoulders bump together – a gentle, barely-there brush, but Hollander jolts away like it’s an erotic embrace. He stumbles, then

slips on the wet pavement, and then Ilya is lunging to catch him as he falls forward into his arms. They stare at each other, wide eyed, noses close enough to touch. Ilya's skin warms, and he has the embarrassing and unwelcome sensation of his cheeks heating. Is he actually fucking blushing right now? Hollander's lips part.

"Fuck," he blurts, straightening up and back, and wrenching himself out of Ilya's arms in the process. "I'm sorry. I didn't— I'm sorry."

"It's fine."

"Sorry."

"Hollander. Is fine."

"Okay."

The light-hearted mood is gone, replaced by a stiff and charged one. Hollander is quiet on the drive home, jaw clenched. Ilya is quiet too, staring out the dark window.

He has a headache, and he's not entirely sure he can blame the concussion.

-

The next morning has him waking up hard again, this time to the dream of someone (Hollander, he knows) crying out for him in slightly accented Russian, hot and slick around his cock.

He jacks off, but it doesn't feel good when he finishes, the usual high ruined by frustration. At age twenty-four, he already boasts a lifetime of hot sex memories to live off of. And yet he's jealous of future Ilya for that one – the idea of Hollander speaking Russian has his dick twitching hopefully against his thigh. It's too hot to even entertain. He knows it's a fragment of a memory, but it's not a very helpful one.

What a pathetic person he is, being jealous of his goddamn self.

Later, after going on a run with the dog and a full day of he and Hollander mutually avoiding each other after last night, he sits on the couch, watching some stupid reality show to wind down. Dinner had been a quiet affair, both of them eating at separate times to avoid the elephant in the room. That *I almost kissed you* elephant, which stampedes Ilya's mind.

It's been six, almost seven days of this— of being in what feels like the future. Of being married to Shane Hollander, who he thinks, horribly, he's tripping head first into something more permanent with, despite the fact that it's not him Hollander married.

His phone dings with a text. It's from Wyatt: his face photoshopped onto a *Jason Bourne* poster. He laughs, texting back. As he waits for the response, his thumb – without permission – floats toward his message history with Hollander.

He's read some of it already, skimming through. It's fairly boring, because they see each other every day. Mostly grocery reminders, or pictures of the dog. Ilya sends a lot of those,

particularly. His eyes catch on one of the more recent ones, sent the day before he woke up in the hospital.

From Hollander, to him: **Quebec Act of 1774?**

And Ilya, to him: **British Parliament**

The fuck? He stares at it uncomprehendingly. Then, like a key slotting into a lock, it makes sense. The Canadian citizenship test. He was studying for it, before. His heart surges with excitement.

“*Shane*, ” he calls, practically skipping. “Shane!”

Hollander comes running in from the backyard, Anya hot on his heels. “What?” he asks, probably nonplussed that Ilya’s breaking their mutually agreed upon no-contact.

“The Quebec Act of 1774 was passed by the British Parliament,” Ilya recites, before looking at him beseechingly. “John Buchan was Governor General of Canada. John Alexander Macdonald is on the \$10 bill.”

Hollander’s face scrunches up in confusion for a second before he understands. “Ilya,” he laughs in delight; his nose crinkles, and Ilya’s stomach flips.

“I remember something!” Ilya grins. He doesn’t mention his sexy dream. “I am studying for citizenship, yes?”

“Yes!”

They beam at each other. Anya barks in excitement, sensing the energy. “Oh my God, that’s great! I’m proud of you.”

“Yes,” Ilya agrees; he is also proud of himself.

Hollander’s eyes are soft as he looks up at Ilya. They’ve gravitated close together in their elation. “You called me Shane.”

Ilya leans forward as if magnetized. “I did,” he concedes. It felt natural, in his mouth. “Shane,” he says again.

“Ilya,” says Shane, awed, and then they’re kissing.

He’s not sure what he expected– maybe for it to feel like a first kiss all over again. But it doesn’t. It feels familiar– he’s kissed Shane a hundred times already, and that’s just the ones he remembers. He knows the taste of Shane’s mouth, the sound he makes when Ilya tilts his head at that one angle. He loses himself in the motion of it, the fact that he has Shane fucking Hollander’s tongue in his mouth, in their home, with wedding bands on their fingers. He’s never had a home before, but he thinks it probably feels like this.

“Shit,” Shane says, breaking the kiss. He jerks back, an echo of the incident in the parking lot.

Ilya's mood sours. "Don't," he snaps. He's sick of this, the back and forth.

Shane looks at him pleadingly. "Dr. Reed said..."

Ilya could not give less of a fuck what some doctor said, and he says as much. Not when Shane's wetting his lip unconsciously. Not when he's looking at Ilya like he's ready to do something stupid. Suddenly all he wants is for Shane to overwhelm him until he can't think of anything else, memory be damned. He's probably as scared as Shane is, honestly, but Shane is much worse at hiding it.

"I'm scared," he says unnecessarily.

"I know," Ilya says. "Kiss me again."

Shane does. Ilya can feel the hesitation in it— he can only imagine what Hollander's telling himself, that anxious mind running in circles — and he deepens it further, drawing him out. Whatever the fuck his life is right now, at least this will never change.

They pause, breathing heavily into each other's mouths. "Ilya," Shane says, but nothing more. Just the sound of his name, carrying so much weight. It sounds like rejection, and Ilya's lungs constrict. It's not fucking fair.

He reverts back to territory he knows well. "It doesn't have to be anything, Hollander." He can't quite get himself to say *It's just sex*.

Shane's face breaks. "It is something, to me. I *love* you. I can't be some one night stand. You're my husband."

Ilya schools his own face into one of cool indifference, heart plummeting at those three words Shane keeps using. "I am not him."

"You are. You're still you. "

Ilya laughs, but it isn't warm. "Clearly, I am not." *Not if you won't even fucking kiss me.*

"You *are*. You're kind, and smart, and losing your memory doesn't change that. I'm the one who's not ready. Not tonight," Hollander says imploringly. His eyes are dark and shiny pools. Ilya can't look away from him: the long lashes, the full lips. It feels like a dream he can't wake up from.

"Okay."

"Please. Just give me time."

"Okay."

Shane takes two large steps back, as if physically removing himself from temptation. "Goodnight, Ilya," he whispers, and silently trods up the stairs.

"Goodnight," Ilya says, to no one.

-

He wakes up on the seventh day in an empty bed.

He pats next to him clumsily, but the space is cold— usually, Shane gets up early, but *that* early. It takes a second for him to understand: Shane’s sleeping in the guest room. Because Ilya doesn’t remember him, because Schultz hit him after he made fun of his backhand, because he was feeling bitchy after getting into it that morning with Shane.

Holy shit.

His eyes shoot open as he bolts upright. He catalogues the past week, the uncertainty, and anger, but he remembers beyond that.

He *remembers*.

“Shane,” he says, out loud to the empty room, the only word in his mind. *Shane*. He catapults himself out of the bed, tangled in the covers, and sprints to the guest room. The door slams open and Shane jolts out of bed. He’s been awake for a while, clearly, and he looks wrecked. His eyes are puffy and red, the purple bruising under them more pronounced than ever.

He’s the most beautiful thing Ilya’s ever seen.

“Ilya?” he asks. “What’s wrong? Are you okay?”

“ *Sweetheart.* ”

Shane’s face— God, Ilya could stare at that face forever. It opens like a flower in the sun, messy with hope and desperation. “Ilya?”

“I remember.”

“You do?” Shane’s voice breaks in the middle of the words.

“I told you about my mother at the cottage, the first time. We got married in July and you drank too much vodka,” Ilya says. He’s buzzing, frantic, words pressing against the back of his teeth as they spill out. “After we won the Cup, we got home and broke the bed. You want to get a cat.”

“Ilya,” Shane says, and Ilya flings himself on top of him. “ *Fuck.* ”

They haven't touched in so *long*.

Shane crushes their mouths together, raw and uncontrolled.

“Morning breath,” Ilya reminds him.

“I don’t fucking *care*, ” Shane says, wetly. He tugs Ilya’s head down roughly, tongue sliding hot against his own. Urgent, messy, perfect. Ilya tips Shane’s head back to deepen the kiss,

pouring everything he has into it, the years of their love. He holds that sweet face in his hands and claims him. His, forever.

He's himself when he's with Shane. This annoying Canadian is his home, his anchor. He can't believe how close he came to fucking it up.

He wraps Shane in his arms, breathing him in. "I love you," he says, for the first time in seven days. "I love you so much. More than anything. You are my everything."

"I love you too," Shane says. "I would have loved you like that forever, but *God*, I missed you."

"Was true love's kiss," says Ilya. "Magic. It helped me remember." It wasn't magic. But, he thinks, he won't rule out some higher power. He and Shane are meant to be together; the universe sees it, too.

Shane cradles his face in his hands, smiling. "I don't think that's medically accurate. I do like the idea of you as Sleeping Beauty, though."

"I look great in a dress."

Shane snorts, and then his face wobbles. "Shit. Ilya."

"I know."

"You don't. You...I was so scared. I thought I was going to lose you."

He thinks of Shane— his sensitive, nervous, perfect Shane – losing his husband, and having to deal with it alone. His heart breaks in half. "I am sorry, moya lyubov," he says. "I am so sorry I forgot you."

"It's not your fault."

"No. But...you would not have lost me."

"I almost did. I should've handled it better."

Ilya's not sure how to make him understand: there's no way Shane could ever lose him, not really. He's had his hooks in him since the moment they met in that snowy parking lot. Ilya never stood a fucking chance.

"Every version of me loves you, Shane," he breathes out. "Even that one. Especially that one." He'd just been too afraid to confront it, caught up in his ego and his ghosts. Twenty-four and not scared of anything but the way Shane Hollander made him feel. Shane has always been his everything.

Shane snuffles, and tucks his face further into Ilya's neck. Where he belongs. "I like this version best," he says, muffled.

Ilya's hand is forced— he has to kiss him. He kisses Shane once, twice, three times, drunk on the little bitten off moans his beloved makes when he sucks on his tongue.

No one sets him on fire like Shane Hollander.

They collide into each other, pulling at hair and kisses turning aggressive. Ilya bites at Shane's ear, and then licks up his neck from collarbone to pulse point, the way he wanted to all those days ago. "Mine," he says, firmly.

Shane gasps. "Yours," he says back. His voice is frayed as he loses what's left of his control. "Ilya, I need you."

"You have me." *Whatever you want. Forever.*

They peel off their clothes, a tangled knot on the mattress. Seven days is far too long, not when Ilya needs him this bad. He would have him every second, if possible. The thought makes him growl; he flips Shane onto his stomach and starts kissing down his spine.

"I can't believe I forgot how much you liked this," he says, before spreading him open as best he can and licking a long, slow line between the cheeks.

He delights in Shane's gasp, his hands keeping his hips in place. It turns out to be necessary: Shane makes a ragged, broken noise, jerking his body upwards as he strains toward Ilya. Ilya runs the flat of his tongue over the hole then circles the tip of his tongue around the rim, alternating the pressure. As he starts to breach him, tongue stiffened to a point, Shane's moans increase in volume, forming Ilya's name in a desperate plea. When he finally presses his tongue past the firm ring of muscle, Shane starts rutting up against the mattress.

"No cheating," Ilya says, swatting at Shane's left ass cheek. He flips him so he can just *look*. And God, is it a sight— a flushed, heaving chest, smooth and pinked. Onyx eyes and pouty lips. *Perfect*.

"Ilya," Shane huffs. His cock is so hard it looks painful. "Come on. Need you in me."

How can Ilya ignore him? He's only human; he loves it when Shane asks for what he wants. Opening Shane up doesn't take too long, but he doesn't rush through it, enamored by the little shivers Shane gives him as he stretches his fingers, body trembling with need. He always opens for him beautifully, trusting Ilya to give him exactly what he needs. And Ilya will.

Finally, though, he's ready— and oh, God, when he sinks in Shane, it's the most incredible thing he's ever felt. Unbelievable, every time. Shane's heat is relentless around him. Ilya's thoughts are white noise, a spinning top.

He feels Shane *everywhere*.

"Fuck yes," Shane murmurs, after Ilya sinks in to the hilt. "Missed you."

"Okay?" Ilya grits out, trying not to thrust automatically. It's been seven days, after all.

"Yeah. You can move. I want it."

Ilya has wasted so much time in his life hiding how much he loves Shane. From everyone, from Shane, and from himself. They don't have to hide anything, anymore, and he certainly doesn't have to hide this; he needs to love Shane properly, and the best way he knows how to show it is through his body.

"So fucking good," Shane moans. "You're so deep."

"I love you," Ilya says in Russian. And again, in English, emphasizing it with a thrust. "You're perfect. Amazing."

"Always so good, Ilya. Give it to me. I want to feel it for days."

Ilya snaps his hips harder, leaving bruising fingerprints in Shane's hips. The pace he sets is brutal, relentless. He would stay here forever if he could, buried in Shane and making him come over and over again.

"Shit," Shane warns, voice wrung out, "I'm coming." And he does, spectacularly, clenching tight around Ilya as his body contorts with pleasure. Nothing in the world will ever stun him as much as Shane Hollander's face when he comes.

Ilya can't take it, his rhythm faltering. Shane claws at his shoulders and he can feel the stinging marks, a claim that will last beyond this moment. "Come for me, Rozanov," he demands, in Russian.

Shit. He manages a few more aborted thrusts before emptying himself in Shane, vision going blurry as his blood sings and sparks. "Hollander," he says, and nothing more.

After, they lay on top of each other, sweaty skin sticking together. Ilya's honestly surprised Shane hasn't made a fuss about the mess gluing them together, but he's not about to voice it. He wants Shane in his arms as long as possible.

"Gorgeous," Ilya murmurs, pressing a kiss to the top of Shane's head.

"That's you," says Shane, playing with Ilya's hair. He twists a strand gently then releases it, moving on to do the same to another one. Ilya's heart glows. This fussy, sweet man of his, who was panicking all by himself in their guest room for the past week. They were probably mirror images of each other, laying awake and staring at the ceiling.

In six days, he'd done a lot of panicking himself. And a lot of hiding. He squeezes Shane closer to his chest. He remembers what Yuna whispered to him-- would he have let himself have this? He thinks he would have. He couldn't hide from it, in the end. Shane made him want to be better.

Shane reaches up to smooth one of Ilya's brows. "What are you thinking about?" he asks tenderly.

Ilya looks down at him. "I'm thinking that I'm the luckiest man in the world, to fall in love with you twice."

He hears a sharp inhale, and then Shane is gone from his sight, nothing visible but a tuft of dark hair peeking out from the covers.

“Where did you go?” he laughs. “Come back.”

Shane’s head rises slowly. His cheeks are bright red. “How can you say things like that?”

“Like what?”

“Like *that*. My heart can’t take it.”

Ilya huffs. He’s so fucking cute. “Well, is true.”

Shane just beams up at him. “I fell in love with you, too.”

“Liar.”

“I did! Even when you were holding back, you were kind. You’re a good person, Ilya. You always have been.”

“Hush,” Ilya tells him, eyes getting teary. It still doesn’t feel real, how much Shane loves him. Thirty-four-year-old Ilya can only comprehend it a little better than twenty-four-year-old Ilya, which isn’t saying much.

“Okay,” Shane says, finally peeling them apart. They both make a face at the ripping sound; Ilya, in particular, is a mess, Shane’s dried come all in his chest hair. “Time for a shower.”

“I do not want to do anything but love you, today,” Ilya tells him. Shane looks at him with heated eyes, and then turns to look longingly at the bathroom.

“Only after we brush our teeth,” he says resolutely.

Ilya can only laugh. This stubborn, fastidious shit. “I did not miss that.”

He’s full of it, of course.

He wouldn’t trade this for the world.

-

“Let me get this straight,” Wyatt says.

Ilya skates a lazy loop around him, then shoots the puck suddenly. Wyatt blocks it like it’s nothing and continues talking.

“You couldn’t remember anything for six days, until you kissed, and then, bam, memories?”

“Da.”

“*Dude*. Call Hallmark like, right now.”

“I am not sure Hollander would agree with that.”

“*Hollander* thinks you should be practicing, not pitching movie plots.” Shane skates up to them, as annoyingly one-track-minded as ever. Practice is basically over, anyway.

Ilya bats a puck at his skates. “Is a great movie. We could be rich.”

“Who would we cast?” Wyatt asks. “I’m thinking an unknown for Shane, but maybe someone more established for Roz, to draw people in.”

“We?” Shane repeats, amused.

“Yes, we,” Ilya says. “As in, us and not you.”

“Well, I don’t need to be involved, because I’m too busy scoring goals. Because I’m a professional hockey player.”

“Are you a professional hockey captain? Oh, wait.”

Shane’s eyes narrow. “I will be, once they remember that I score the most goals on this team. And in the league.”

“That is what we call a fluke. They’re all ugly goals, anyway.”

“Right, because you only score sexy goals.” Shane’s gravitated closer to him, chin tilted up defiantly.

“I’ll show *you* a sexy goal,” Ilya says, smitten with the way Shane can’t resist getting up in his face. His eyes are sparkling with challenge, and it’s all Ilya can do not to kiss him. The hitch in Shane’s breath means he’s feeling similarly.

There’s a cough behind them; they whirl around to see Wyatt standing up. “Guys,” he says, defeated.

Shane cringes. “Um, sorry.”

Wyatt’s already skating off the rink. “It’s cool,” he sighs, and then, under his breath, “I wish *I* had amnesia.”

And then they’re the last two on the rink, as usual.

“Hi,” Shane says, and there’s no challenge in his voice anymore. Just plain adoration.

Ilya feels the same; he’s not sure what the fuck he did in a past life to deserve this one, but he’s not going to take it for granted. Nothing can take this away from him.

“Hi,” he says back.

When their lips meet, it’s like coming home.

End Notes

ilya: wow hollander is so annoying
also ilya: i need him around me at all times or i will die

okay here are my thoughts you know the drill:

1. ilya takes years off of shane's life every time he silently sneaks up on him
2. shane's POV for this fic is so painful lol i would write it but. ouch!
3. taking a break from fic for a few reasons (writer's block + life + i'm not used to such a small fandom & it can be a tad discouraging sometimes. i'm trying to practice writing for myself more than anyone else!). if you made it this far + read my rambling — thank you, seriously <3

EDIT: there's a paragraph in here that is literally straight-up plagiarism from a fic i read a while ago, something i realized after i happened to reread it today (so, so embarrassing). i immediately changed it, obviously, but if you are rereading this and it's different that's why. don't plagiarize kids

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