

Love In My Void

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Love In My Void

by [ash_morrison](#)

Summary

Shane thinks he's doing a good job at hiding the truth behind his performance diet.

Notes

WARNING: this work delves deeply into the world of disordered eating and the effect it has on the person and their loved ones. If this is something that will trigger you, please do not read this! This will deal with heavy topics so I want everyone to be safe and do what's best for them.

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I wanted to write a more in depth analysis about Shane and his disordered eating that takes place during The Long Game. A lot of TLG focuses on Ilya's perspective which I loved, but as someone who had suffered with ED I felt such a connection to the things Shane did or said and wanted to explore that a bit more. There also doesn't seem to be many fics about it either. So I decided to write one!

Chapter 1: Performance Diet

Summer at the cottage came and went in a blur of unbridled joy.

They'd wake up late, still tangled in each other from the night before and go for another round. The days in the sun were long and filled with kayaking and lazy kisses. Ilya had wholeheartedly taken up cooking as a hobby. He was spoiling Shane, from crepes smothered with berries and compote in the morning to full barbeque spreads for dinner.

Everything had been perfect in their off-season bubble. It filled Shane with the hopeful prelude of experiencing forever with Ilya.

Except now, training camp for his tenth season starts today, so the bubble will officially pop tomorrow when Ilya heads back to Ottawa for his own camp.

"I'll see you tonight." Shane gives Ilya a peck on the lips and hoists his hockey bag onto his shoulder.

Ilya leans against the doorway as Shane loads the car.

"Practice hard today, Hollander. I came up with good idea for our day with the cup this year."

The cheeky comment draws a bark of laughter from him. Shane has one foot in the car when he turns back to Ilya.

"You really think this could be the year?"

Ilya shrugs nonchalantly, but his gaze is loving.

“If it’s not me, it’s you.”

This makes Shane oddly emotional.

“If it’s not me, it’s you.”

It seems like a promise.

The smell of ice and rubber permeates the air in a familiar way. Walking into the practice facility feels like second nature, a homecoming.

As per usual, he’s the first one to get there, so he attempts to get in a quick mile on the treadmill. He likes to get his blood pumping before the no doubt grueling training camp they were in for. He can almost hear Ilya’s voice in his head— *best cardio is done in bed, moya lyubov*.

He clenches his jaw and jacks up the speed.

No distractions.

In the mirror he watches beads of sweat trail from his hairline, down his neck while the sound of his feet pounding against the treadmill drones on.

A couple of his teammates begin filtering in and warming up and chatting about their off season lives— family vacations, weddings, the birth of a child. All things Shane would never be able to bond with his teammates over; except for Hayden.

Over the years he'd become a pro at locking away the part of him that was happy and in love. Most conversations with his teammates focused on strategy, stats, and league gossip. It was too difficult to talk about his own life without revealing who had him in complete domestic bliss— Ilya *fucking* Rozanov.

He kicks up the speed another notch.

In the locker room he was Shane Hollander, Captain of a Stanley Cup winning hockey team. He is a generational talent, someone who garners respect and is able to lead in good and bad times.

If they found out about him and Ilya... it could all disappear. And who would Shane be if not for all those incredible accomplishments?

The pace he set for himself is relentless. His lungs and thighs are burning with effort. When he finally reaches the breaking point, he slams his hand down onto the red emergency break, bringing the treadmill to an immediate stop. He takes heaving breaths with his hands on his knees.

“That was some warm up.” Hayden eyes him warily where he's lazily peddling on the exercise bike next to him.

Shane squirts some water into his mouth and brings his shirt up to wipe his face. Before he can even respond he hears his name called from across the room.

“Hollander, you're up first! Come on over.” Their athletic trainer is decked out in head to toe Voyagers gear, holding a clipboard.

He pats Hayden on the shoulder and heads over for the initial weigh-in for the season. He puts his water on the floor and takes off his shirt and tosses it next to the bottle.

The trainer is flipping through some papers and begins to read off of one.

“Okay so we got Shane Hollander, 5 foot 10 inches, last year's end of season weight was 192 pounds. Now, let's see where we're at. Get on the scale, bud.”

Shane doesn't look at himself in the mirror shirtless, he averts his eyes, focusing on the scale's small screen. The digital numbers finally settle after jumbling in contemplation.

204 lbs.

92.5328 kg

The trainer lets out a low whistle.

“Damn, Hollander.”

Shane feels like he's going to be physically sick.

The trainer is writing the new information on his clipboard. “Either you didn't work out at all in the off season, or Yuna has become one hell of a cook.”

He'd ended the season at 192 pounds... this meant that he had gained over *10 pounds* during the months spent with Ilya at the cottage.

It was impossible. Shane plays their workout regiment in his mind. Every morning they would take Anya on a mile walk through the winding hills near the lake, followed by exercising together in the home gym. On the lake they would swim and kayak. Not to mention the unholy amount of sex they had. That had to count for something.

But then he also remembers stacks of fluffy pancakes dotted with bananas and chocolate chips, crepes filled with nutella and strawberries, homemade flatbreads with goat cheese and

figs. He can almost taste the pulled pork smothered in tangy barbeque sauce, cornbread fresh out of the oven, warm and sweet.

Shane feels heat crawling up his neck, to his cheeks, all the way up to his ears. There's a hollow pit in his stomach growing to the size of the Mariana Trench.

"I'll get it down." Shane finally says, stepping off the scale. He's pulling his shirt back over his head in a hurry.

The trainer sizes Shane up again and writes some more notes down. It gives Shane anxiety.

"I mean, you *are* built like a brick shit house now, so maybe that could be it." He observes. "Just- for now, I'll have you stick to cardio and endurance based workouts. Gotta get you accustomed to having some extra muscle and weight on and figure out how to stay fast on the ice."

"Sounds good."

Shane doesn't even recognize his own voice.

Ilya is in the kitchen when he gets home. Anya is circling him like a shark that smells blood, begging for scraps.

"Hey."

Anya comes bounding over to greet him. She puts her paws on his thighs and stretches. He gives her some nice ear scratches.

“Perfect timing!” Ilya beams, coming over to Shane with a plate of what looks like black sesame cookies. His favorite Japanese cookie. “Happy first day of new season! I wanted to make you special treat before I leave.”

Shane wants to cry because his initial reaction to this incredibly loving gesture is anger, and it makes him feel like a fucking monster.

He has the most loving, caring boyfriend who apparently asked his mom for her Japanese recipes so Shane would feel more at home.... Yet, he thinks about the extra weight he gained and sees Ilya’s plate of cookies and the tips of his ears heat up and his fist clenches at his side.

The anger is completely misdirected because at the end of the day, Shane was the one who caved every time. Ilya made incredible meals and baked goods and he had indulged. Maybe what he’s really feeling is *shame*.

“The season hasn’t really started.” He shrugs.

“And yet, I make you cookies anyway!” Ilya puts the plate on the kitchen counter and takes Shane’s face in his hands. He flashes a crooked smile and kisses Shane.

“Yest, moya lyubov.”

Eat.

Shane’s pretty sure he won’t be eating anything in the foreseeable future. Not when every time he closes his eyes he sees those horrible numbers glowing on the scale.

“I’m actually going on a performance diet. I just, I feel like this could really be the year we win the cup and I wanna make sure I do everything I can to make that happen.”

Ilya frowns.

“Your trainer said this? To go on performance diet?”

He averts his eyes, “Yeah, I spoke to the team nutritionist and they set me up with a whole meal plan.”

Ilya rests a hand on his shoulder.

“And they think this is necessary? You are in best shape of your life. We trained every day.”

Shane feels a magnetic pull towards Ilya. He takes a step closer and lets his hand sit at the curve of Ilya’s waist.

“You’re my boyfriend, of course you’re going to say that.”

“No.” He says firmly. “Is true. I would say even if we weren’t boyfriends.”

Shane lowers his head to Ilya’s shoulder. He feels utterly exhausted.

“I gained ten pounds.” His voice was muffled against the fabric of Ilya’s shirt. It’s the only way he feels brave enough to admit his failure.

He can feel Ilya’s body become rigid under him. He’s probably disgusted by him. From now on Shane will have to make sure they have sex with the lights off. Ilya is probably cooking up ways to tell Shane it’s over.

“Shane,” he says gently. “Look at me.”

He really, really doesn't want to. Ilya lifts his chin up so Shane has no choice but to meet those hazel eyes. They aren't filled with disgust. Instead, they're soft and kind.

“Ten pounds means nothing. Muscle is weight. And you? You are *very* muscular, Hollander.”

“It's definitely not all muscle, but thanks.”

“I'm serious. You are best in league. Ten pounds or not, this is true. You are Shane fucking Hollander.” Ilya holds Shane's face in his hands, his thumb brushes across his cheek. “You are perfect and I love you.”

He feels the lump in his throat and his eyes begin to brim with tears.

“I love you too.” His voice is thin and warbly.

“I don't want to leave you like this.”

“It's okay, Ilya.” He reassures him.

The last thing he wants is Ilya staying over late when Ottawa's camp starts tomorrow. He be stuck driving in the dark. Something could happen, or he could sleep through his alarm, or—

Ilya is grabbing his wallet and keys off the counter and putting them in his pocket. He must have told Shane he was leaving but he must not have heard.

“There are leftovers in fridge; ground turkey and rice with spinach and adobo. It is safe for performance.” He gives Shane a kiss. “And please, have one cookie for me. I want you to

have something to make you smile.”

Shane kisses him again. This time it’s tender, more of a caress. He presses his forehead to Ilya’s and just— breathes.

There’s so many things he wants to say something like, *what did I do to deserve you? Or, will you marry me? Maybe, would you love me if I wasn’t perfect?*

He settles on—

“I’ll have one after dinner while I watch the ESPN recap.”

Ilya flashes a bright smile and gives him one last peck.

“I will text you when I am home. I expect a picture of you eating the cookie tonight so I know you are enjoying.”

When Ilya leaves, the house feels vast and Shane feels very, very small.

After scrubbing himself raw in the shower he finally curls up on the couch in a baggy sweatshirt and sweat pants. He keeps the hood up for Maximum Comfort.

Shane puts a cookie between his teeth and throws up a peace sign. He snaps a selfie and texts it to Ilya.

Shane: [image]

Shane: just like moms!

Ilya: enjoy them i made with love

Shane: funny... i think i can taste the love

Ilya: love and sesame seeds taste same actually

Ilya: do not stress

Ilya: sleep well moya lyubov

Ilya: I love you

Shane: i love you too

Shane looks at the cookie sitting on the coffee table. It still resembles a full moon with no bite taken from it. He tastes a ghost of the nutty flavour in his mouth from taking the picture. He desperately wants to eat the cookies. One, two, maybe even three.

Ilya had spent his whole day baking for Shane as a way to show his love. He should at least have one...

He takes the plate of cookies and dumps it into the trash bin.

It will be worth it when he wins the cup.

He turns off the kitchen lights and heads to bed.

Chapter 2: Intimacy

Chapter Notes

WARNING: this work delves deeply into the world of disordered eating and the effect it has on the person and their loved ones. If this is something that will trigger you, please do not read this! This will deal with heavy topics so I want everyone to be safe and do what's best for them.

Thank you all for the support and love you showed the first chapter! This is a deeply personal topic for me so I wanted to do the topic justice.

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

An alert comes through Shane's headphones about midway through his second mile.

New text message from Ilya– smiling face with horns emoji

He turns his watch to look at the text.

Ilya: working out again?

Shane rolls his eyes and pushes himself harder even at the protest of his body.

When they both bought smart watches they synced up their workout notifications so they could motivate each other and garner some friendly competition. Recently, Shane's been regretting that decision.

He decided to run in the park today. He just couldn't be home. Without Ilya there to buffer, Shane's been living in his head a lot. When he's not thinking of the possibility of playing *another* season in the closet or potentially letting his team down because he was *still* 200 pounds, he spends time worrying about Ilya.

It's been difficult to see the spark Ilya has always had for hockey diminish. His competitive drive has been tampered down as he toils away on a team that is facing the real possibility of another failed season. Through all of this, Ilya doesn't even seem to care. Shane can't help thinking he's played a role in anchoring Ilya, keeping him from reaching his full potential. He deserved to play on a great team, not fucking *Ottawa*. He deserved to hoist another Stanley Cup, win the Conn Smyth... but he left Boston. He left a team that valued him, fans that loved him.

He did it for Shane. And some days, that eats him alive.

His calves feel like they're on fire, and his lungs feel about ready to give out. It was much more difficult to run with a weighted vest. He's mostly gotten used to the extra twenty pounds it adds, but as Ilya so kindly pointed out, Shane is working out for the second time that day.

He rounds the corner and notices he's in the final stretch. It's a straight shot to where he parked his car.

He'd text Ilya back when he got to the car.

Shane sits in his Jeep, panting while the air conditioner blasts in his face. He rests his head against the headrest and closes his eyes. Another text notification comes through the car's bluetooth. He sighs and looks at his phone.

Ilya: you should relax you have big game tomorrow

Shane: it's just the home opener

Shane: it happens every year remember?

Ilya: so does birthday but we still celebrate those. don't be brat

Shane: but :(im :(so :(good :(at :(it :(((

Shane: and you love it

Ilya: yes. do you know what i love even more?

Shane: fucking me?

Ilya: when my boyfriend is nice to his body

Ilya: jesus shane

Ilya: you are always so horny

Shane: so is that a no to phone sex or

Ilya: i'll be home in hour

Shane makes sure the camera is angled at his face more than his body. He lays down on the mattress and sighs when his hand wraps around his own cock.

“I can’t see you, sweetheart. Move screen so I can see you touching yourself for me.” Ilya’s voice rumbles through the phone.

His stomach twists uncomfortably. It feels like he’s been found out.

If Ilya can’t see his body, then he won’t have to worry about Ilya seeing his body. He wanted to *enjoy* this. He wanted to close his eyes and let go. He missed having sex. And he missed being confident about having sex.

“Do you think you could come from just watching my face as I jerk off?”

“Is water wet?” Ilya chuckles. “Of course I could. Are you going to put on show for me, Hollander?”

There’s a swoop in his stomach at the way Ilya says those words. Like he’s his toy on a string. Performing for his pleasure. His own personal whore.

“Look at you, you’re already blushing at the thought.”

Shane adds more lube to his palm and lets out a breathy sigh at the pressure and glide of his own fist. His head falls back against the pillow as he moves his hand faster.

“Fucking beautiful.”

He can feel the way his eyebrows furrow when his hips buck up.

“Ilya—”

“What is it, sweetheart?”

He wants Ilya to hold him down and fuck him into the mattress. He wants it so badly he can hardly breathe.

“Wish you were here to fuck me.” He pants.

For the first time in what feels like forever, there’s not one self conscious thought in his mind. He’s overwhelmed and desperate, but he’s safe. He’s enjoying this. And he fucking misses Ilya’s cock.

“Patience.” Ilya’s voice is deep and wrecked. “When I get my hands on you... *Fuck*, we’re not leaving bed for days.”

He thinks of the last time they didn’t leave bed for days. The way Ilya fucked him awake while his come from earlier still leaked from Shane’s hole. It was messy, imperfect, and so fucking hot.

His whole body tenses and his toes curl.

“Oh my god, Ilya. Fuck!”

His chest heaves as warm spurts of come paint his stomach. Ilya makes a strangled noise as well, following him over the edge.

For once, Shane’s mind is blissfully, blissfully blank.

The plate of grilled chicken and broccoli begins to blur the longer Shane looks at it. His teammates are all talking over the restaurant’s music with their mouths full. He still hasn’t

picked up his fork.

“You gonna eat that or just stare at it until the check comes?” Hayden asks after he slurps a piece of linguine into his mouth. There’s Alfredo sauce on his lip.

It makes Shane want to throw up. He takes a sip of his lemon water and picks up his fork and knife.

“I know you’re carb loading but do you have to be so gross about it? You’re like a damn animal.”

“Oh, did I make you lose your appetite, Hollander?” He asks sarcastically.

“Leave him alone. He’s probably just sick thinking about having to play Rozanov tomorrow.” Someone chirps from two seats down.

Hayden taps his foot against Shane’s under the table in a silent show of support.

“Yeah...” he spears a piece of undercooked broccoli miserably, “that’s probably it.”

Walking into Ilya’s Ottawa house is like wrapping himself in a warm blanket. He could be a bottomless pit of misery and the second he breathes in that familiar smell of Ilya’s favorite amber and vanilla candle, all of his problems disappear.

Anya comes charging at him with a happy bark and wagging tail. She paws at his leg and he rubs her ears until she groans.

“That feels good doesn’t it, cutie?” He says in a silly voice.

“Okay, me next.” Ilya smiles as he approaches.

He looks soft in low slung sweatpants and a basic t-shirt.

“How was team dinner? Did Hayden eat his pasta like toddler again?”

Shane let out a bark of laughter.

“Be nice.”

He kisses Ilya hello and settles on the couch.

“So that is a yes.”

“Alfredo sauce and all.” Shane grimaces. “It was fucking disgusting.”

Ilya chuckles and curls up in the corner of the couch, his legs spread on the chaise part. He pats the space between his legs.

“Come.”

There’s a flutter in his stomach at the words. He takes the invitation and crawls over to him and rests his back against Ilya’s chest. A shiver goes down his spine when Ilya plays with the long strands of his hair.

“As much as I love making fun of Hayden, no more Hayden talk. I missed you, sweetheart.”
He whispers in Shane’s ear.

His warm hand moves to rest on Shane’s hip. Ilya rubs circles against the skin where the fabric of his shirt has risen up. He squirms a bit and pulls the material back down so that he’s covered.

Ilya’s mouth trails slow and lazy kisses down his neck while his hand weaves under Shane’s shirt. The broad warmth of his palm rests on his abdomen. Against his will, his body goes rigid under the touch.

“Just relax, Hollander.” Ilya’s breath tickles Shane’s neck. He presses his lips where his pulse thrums. “Let me take care of you.”

He wants to relax so badly. He wants to let Ilya’s hands roam his body, unburdened by his own mind. He can do this.

“*O-okay.*” He breathes, barely a whisper.

“Good boy.”

Ilya’s thumb brushes against his nipple. He rolls the nub between the tips of his fingers and grinds his hips into Shane from behind.

“Missed this.”

His hand moves lower to rest just below Shane’s navel. It’s a tender yet possessive touch. When they first started their relationship this was one of Shane’s favorite things.

Now, it fills him with dread.

It's hard to keep his breathing even when his heart is jackrabbiting in his chest.

"I had dreams of this," Ilya's words are filled with need. "But you are more beautiful than I remember."

"I think it's the CTE talking." Shane deflects.

"I would remember your body, concussions or no, moya lyubov. You have definitely grown more beautiful." Both his hands stroke down Shane's chest to dip below his waistband. One grip is anchored at the crux where Shane's hip meets his groin; his fingers dig into the meat of the skin there. "So strong."

Shane's heart rate hasn't slowed down. If anything, it feels worse and now his stomach is roiling. He feels hot and cold all at once.

When he finally wraps his hand around Shane's cock, he lets out a surprised little sound.

Shane isn't hard.

It was as if Ilya's teasing touches and loving praise had no effect on him at all.

He blinks rapidly while the words get stuck in his throat.

"I'm— Uh, I'm sorry." Shane stutters and distances himself from Ilya. It's more of a scramble. "I don't..."

Ilya reaches out to hold his hands.

“Shane.”

He feels fucking numb.

“Shane, it’s okay!”

He looks over at Ilya with tears in his eyes.

“I think I’m gonna be sick.” He chokes out before clapping a hand over his mouth and rushing to the bathroom.

Gentle fingers brush Shane’s hair away from his forehead. The strands are sweaty and clinging to his damp skin, but Ilya doesn’t care, or if he does, he doesn’t show it.

He fights another round of nausea and dry heaves into the toilet.

There’s nothing left.

There’s nothing fucking left.

“Is okay, sweetheart. Everything will be okay.” Ilya rubs calming circles between Shane’s shoulder blades. “If you have stomach bug, maybe is best to tell coaches you will not play tomorrow.”

Shane groans. “Can’t.”

“Why not?”

“Cup run.”

Ilya laughs and shakes his head.

“Thank god you are pretty because you are very stupid, Hollander.” Ilya jokes. “Is very cute you think you are dealbreaker. Voyagers will win even without you.”

Shane adjusts himself so his back is against the edge of the bathtub. He fixes Ilya with a glare.

“Don’t put yourself down to make me feel better. It’s unbecoming.”

“Fine. I will play very hard and win game.”

Shane closes his eyes and leans his head back against the shower door.

“Good.”

Eventually they move from the bathroom floor to Ilya’s bed. Shane is tucked in with a glass of ginger ale waiting for him on the nightstand.

“Can we... Can we talk about what happened?”

He can tell Ilya is walking on eggshells.

Shane just wants the bed to swallow him whole. His cheeks are already burning with shame. He doesn't know how he can possibly explain what happened to him... or what's *been* happening to him.

Shane is someone who is horny and insatiable. It's practically his defining characteristic.

But now... Now he can't get out of his own head long enough to even get his dick up. His mind supplies horrible, obsessive narratives any time they get intimate.

Ilya can feel how bloated you are from dinner.

Ilya won't want to fuck you if you're fat.

And sometimes, there's a worse thought.

Ilya knows you're lying.

How does he explain it?

He looks at his hands. "I don't know where to start."

"Can I start then?" Ilya asks gently as he takes Shane's hands in his own.

The warmth radiating from Ilya brings him comfort. He nods.

“You are *everything* to me.” His deep voice is filled with emotion. “Nothing will ever change that. We will be old and grey and I will still feel this way about you. You do not need to be perfect. We do not always need sex. I only need you to be Shane. My strong, kind, and very stubborn Shane.”

The words lodge themselves between Shane’s ribs and burrow deep into his chest.

“What if I feel like I’m losing myself?” He whispers, eyes filled with tears.

“Then I am here to remind you.” Ilya presses a kiss to Shane’s knuckles. “You love me, yes?”

“Of course I love you.”

“With no conditions, yes?”

“Of course!”

Ilya gives a wry smile.

“Then listen to me when I say, I love you. Unconditionally. When you win, when you lose, when you are healthy, when you are sick. I love you. I am here for you. And when you are ready, you can tell me everything.”

He presses his lips together to stop the bottom lip from wobbling.

For now, Ilya’s words are enough to fill the ever-widening pit in Shane’s stomach.

Chapter End Notes

I'd love to know what you thought!

If you liked it please subscribe to get updates when I post the new chapters!

ED support resource: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/eating-disorder-hotline/>

Chapter 3: Lying

Chapter Notes

WARNING: this work delves deeply into the world of disordered eating and the effect it has on the person and their loved ones. If this is something that will trigger you, please do not read this! This will deal with heavy topics so I want everyone to be safe and do what's best for them.

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There's a pounding on Shane's hotel door just as he finishes packing up his things. They're set to fly back to Montreal sometime tomorrow morning. He can hear the happy whoops of his teammates in the hallway.

"Come on, Hollander! We owe you drinks!" J.J. shouts.

Shane had scored a hat trick that day. Game winning goal and all. He should be smiling from ear to ear. Instead, he just wants to go to sleep.

He opens the door to find at least ten of his teammates filling the hall.

"Ayy, there he is!"

Someone catcalls.

He is suddenly very aware of the fact that he's shirtless and wearing a pair of skimpy boxer briefs.

"I was just about to turn in early, actually." He jerks a thumb backward towards the inside of his room. "Flight tomorrow. Remember?"

Hayden claps him on the shoulder. “It’s only seven o’clock, man. You still have to eat, don’t you? Come out to dinner at least! Shaw’s treat.” He winks.

“Why are you volunteering *me* to pay?” Shaw protests.

Shane makes a face that he hopes resembles regret.

“Sorry guys! I already ordered room service. How about you get me for the next night out?”

“Raincheck it is then, Captain.” J.J. says. “Sleep tight.”

“Don’t let the bedbugs bite!” Hayden calls over his shoulder as he heads towards the elevator.

Shane gives a final wave to the group before heading back into the sanctuary of his room. He deadbolts the door and turns out the hall light.

The bedside lamp still bathes the room in warm tones. He flops on the mattress and props his laptop on his bent knees. A FaceTime call comes through after about twenty minutes of watching trick shot compilations on YouTube.

He accepts the call and angles the screen so Ilya can see him better.

“Shane *fucking* Hollander.” Ilya shows off a sharp toothed grin. “What a game!”

Shane shrugs and runs a hand through his hair.

“What can I say? It’s all in a day’s work.”

“I do not know what that means, but I will know cockiness in any language.”

Shane laughs.

He can already feel his mood lifting. The grey cloud that seemed to hang over everything lately began to lift. The knot that’s taken up residence in his chest seems to loosen. Maybe he just *really* misses his boyfriend.

Ilya is hunched over a hotel desk in a threadbare t-shirt, curls dripping onto the fabric post-shower. He begins digging through a paper bag and reveals takeout containers of chicken udon and sushi rolls. He holds them up victoriously and smiles.

“My favorite part of playing New York!”

He had a point. Every team looks forward to playing in New York or Nashville because the food is just *that* good.

“Where is your dinner, Shane? No grilled hot chicken sandwich lettuce wrap?” His eyebrows are knitted as he gestures at Shane with his wooden chopsticks. “We were supposed to have dinner date.”

“I’m sorry, I was starving after the game so I ate already.”

The lie rolls off his tongue easily.

“Is okay.” Ilya pops a sushi roll into his mouth and chews. “You earned that sandwich. You were man possessed on ice tonight. I am very proud.”

He feels the warmth of his cheeks reddening. A mix of shame at outright lying to Ilya, and pride at the praise he's received.

"Did you get many hats? It sucks you got hattie on the road."

"Hardly any... not really a surprise though. The deep south isn't really known for rooting for Canadian teams."

"When I see you, I will get you hats. So many, we won't be able to find you in the pile."

They burst out laughing. After two equally long roadtrips, he's pretty sure they are both delirious at this point. The mind numbing shuffle between hotels, airports, and rinks has the potential to make someone go mad.

He's felt added pressure on this roadtrip more so than usual. It's been impossible to fully maintain his performance diet while he's away. The stress of greasy takeout, vending machine snacks, and continental breakfasts. Shane's a homebody at heart. He's very much looking forward to being able to cook a nice meal in his kitchen and sleep in his own bed this time tomorrow.

"I think maybe Mighty Ducks." Ilya says through a mouthful of noodles.

Shane realizes he'd spaced out while Ilya was speaking.

"Huh?"

"For movie night, Shane. We will celebrate you by watching Mighty Ducks. Your favorite!"

Shane fucking loves this man.

“I’d actually really like that.”

“I knew you would, sweetheart.”

For the fifth time in as many minutes Shane opens the fridge to peek at the contents. The items inside haven’t changed but for some reason his brain has convinced him that *maybe* something... relatively healthy would reveal itself.

It was Ilya’s fridge so he wasn’t holding out hope.

He heaves a massive sigh and closes the door, extinguishing the fridge light.

Leaning against the granite countertop, he lets his head fall back and closes his eyes. It replays again and again— the sight of the chicken taquitos, cans of ginger ale and pudding cups.

His stomach gnaws at him.

After a full day of trying his best to be good, it’s always hardest for him to stick to his diet at the end of the night. His portions are smaller, but high in protein. It still doesn’t fill him the way it should. It leaves him... wanting.

But if he’s going to win the cup this year he has to be disciplined. All his meals are approved by the team nutritionist. Shane’s made some minor tweaks here and there which have paid off tenfold. He’s arguably in the best shape of his life despite it being his tenth year in the league.

The ache is still there. It might even be worse now. He presses his fist into his stomach to relieve the pain.

“Will you stop being so dramatic?” He groans to himself.

“Shane?”

He practically jumps out of his skin at the sound of Ilya’s voice. When had he gotten home? He wonders how long he had been in this cycle of opening the fridge and closing the fridge.

Would he eventually have caved?

The thought of licking chocolate pudding off of the foil lid flashes in his mind.

“What are you doing awake?” The light under the cabinets cast shadows across Ilya’s face in the dark but Shane can still see the concern in his eyes. He drops his keys on the counter and hangs his jacket over the back of one of the dining chairs. “It is very late, moya lyubov. Are you okay?”

“Yeah!” He could immediately tell his tone was a little too enthusiastic. He toned it back. “I was having a midnight snack. I was just about to go back to bed before you scared the fuck out of me.”

Ilya approaches Shane and wraps him in a hug. He smells like cigarettes and amber.

“Did you have pudding cup? I saw you looking earlier.” He murmurs into Shane’s neck. “They are good, yes?”

Shane swallows.

For all the fantasizing he did over the dessert, the sweet, creamy goodness never passed his lips. He doesn’t know why he lied. He didn’t have a midnight snack. He could have just told

Ilya that he couldn't sleep. There was no need to lie. So *why* was it his first instinct?

"So good." He replies, pressing a lingering kiss to Ilya's lips. "I can think of something better than dessert though."

Ilya hums in response, hand against Shane's lower back guiding them closer together. He breathes deeply through his nose, the way he does when he teeters between lust and self control.

"Meet me in bed." Shane murmurs against Ilya's mouth.

He brings his shirt up over his head and tosses it into the laundry basket. He lays on the bed and attempts a seductive pose. Not that it really matters. This would be a quick fuck, fumbling hands, possibly mouths. Something to lull them into sleep.

He can hear Ilya rustling in the kitchen still, probably turning off the lights and checking the doors.

Finally the door opens. Ilya doesn't turn the light on and undresses quietly in the dark of the room.

"Is late, Shane. We should go to sleep." Ilya practically whispers.

He pulls back the comforter and climbs into bed.

The rational part of Shane's mind screams at him that it's nearly two in the morning and Ilya is probably dead tired.

Shane blinks rapidly, stuck in his spot on the bed in that dumb fucking pose. He tries to swallow past the lump that forms in his throat. There's this totally debilitating feeling that strikes him—the feeling that he did something to make Ilya not want him.

Slowly he peels back the bedding and settles on his side, his back to Ilya instead of assuming his normal big spoon position. The idea of being rejected by Ilya a second time tonight would be too much to bear. He presses into his stomach again, trying to stave off a building hunger pang.

The mattress shifts and Ilya's hand settles at the curve of Shane's waist, his thumb circling against the meat of his hip.

“Goodnight, sweetheart.” His voice sounds fragile.

Shane pretends to already be asleep.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all are enjoying so far! Please let me know your favorite bits!

Next chapter will be a doozy.

ED support resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/eating-disorder-hotline/>

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Chapter 4: Rock Bottom

Chapter Notes

WARNING: this work delves deeply into the world of disordered eating and the effect it has on the person and their loved ones. If this is something that will trigger you, please do not read this! This will deal with heavy topics so I want everyone to be safe and do what's best for them.

-

This is rock bottom for Shane. This chapter is pretty intense so please take care of yourselves.

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

It starts off as something manageable. Little episodes, few and far between, triggered by days he's been particularly strict about what gets to fuel his body.

He's shoveling snow at his house and gets lightheaded on the upswing. He stands still for a second, waiting for it to pass. As soon as his head clears, he continues on. He's fine the rest of the day.

He stands up too fast getting out of bed one day and needs to brace himself on the nightstand.

His eyesight blurs around the edges during a particularly taxing run at the practice facility.

Everything is fine. That is, until he gets absolutely crushed by one of Florida's enforcers mid game. He's laid out on the ice with no whistle to signal stoppage of play.

He's normally quick to get back up, the way any hockey player worth their salt would, but on his first attempt, he gets dizzy and falls right back to the ice. The crowd yells at the refs to blow the whistle. It doesn't come. He grits his teeth and tries again, only to lose his legs again. The shouts grow louder. Finally he stands, using his stick to balance, and skates to the bench waving frantically for a shift change.

The team medic meets him down the tunnel. Besides the difficulty getting up and staying up, he feels... normal. No headache, no residual weakness, just, normal. They run the concussion protocol on him anyway.

Shane provides his full name, current date and year, and who the current PM is. The medic practically blinds him with the mini flashlight as he checks for pupil reactivity. Thankfully, he clears Shane to resume playing.

He stays in the locker room waiting for the period to end. He'd gotten hurt about ten minutes before the clock ran out anyway.

He's sitting in his stall, jersey off, bouncing his knee at a vicious speed as he replays what happened over and over again. Shane's body is a well oiled machine and skating comes easier than breathing some days. So how the fuck did he end up looking like a newborn fawn, stumbling and tripping over himself?

Teammates begin filtering in, helmets off and drenched in sweat.

"What happened out there, Hollander? You okay?" Hayden taps his stick against Shane's leg as he passes by.

"I'm good. Just got a little rattled is all."

"Next shift that dickhead is on the ice, he's getting crushed." J.J. says.

"Drink some gato and eat a fucking granola bar, Hollander." Their coach barks at him. "And keep your damn head up so you don't get knocked on your ass again."

Shane bites his cheek and sniffs from the cold.

“Yes, coach.”

His teeth feel like they’re about to fall out from the sweetness of the yellow Gatorade, but he chugs anyway. The sweet of it counteracts the protein bar he ate that tastes like chewy drywall.

Both items sit like lead in his stomach by the time his teammates are suiting back up for the third period.

He rubs his hands on his thighs and claps a couple of times to hype himself up. He needs to get his head in the fucking game. They were down by two and every point mattered this far into the season.

If he wanted to win the cup—

Every calorie.

Every pound.

Every point.

Mattered.

It’s seven am and Shane has a flight to catch for their game against LA tonight.

Ilya sleeps peacefully as Shane sneaks into the en suite to get ready. He does his best to be quiet as he warms up the shower and brushes his teeth. Last night had been particularly rough sleeping wise. Ilya had tossed and turned, restless and crying out. It broke Shane's heart.

Something has been different lately. A gap between them, widening. Shane doesn't know how it got there or how to fix it, but now it's manifesting in Ilya's dreams. He wishes he could peek inside Ilya's mind and unravel the complicated strands of grief and sadness for him. Instead, he lets him get his well needed rest.

The steam begins to fill up the bathroom making everything hazy. It almost feels like one of his episodes.

Grabbing a towel from the cabinet, he tosses it onto the closed toilet lid. He bends over to take his socks and sleep shorts off. Except suddenly, his heart is pounding like he'd been skating herbies for an hour.

He straightens up and his vision swims. Not from the steam this time, but for real. This feels different from any episode he experienced prior. He's sweating through his shirt now.

A jolt of fear courses through him.

"Ilya?" He calls out.

He doesn't know if he's whispered his name or shouted it because his hearing is all wrong. It sounds like he's underwater, everything muffled and quiet around him. His fear has turned into full blown panic now.

He tries to sit down to catch his breath, but his vision begins to tunnel until there's nothing at all but darkness.

There's a string of frantic Russian curses that tease at the back of Shane's brain. Then, clear as day—

“Wake up, Hollander!”

It's Ilya. He sounds scared. Except Ilya's never scared.

“Is not working... what do I do?!”

“Rub his sternum with a closed fist. Use a decent amount of pressure. They'll be there soon.”

“Come on. *Come on*, Shane.”

Something wet drips on his face. His eyes flutter open and closed.

“Mmm up.” He mumbles.

Okay, maybe he's not *totally* up. But Ilya sounds really fucking scared and he needs to tell him he's fine. Everything is fine.

“Shane,” Ilya sounds very serious, “Open your eyes.”

“You're hurting my chest.” Shane groans and attempts to roll away from the pressure.

When he opens his eyes the first thing he sees is Ilya bent over him, backlit by the ceiling light, curls like a halo.

“Oh, *fuck*. Hi! He’s awake. He’s awake!” Ilya’s resolve crumbles, the relief in his voice obvious. He cups Shane’s cheek gently. “There you are.”

“Good!” The tinny voice says through the speaker phone of Ilya’s cell. “EMS is there. Is the door unlocked or are you able to safely open it for them?”

“What’s going on? What happened?” His voice sounds just as groggy as he feels.

Ilya’s eyes flicker between the bathroom door and Shane. He can sense Ilya’s hesitation.

“I’ll keep him talking and awake, you go and unlock the door.” The dispatcher says after a prolonged moment of silence.

“Okay... okay.” Ilya wipes his eyes when he thinks Shane isn’t looking. “Stay here. *Please*. Just... stay here.”

Every part of Shane’s body is on high alert as he’s wheeled into the emergency room on a stretcher. He’ll never admit it, but his main source of fear in that moment is if someone at the hospital recognizes him, or worse, him *and* Ilya.

Thankfully, he’s brought to a private room with sliding doors and ugly yellow curtains. Ilya doesn’t leave his side as they have him take his shirt off and hook him up to stickers and wires and cuffs. He holds his hand while the nurses draw blood and start IVs. But he doesn’t say a word.

“Tell me your name, honey.”

“Uh, Shane... Hollander.” He practically whispers his last name.

She doesn't react in a way that shows she knows who either of them are. Maybe they've lucked out and found the only hospital in Canada that doesn't hire hockey fans. He breathes a little easier.

“Okay, Shane. Do you know your height and weight?”

“Yeah, uh, I'm five eleven... 192 pounds.”

He had lost twelve pounds over the course of a couple of months by doing his performance diet. He was back to last year's end of season weight. It had felt like accomplishment at the time. But now, with Ilya's stricken expression at the information, Shane feels complete and utter shame.

He blinks rapidly when she flashes a mini flashlight in his eyes. The doctor sweeps into the room with three other people in tow.

“Good! Pupils are reactive.” The nurse says.

The doctor begins asking him questions similar to a concussion protocol and testing his limb's abilities to move, balance and push. Then she wants to know what exactly happened leading up to the episode.

He tells a version of the truth.

How he's been stressed about work. How he's been following a new performance diet. How he's not been so good at remembering to stay hydrated. How he hasn't been sleeping much.

Ilya stays completely silent but the fingers of his free hand are tapping erratically on his kneecap. The only time he speaks is when the doctors ask for his version of events for the length of time Shane can't account for.

"I was sleeping, but I heard him call for me from bathroom. When I got there he just... he fell. Completely out."

"And did he display any shaking or twitching when this happened?" The doctor asks as the medical students take notes behind her.

Ilya's brow furrows like he's reliving the moment in his mind. "No, he was like statue but with shallow breathing."

"Did he hit his head at all when he fell? On the tile, the toilet, anything like that?"

"No, no. Nothing like that. I was able to catch him in time."

Shane instinctively gives Ilya's hand a squeeze. He can't stop thinking about how scared he must have been.

"About how long do you estimate he was unconscious for?"

He makes a noise in the back of his throat. "It felt forever. But it was maybe five... ten minutes? I cannot say. He woke up after I rubbed his chest very hard."

"Well, you did all the right things." The doctor reassures Ilya. "If he hit his head, we would probably be having a different conversation right now."

Shane stops to think how lucky he really is. If Ilya hadn't been there, he could have ended up with a concussion or worse, a brain bleed. He could have fucking *died*.

“Okay, so right now there’s no immediate signs that point to stroke, which is good. We’re going to order an MRI just to be safe. With the information we have so far, I believe he passed out due to something called orthostatic hypotension. This is a dip in blood pressure that can occur when changing position quickly.”

“It can become worse in instances where someone is dehydrated or overheated, sometimes low blood sugar can also cause this. In this case, it seems like it could have been a mixture of all three. Considering you were in a hot room, hadn’t eaten yet, and changed positions fairly quickly.”

“How will you fix him?” Ilya sounds worn thin.

“Thankfully, there’s no serious course of treatment necessary for this. We already have some IV fluids running for you and we’re going to keep you for a few hours to monitor your blood pressure along with the infusion. If we like what we see and your imaging comes back clear, then you’ll be good to be discharged. Any questions for me?”

It was a lot of information to take in but Shane understood the gist of it.

“When will I be good to go back to play– I mean, working?”

“*Shane.*” Ilya chastises. “You almost die and first thing you ask is about *work*?”

Shane bites the inside of his cheek.

“I would take at least three days off to rest. Get some sleep, eat some good food, and don’t do anything overtly physical. Just take it easy.”

The idea of three days off already feels like a death sentence.

Ilya's been gone for about twenty minutes. He said he had to use the bathroom, but that's starting to feel more and more like a lie.

There's a knock on the sliding door.

"Can I come in?" It's a woman's voice.

"Sure."

The curtain opens to reveal a petite woman with a pixie cut. She wears a white lab coat over her business casual clothes.

"Shane? Hi, I'm Becca, it's nice to meet you."

"Hi Becca."

She seems less *doctor-y* than the others he's met so far. She has a kind face. She pulls a chair over to his stretcher and sits so that they're eye to eye.

"So, Doctor Berg was telling me a little bit about what happened to you." She has her hands folded in her lap over her notepad. "She had some concerns with how you're managing your stress. She also mentioned something about a performance diet you're on. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?"

Shane eyes her suspiciously. "What kind of doctor are you?"

"I'm a psychologist who specializes in eating disorders."

He instinctively crosses his arms over his bare chest. He's never been more self conscious. He doesn't have a fucking eating disorder. He's a generational talent. A Stanley cup winner. Winners don't get eating disorders.

"I'm on a diet from a nutritionist. I don't have an eating disorder." He snaps.

She writes something on her note pad. The monitor he's hooked up to begins to beep. Her eyes flick up to the screen.

"It's okay, Shane. Why don't you take a couple of deep breaths for me."

He doesn't want to hear her calm voice. He doesn't want to take deep breaths. He doesn't want to talk about his diet. He wants to go home right now.

If Ilya were here he'd be able to clear everything up. He could vouch for Shane. He's an athlete too, he understands the way these things work.

"Where's Ilya?" He asks. "He said he was going to the bathroom and he didn't come back. I just—"

"Shane." Becca interrupts. "I know this is a lot to handle, and you're under extraordinary levels of stress, but I need you here with me now. I want to help you. Doctor Berg wants to help you. *Ilya* wants to help you."

Ilya wants to help him.

If Ilya wants to help him... he must think there's something wrong with Shane. He's not here right now because he's the one who told the doctors he needs a psychologist. It all comes crashing down on him.

His chin wobbles as his eyes fill with tears. “Ilya knows?”

Becca gives him a sympathetic look and nods.

“Oh god.” The dam bursts as he sobs into his palms.

Shane is silent the whole drive home; a pile of referrals and eating disorder reading material on his lap.

It’s almost impossible to look Ilya in the eye after his meeting with Becca. There are many conflicting feelings swirling in his mind, but self loathing is the loudest and most vicious. His chest feels like a bottomless pit.

When they get to the house, Shane wants nothing more than to get under the covers and create a bubble away from everything. He’s vulnerable and scared but a part of him doesn’t want to burden Ilya any more than he already has.

“Will you not speak to me now?” Ilya calls after him. “Please, Shane. We need to talk about what happened.”

Shane sighs in defeat and turns around to face Ilya. “What’s there to talk about?”

“Can we talk about what you do when I am not here?” Ilya’s desperation bleeds into his words. “If it is this bad when I am here... *Fuck*, I just—” he scrubs his hand over his face.

It’s like a floodgate has opened inside of Ilya.

“I’m fucking scared, Shane. If I was not here, how long would you have laid on the floor? Would you have taken yourself to hospital?”

Ilya’s fingers twitch at his side. A telltale sign he’s craving a cigarette.

“You’ve been so secretive, I wonder if you would tell me this happened to you. Or would you continue to pretend everything is fine and what you are doing to yourself is healthy?”

Shane can feel his cheeks going red and curls in on himself more. The words are like being doused with ice water.

“You know, I have not seen you shirtless in one month. And today, I see you... and you’re—you are wasting away, Shane.”

“I get it! I’m a fucking headcase.” Shane exclaims, eyes brimming with tears. “I know I took things too far. But I can’t bear to see you looking at me as if I’m a burden, or some broken thing. I’m sorry, I just can’t take it.”

Ilya’s face twists into a hurt expression. “That is what you think of us? That I would think you are *burden*?”

“Isn’t it?” His voice breaks.

Ilya closes the gap between them and embraces Shane tightly, chin hooked over his shoulder. He can feel Ilya’s body trembling.

“I am scared.” He says into Shane’s neck. “I am worried. But you will *never* be burden to me. Never. Do you understand me, Sweetheart?”

It's hard for Shane to accept what he's saying, but he has to trust Ilya and Ilya's love for him. He nods and hugs him closer.

"We are going to get through this. I love you so much."

Shane just cries and lets Ilya comfort him.

HOLLANDER OUT WITH 'MYSTERY ILLNESS' FOR THIRD GAME

The Montreal Voyageurs will remain Captain-less for a third straight game tonight as they get ready to face off against the Toronto Guardians. The team continues to stay tight-lipped regarding Shane Hollander's notable absence.

The team's coach commented before Thursday night's game. "Barring any injuries, this is the lineup and it'll stay like this until Hollander is ready to be back."

Hollander currently leads the team in points and ice time.

When asked about the potential effect his absence will have on their playoff run, Forward Hayden Pike said, "Playoffs are coming down the pipe... we're looking forward to getting Hollander back in the mix. It'll be good to pick up a few extra points going into it."

In the past week, with their back to back regulation losses, the Voyageurs have slipped to the number two spot in the Atlantic Division. Tonight they have a chance to overtake number one, the Boston Bruins, if they secure a regulation win at Scotiabank arena tonight, 7 p.m. EST.

Chapter End Notes

This was a very emotional chapter for me to write, I hope the sincerity of it shows.

Things will get better from here on out. I promise.

ED support resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/eating-disorder-hotline/>

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Chapter 5: Recovery

Chapter Notes

WARNING: this work delves deeply into the world of disordered eating and the effect it has on the person and their loved ones. If this is something that will trigger you, please do not read this! This will deal with heavy topics so I want everyone to be safe and do what's best for them.

Hi guys sorry the update took so long! This is a very heavy fic to write and a little mentally taxing so I needed a little hiatus! I hope you guys enjoy but also take care of yourselves.

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

After the initial shock of the diagnosis, it feels nice to know that other people in the world have felt the same way Shane has and have gotten better. Shane really wants to get better.

Shane knows that the first few weeks after the hospital were hell on earth for Ilya and for Shane's parents. He knows they were barely sleeping. He could see it in the dark circles under their eyes. Shane didn't make it easy for them either, his moods would yo-yo erratically and getting him to eat, to sit still, not to exercise, was challenging. He felt childish for needing to be observed by them and given a pat on the back for eating dinner. But they never made him feel less for it. They were always there, always supportive.

Sometimes he can't believe how fucking lucky he is.

He's not perfect, but he's making steps towards progress. His therapist, Jane (he and Ilya had a good laugh at this), sees him four times a week either in her office or online. Shane also has a personal nutritionist who specializes in eating disorders who even travels with him on road trips. It helps to keep him on track, especially now that the playoffs are next month.

People might say a lot about him, but they'll never say he didn't try.

Recovery is easiest when he's with Ilya though.

When they're together, Ilya will join him in meditating or saying his morning affirmations or they'll cook meals together.

Jane says that making food something you associate with good memories can help rewire a person's relationship with food and eating. Every week his nutritionist will give him some well balanced recipes to try. If they're able to steal time between their schedules, Shane and Ilya will practice the recipes together. Cooking with Ilya and enjoying the fruits of their labor together is something Shane is beginning to cherish.

Even with all of the support, as a professional athlete it's been difficult for him to wrap his head around the fact that he has an eating disorder.

He'd been exposed to strict workout regiments, supplements, and restrictive nutritional plans for more than half of his life. This desperate need to be the best has driven him to his best self, but still somehow corrupted him until he was sick inside. No one ingrained that need in him. He was born with it.

The more he sat with the words— *atypical anorexia nervosa with compulsive exercising tendencies*, he began to understand that there's a difference between being a health conscious professional athlete and being unwell the way he is. Ilya is the perfect example of a high caliber athlete who is able to put up insane numbers while still eating whatever the hell he wants, working out once a day, and enjoying his fucking life.

Shane can do it.

He can be like Ilya.

He can have it all... a hall of fame career, a life, a *family*.

He could be happy.

Warm infrared light bathes over Shane's skin in a comforting way. He sits with the backs of his hands resting on his knees, palms facing upward. His eyes are closed to distractions as he takes deep, measured breaths.

"I am alive, healthy and safe." He says into the quiet.

His finger twitches. Shane keeps his eyes closed.

"I have permission to rest."

He imagines floating in the lake under the scorching summer sun. Ilya is with him. They're holding hands and the shine of Ilya's wedding band glints happily. He sinks further into the good feeling spreading through his chest at the vision.

He wants that. He wants that so badly.

"I *deserve* rest."

Even though he's thousands of miles away, in his head he can hear Ilya's strong and kind voice.

You are not recovering alone.

One...

Two....

Three...

Four...

Five...

Si—

“Shane, are you making wine? It is grape, not steak. I am sure you have chewed it enough.”

Shane blinks to refocus his eyes. “What?”

“Eat the grapes, moya lyubov. Do not think, just eat.”

“Who says I was thinking?” He deflects.

Ilya pins him with an all too knowing look.

“I can hear your thoughts, they are much louder than my own.”

“And what were my thoughts?” Shane had a pleased hum to his tone.

Ilya pauses and seems to calculate his response. He settles on, “You are thinking of riding my face.” He says casually.

Shane pops another grape in his mouth and tries not to count each time he chews. He rolls his eyes and with a full mouth says, “You’re such a pervert.”

Ilya shrugs, “If I am pervert, then what are you, Hollander?”

“Some might say– insatiable.”

“If you finish grapes and pick recipe to make for dinner I might consider... satiating you.”

Shane swallows thickly. He feels the masticated grape travel down his throat.

“I think when Jane said I need a reward system set up, she didn’t have sex in mind as the reward.”

“You do not like sweets. You are not man of many needs. Only two things motivate the great Shane Hollander, hockey and his fiance’s cock. We are already in playoffs, so that leaves one option.”

Ilya looks as if he is about to devour Shane whole. His tongue darts out of his mouth to moisten his bottom lip. His eyes linger on Shane’s crotch. It makes his mouth go dry.

“I think, uh, I’d be down to work up an appetite.”

Ilya smirks, “I thought so.”

“I think it’s gonna be really good!” Shane says excitedly as he chops up broccoli florets and spinach.

Ilya stops stirring and brings the spoon to his lips to taste the sauce. He groans in satisfaction. The sound makes Shane’s stomach flip and sends a rush of heat through him.

“Come.” Ilya hooks a finger in the neck of Shane’s apron and pulls him close.

Shane puts the knife down and watches as Ilya dips his finger quickly into the creamy sauce and offers it to Shane. It drips down and Shane tracks the movement with anticipation.

“Taste.”

He leans in and gives a small, teasing lick. The sauce is delicious. Ilya raises his eyebrow and Shane wraps his lips around the digit and closes his eyes. He hums and sucks it clean with a small pop.

Ilya’s looking at him with dark eyes.

“Good, yes?”

Shane licks his lips. “It’s delicious.”

He smiles at Shane and continues stirring.

“We are good cooking team, moya lyubov. Is good bonding activity for us. Are you having fun?”

Surprisingly, the idea of eating baked chicken with alfredo sauce and veggies doesn't fill him with dread. He's not focused on the calories or amount of fat in the creamy alfredo sauce. He's enjoying spending quality time with Ilya and having him here eases his anxiety around eating things that aren't "safe" foods.

"You know me, I have fun doing anything with you."

"So cheese of you." Ilya scrunches his nose in a way that makes Shane feel a level of cuteness aggression that's concerning.

Shane cackles and dumps the veggies into the pot with the vegetable steamer to cook.

"You mean, *cheesy*?"

"You know what I mean, Hollander." Ilya swats playfully at Shane's ass with his free hand.

"Don't start a war you can't finish, Rozanov." He warns just before he blows an obnoxious raspberry onto the back of Ilya's neck.

His shoulders jolt up, "Hey! Hot stove!" He chastises Shane and drops the spoon into the pot.

Shane finds himself crowded up against the kitchen island. Ilya captures his lips in a lingering kiss.

"Do not distract the cook." He says against Shane's mouth. "Is dangerous."

Shane runs his fingers through Ilya's curls and nips at his bottom lip. He kisses him long and slow. Ilya groans and rests his palms on Shane's waist. It makes Shane dizzy.

“I’m just following instructions.” He points to the embroidery on Ilya’s apron where in pretty script it says *kiss the cook*.

Ilya glances down at Shane’s mouth and flicks his gaze back up. “I guess I must allow this then.”

The air is charged between them.

“I guess so.”

Ilya kisses Shane like a man starved, pressing their bodies together. He feels breathless. It overwhelms Shane, how much he’s missed this... having Ilya close, Shane’s body reacting to the way Ilya touches him, having fun.

The timer for the oven goes off and they separate, foreheads together, breathing each other in.

“I think the chicken’s done.”

Ilya sighs in exasperation. “Yes, yes.”

He can feel Ilya’s temptation to put dinner off in favor of fucking Shane against the kitchen counter, but because he loves Shane and cares about his recovery, he extracts himself from the temptation. He opens the oven and uses pot holders to take the pan of baked chicken out. He places it on the stovetop to cool off.

Shane grabs the pot of vegetables and drains the water into the sink. “Don’t worry. We still have *all* night.”

He kisses Ilya’s shoulder as he passes by him. As he sets the plates out he can feel Ilya’s gaze on him, checking out his ass in his workout shorts.

The pit in his stomach is back.

He's been sitting in his car outside of the Voyagers practice facility for about ten minutes now. He's tried to leave, but every time he turns his car on and grips the steering wheel, his hands shake so badly he's afraid he'll crash if he puts the car in drive.

What did you think would happen?

Then fuck off and go home.

The words sharpened with venom. The way his teammates averted their eyes. It plays on repeat in his mind, warping something deep inside of him.

Neither of them will be allowed to play until the Commissioner decides what to do with them and their now very public relationship. Even worse, there's a high likelihood that the Voyageurs and Centaurs will face off in the first round.

He lived with the fear of their secret being outed for so long, but he never expected repercussions this harsh. Shane's every fear had been confirmed and then some. Being with Ilya, *loving* Ilya... it would cost him everything. He'd been so incredibly stupid to think he could have hockey *and* a normal life with Ilya.

Shane didn't know who he would be if he couldn't have both.

Two hours of catatonic silence had passed before Shane decided he needed a good run to clear his head.

The monotonous drone of the treadmill and the pounding of his feet fill the home gym.

He couldn't change his situation. He couldn't change that fact that he's madly in love with Ilya and that knowing they'll be married soon is the only thing keeping him sane.

He couldn't change that fact that his team... his fucking *second family* didn't want him anymore.

Beads of sweat gathered at his hairline as he tried breathing evenly in through his nose and out through his mouth.

He couldn't change that he was so fucked up in the head, so obsessed with being perfect, that his first thought after being suspended was— *If I didn't eat that donut last night, this wouldn't have happened.*

Shane increases the speed of the treadmill to a punishing pace. His thoughts continue to spiral. He needs to work harder. What if he isn't allowed to finish the season? There's a high possibility that his team won't even accept him back. He knows now that he's clearly expendable to the Voyagers. They didn't even want him in the lineup for the Stanley Cup playoffs.

If he didn't have an enormous stitch in his side from the treadmill, he'd laugh. The actual absurdity of it all! He had brought the floundering Voyagers team into a golden age... he hoisted the Stanley Cup three times with them, four if they win this year. He always thought he'd retire in Montreal.

Now, he was filled with uncertainty. The only constant right now seemed to be Ilya.

Ilya.

Shane hadn't even texted him to see what happened with his own team meeting. God, he was so fucking selfish.

The cells of his lungs are screaming for relief. He hasn't run this hard since before... everything. No one let him work out this hard anymore. When he can't take it anymore, he slams the emergency brake and bends over, hands on his knees, panting heavily.

He tries to catch his breath as he paces in circles with his hands crossed over his head, under armor shirt riding up. He chugs some water and stares at his heart rate. It's not coming down. The feeling of the water sloshing in his empty stomach makes his skin crawl. He feels full and disgusting and he can't fucking breathe.

Suddenly Shane's mouth is watering and an uneasy feeling comes over him. He bends over and pukes right on the rubber flooring. There are tears in his eyes but he can't tell if he's crying from throwing up or because his life is falling apart.

He furiously wipes at his eyes.

"Fuck!" He shouts into the silence before a fresh wave of tears comes upon him.

He's backsliding in his recovery.

Running until he pukes doesn't fall under 'moving in a way that makes your body happy'. That's Jane for 'exercising safely'.

Ilya is going to be so disappointed in him.

He's breathing slowly in through his nose and out through his mouth, and pukes again.

Once he gathers his strength, he calls Jane for an emergency session to help stop the spiraling thoughts. He tells her everything. No lies. In the end she suggests he call his mom to come stay with him for the time being. She doesn't think he should be alone.

Shane can't help but agree.

The dam inside of Shane breaks as soon as his mom's arms are wrapped around him. She rocks them slowly and rubs his back as he cries. She makes soothing noises that remind him of being a little kid with a skinned knee who just needed his mom.

Eventually, Shane breaks the silence.

"I don't know what to do." Shane's voice is muffled as he cries into his mom's neck. "What am I going to *do*? I gave that team fucking everything."

She runs her palm gently down his hair. "I know, baby."

"How am I going to move past this?"

She takes his face in her hands and wipes away his tears. "A mother only ever wants their child to be happy. The way you light up around Ilya... it is the greatest joy to see. Think about the future you want for yourself. I think deep inside you know what needs to happen next."

He's quiet for a moment, considering his options. She presses her lips to his forehead.

"I am going to make your favorite udon soup for dinner. Go take a nice shower and we can talk more after."

She picks up the small bag of groceries she showed up with and goes toward the kitchen.

“I’ll be a free agent.” He blurts out.

She turns back around slowly with a small, knowing smile.

“At the end of the season, I’ll be a free agent. I’m going to sign with Ottawa.”

A massive weight feels like it’s been lifted off his shoulders. The idea seemed like the most natural thing in the world.

He could play hockey, be a part of a team that’s accepting and fun. He can be teammates with Ilya. They can live in the same house, have the same days off, they wouldn’t be stealing moments here and there anymore. They’d be *husbands*. He’d have a supportive coaching staff, he’d have his parents nearby, he’d be able to breathe for the first time in years.

He could have it all and he’s ready to fight like hell for it.

His mother hugs him fiercely, “That’s my boy.”

Shane feels as if he’s floating on air. He just stood up for himself and Ilya against the goddamn commissioner of the NHL. His plan worked. He has blackmail, he has Ilya, and he’s going to make sure he gets a spot on the Ottawa Centaurs.

He wonders if this is what doing drugs feels like. He feels like he could fight a moose and win right now.

He turns to Ilya who has a shit eating grin on his face. He takes Ilya's hand in his because he fucking *can* now.

Ilya's grin softens into something fond. "I am so proud. You were very brave just now." He looks Shane up and down. "And hot."

"I was only brave because you were there with me."

Ilya makes a disapproving noise in the back of his throat. "No. I take no credit. This whole year you have been brave. Today, you were most brave."

Shane ducks his head and feels his cheeks burn at the compliment. Ilya tilts his chin up, so he can look him in the eye.

"Let us celebrate, yes?"

Shane's stomach growls.

"There's a place close by that has really good chicken parmesan."

Ilya perks up, "Oh, really?"

"I've always wanted to take you. And now—" Shane looks down at their hands entwined, in public for the whole world to see. "Now I can take my fiancé out to dinner."

"That is so romantic to say. You will be, what is it, wine, dine and sixty-nine me?"

Shane cackles so loud a woman walking by gives him a dirty look.

“Where the hell did you learn that phrase?”

Ilya shrugs, “One of the guys.”

A wave of adoration for Ilya washes over Shane.

“I love you.” Shane blurts out.

The corner of Ilya’s mouth twitches until he breaks out in an eye-crinkling smile.

“I love you too.” He kisses Shane’s knuckles. “Now, bring me to chicken parmesan. I want to share spaghetti like dogs in that movie.”

It’s been a difficult day. Locker clean out usually is, but when your entire team thinks you lost the first round of the playoffs on purpose to your fiancé... well, that’s a special kind of devastation.

So when Shane stumbles through his front door with his equipment bag. He kicks off his shoes and takes a moment to lean against the closed door with his eyes shut, a deep breath in followed by a long exhale.

“You look tired, sweetheart.”

Shane’s eyes fly open and Ilya is standing near the staircase.

“You’re here!” Shane exclaims, dropping his stuff in the entryway to tackle Ilya in a crushing hug. “Fuck, I’m so happy to see you.”

Ilya’s hand cradles the back of his head and he kisses Shane softly. When they separate Shane buries his face in Ilya’s neck and inhales.

“We thought you might want company.” Ilya says as he cards through the length of Shane’s hair.

“Mom and dad are here too? Is that why I didn’t see your car?”

“They are seeing movie and getting dinner.” Ilya smirks. “Wanted to give us… privacy.”

Shane nearly chokes. “So you’re telling me that my parents basically gave us their blessing to fuck tonight?”

He can tell he’s blushing because Ilya is chuckling and smirking. “Fuck? Did I say that? I thought we might do puzzle, or play card game.”

“Such an asshole.” Shane laughs and playfully shoves Ilya’s shoulder.

“Come here.”

Ilya’s hands palm Shane’s ass as he lifts him. Shane wraps his legs around Ilya’s waist and connects their lips in a heated kiss.

“Take me to bed.” He sighs into Ilya’s mouth. “Please.”

Every nerve ending in his body is on fire with how close to the edge he is. The bedsheets are pooled around Shane's waist as he rocks himself on Ilya's cock. His palm is splayed on Ilya's chest, head tipped back in pleasure. Soft groans escape him and Ilya grips Shane's hips for purchase. He looks at Shane as if he's a meal to be devoured.

"Look at you." Ilya pants, his eyes dark. "Fucking beautiful."

Shane bends forward so that his cock is trapped between their bodies, smearing precum. The glide as he rolls his hips makes him keen. He crushes their lips together in a heated kiss. It's sensual, rough, laced with desperation.

His mind is blissfully blank except for the blinding need to be fucked into oblivion. Ilya trails open mouthed kisses down Shane's neck, teeth occasionally scraping the sensitive skin.

"Fuck me. Make me feel it. Please." Shane begs.

He lets out a soft huff of air when Ilya flips them so Shane is on his back. Ilya bends Shane's knees up to his chest.

"Like this?" He thrusts into Shane, the sound of their bodies together obscene as Ilya fucks him fast and deep. The chain with Ilya's cross and his engagement ring drags across his hot skin.

"Oh my god, yes!" His whole body is moving with the force of Ilya thrusting into him. "So close."

"Fuck, Shane. You feel so good."

Ilya's rhythm becomes erratic and he connects their lips frantically. It's more of an exchange of breath than a kiss. It makes Shane dizzy. His hips suddenly still as he comes inside of

Shane. He shallowly thrusts into him, milking his orgasm, filling Shane up. The thought sends Shane tumbling over the edge as well.

“Oh my god, oh my god.” He cries, toes curling as he clenches around Ilya’s slowly softening cock.

“Perfect.” Ilya pants. “You’re so gorgeous.”

They bathe in the afterglow of their orgasms, bodies still entwined. Ilya slowly pulls out and climbs down Shane’s chest. He looks up at Shane with hooded eyes as he laps at the come painting his stomach. It’s one of the hottest things he’s ever witnessed. He pulls Ilya back up by the curls and kisses him long and slow.

“Love you.” He murmurs against his mouth.

“Ya tebya lyublyu.”

Chapter End Notes

ED support resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/eating-disorder-hotline/>

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Chapter 6: Peace

Chapter Notes

Here's your well deserved happy ending.

Thank you so much for following this story. Hopefully I'll see you all soon on a happier fic!

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

Soft morning light filters through their bedroom in the cottage. Shane slowly blinks awake and stretches, making a small content noise in the back of his throat. He can hear the clinking of plates coming from the kitchen.

He's sitting up, the sheet draped over his waist when Ilya walks into the room. He's carrying a small bamboo breakfast tray filled with an assortment of breakfast items.

"Morning!" Ilya says cheerfully. "I made us something."

He places the tray on the bed between them. There are stemless strawberries, grape clusters, mini croissants, nut butters and fruit spreads. Ilya is grinning ear to ear.

"Let me get the coffees!" He dashes off to the kitchen and comes back with two mugs. He offers one to Shane and kisses the top of his head before sitting down gently on the bed.

"This is really sweet and all, but you know you don't need to give me gifts to get in my pants. I'm literally marrying you in like, eight hours."

"So you are not backing out?" Ilya smirks.

Shane pops a grape into his mouth and chews. "Not a chance."

Ilya looks stunning in this light. His curls are a soft golden crown and his hazel eyes sparkle as he looks at Shane like he's an oasis in a desert. Ilya brings a strawberry to his mouth and holds it between his teeth. He leans into Shane, palm coming up to cup the back of his neck, and offers the plump berry. Shane wraps his lips around the strawberry and sighs when he bites into it and the sweet juice trickles into his mouth and down his throat.

Ilya's thumb brushes the corner of Shane's mouth. He watches, enthralled as Ilya looks at the finger tip and pops it into his mouth. His eyes slip shut as he sucks the juice off.

"So sweet." Ilya's deep voice rumbles.

Shane swallows thickly and leans in to press their lips together. He licks into Ilya's mouth as he tightens the grip on his curls. The bright sweetness lives on Ilya's tongue.

"Do you think it's bad luck to fuck before the wedding?" Shane murmurs, his forehead pressed to Ilya's, breathing him in.

"I *think*..." Ilya kisses Shane. "We make our own luck, moya lyubov."

He glances up at Ilya and sees the adoration plain as day in his eyes. They'd been through the worst of what life had to offer and made it out on the other side. Ilya had been by his side every step of the way, strong and sure, even when he had his own battles he was fighting. They grew stronger when everything else had fallen apart. Shane wanted nothing more than to spend the rest of his life learning and loving Ilya.

He swallows past the lump in his throat. "We *are* pretty lucky, aren't we?"

Ilya comes behind Shane and hooks his chin over his shoulder, taking in their reflection in the mirror.

“Would you like to do affirmations before we separate until the ceremony?” Ilya asks.

Shane pouts.

“*Or* we could just stay together all day.”

Ilya smirks. “Nice try, but no. I want to be surprised when you walk down the aisle.”

He lets out a long suffering sigh.

“I’m just wearing a tux. You’ve seen me in a million different versions of formal wear. It’s not going to be anything groundbreaking.”

He turns Shane around in his arms and rests his hands on Shane’s hips.

“I want to watch you walk to me.” His hazel eyes flicker with emotion. He brushes a thumb against Shane’s cheek, tracing the freckles there. “I want to feel longing one more time. Because after today, there is no longing, just us, together.”

Shane’s lip wobbles. He presses his forehead to Ilya’s.

“Together.”

Shane presses a tender kiss to Ilya’s lips. It stays chaste but the feeling it creates inside Shane brings tears to his eyes. As their mouths slot together, tongues barely brushing, he can taste the salt of Ilya crying as well.

“Anyway,” Ilya wipes his eyes. “I have bet to make with you. It doesn’t work if we are together all day.”

Shane lets out a laugh, because of course Ilya would think of a bet on their wedding day. He wipes his own tears away as well.

“Okay, let’s hear it.”

“Whoever cries first when you walk down the aisle loses. If I cry first, we will be Hollander-Rozanov. If you cry first, we will be Rozanov-Hollander.”

“That’s not fair! I cry at everything.”

“You are in luck, moya lyubov. I am feeling rather...” He searches for the word and waves his hand.

“Sentimental?” Shane supplies.

“Yes! I am feeling sentimental. Every time I look at you... I see Shane from Saskatchewan.” Ilya brings his palm to Shane’s cheek in a gentle caress. “You were so earnest and beautiful. I had no idea you would change my life... change *me*.”

He leans into Ilya’s touch and closes his eyes. The feeling of total safety and happiness wraps around him like the arms of a lover. This man, his *husband*, has known almost every version of Shane that has ever existed, and he will know every version from here on out. He’s going to be privileged enough to see Ilya through the rest of what life has to offer. The idea makes his throat tight.

“I don’t think I’ve ever told you this.” Shane looks into Ilya’s eyes. “But, when I’m missing you or if I’m going through a tough time... I think of you. In the pool. With the kids at the

All Star Game in Tampa. You were so happy and full of life, entertaining all of those little kids and I just- for the first time, I thought about what our future could look like if we could be together. If we could be happy. I wondered if we would have kids.”

Ilya’s throat bobs and his mouth quirks up in a way that shows he’s holding back emotion. “Is that so?”

Shane nods.

“And what was your conclusion?” He murmurs.

“That you would be an amazing dad.” Shane tucks Ilya’s wayward curls behind his ear. “You’d be silly and kind, protective and patient. And today, looking at you, I’m realizing how lucky I am to be marrying you; that we’re going to have a family together one day. And I just love you so fucking much.”

“Not more than I love you, sweetheart.”

He connects their lips in a soft brush of breath.

“We’re gonna be happy.”

Ilya’s smile is brighter than the sun itself.

“So fucking happy.”

Thank you for all of your support as I posted this. The reception has really been incredible.

This was a really difficult story to write and I hope I did the topic justice. I love Shane with all my heart and I'm so glad I could write him out of the dark.

For anyone struggling with an ED right now, I see you and I wish you the very best. We can do this.

ED support resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/eating-disorder-hotline/>

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