I would like to reach out my hand

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Summary

Ilya Rozanov is a paramedic at the Ottawa Centaurs' home rink, and is on duty when Shane Hollander, star center for the team, goes down on the ice. On the ambulance ride to the hospital, Shane finds solace in Ilya's presence, and a connection is formed.

Day thirty fucking one of flufftober: "stay?"

Notes

We did it, Joe. I fucking did all of flufftober.

Y'all, if you're reading this, from the bottom of my heart thank you so much. It's been such a journey to get here, and I'm so proud of myself for sticking it out and making this happen. I can't believe I did it, tbh, I'm really bad at follow through. I know I'm not a popular author, I know my writing is like, subpar at best most days, but I'm so thankful for all of you putting up with me, wading through these fics together and making this possible. If you've left even one kudos or comment, just know you've made my days a lil better. Thank you so much.

And I cannot finish up flufftober without saying the biggest thank you to Anna and Dntat. Seriously, you two, I couldn't have done this without you. I wish I could buy you both steak dinners for your help with these fics. Plz go read their works and leave them all the kind comments!!!

Ilya loves it when he gets to work NHL detail for the Ottawa Centaurs. As a paramedic, he'd had to go through some extra, special training for this gig, but growing up playing hockey in Russia had prepared him for it – he knew how to handle himself on the ice.

The Centaurs are playing the Boston Bears tonight, and Ilya is watching from the wings but still close to the ice, with another paramedic he's grown to know over the past few seasons – Svetlana Vetrova. They've gotten to know each other well this season, and Ilya likes that she can keep up with him, both in emergencies and when it comes to bantering and entertaining themselves during a boring game.

Not that any of the games are boring – it's just that their presence isn't usually necessary, a good thing, really.

Svetlana's arms cross over her chest as they watch the game, eyes following the players as they pass the puck back and forth. As Shane Hollander steals possession of the puck from a big Boston defenseman, Svetlana elbows Ilya in the ribs.

"Your boy is playing well tonight," she teases in Russian, her voice colored with genuine admiration. Svetlana knows hockey, almost as well as Ilya. It is a bit ironic that the two Russians always end up on shift together, but he's not complaining.

Ilya's lips turn down at the corners and he rolls his eyes as his own arms cross over his chest. "He is not my boy," Ilya responds back, enjoying a conversation in his native tongue.

"You like him, though. I hear the way you talk about him."

A small noise of annoyance escapes Ilya, and he rolls his eyes. "I admire his skill and I envy his salary. That's all," Ilya responds. They watch as two players battle it out in the corner, grappling over the puck. The Bears player wins and shoots off with his prize, a smile on his face.

So maybe he *does* like Shane Hollander a little bit more than he should. It's not like he has a chance with the hockey player. Despite the fact that Shane is openly out and proud about it, Ilya can't imagine a world where they would ever be on even playing ground. So he just admires Shane from afar, though it seems like he's not been subtle enough about it.

"I don't talk about him any kind of way," Ilya snaps, and Svetlana giggles gleefully as she bumps him with her hip.

"Ilya! You're blushing!"

Ilya swats at Svetlana and tugs his ballcap further down his forehead, and pointedly looks back to the game. Boston has the puck again, but as they watch Shane Hollander intercepts a pass and takes off down the ice.

It's like everyone sees what's about to happen except Shane. He's so focused on the puck that he doesn't see the Boston player coming at him from the left, and so he doesn't swerve out of the way, instead taking a hit directly to his torso which flings him into the boards. He goes

down like a ragdoll, and Ilya and Svetlana don't even think, they both just spring into action as all movement on the ice stills. They grab a stretcher and push open the small door that allows them onto the ice as two team medics start for Shane from the team's benches. Shane hasn't moved since he went down, and Ilya's stomach twists into an anxious knot as they approach.

The medic, a man Ilya knows is Mark, is removing Shane's helmet. Ilya and Svetlana wheel the stretcher close, but not close enough to intrude as Mark feels for Shane's pulse, then says something under his breath to the other medic on the ice with them. The two men continue their assessment as Ilya approaches and crouches down.

"Pulse is there, just weak," Mark informs him, and Ilya nods. "Breathing is shallow, but stable. Probably suffered at least a concussion, though it's hard to tell what else right now. We should get –" They stop as Shane's hand twitches, then he's gasping for air, sputtering as he tries to sit up. Ilya catches him on the shoulder and steadies him on the ice.

"Steady there, Hollander," Ilya says as he looks over at the medics. Everyone looks relieved. "We are going to get you on a stretcher and take you out of here, ok?" Ilya's Russian accent is thick from the stress of the situation, but his tone is authoritative. Shane nods, and Ilya notices the fear that's widened Shane's dark eyes, the way his breathing is erratic and unsteady as his chest heaves.

"W-what happened?" Shane asks. One of the medics is at Shane's shoulders, and Ilya goes to his feet. Together they hoist Shane up and onto the stretcher, which Ilya and Svetlana start wheeling off of the ice and towards the ambulances waiting in the bay. Ilya tugs at Shane's skates, dropping them onto the ice as they go.

"You took a pretty good hit," Ilya informs him in a steady tone. "Can you wiggle your toes?"

Shane looks down towards Ilya, but he's unable to fully sit up due to the way he's strapped to the stretcher. Shane's toes wiggle, thankfully, and Ilya breathes a small sigh of relief.

"My parents are here," Shane's voice is shaky, and his eyes start to close.

"We need you to stay awake, Shane," Svetlana instructs, and his voice is soft and kind as she touches his cheek with her fingertips.

"Yeah, ok," Shane's eyes open again, and look down to meet Ilya's. He winces as the stretcher moves, and Ilya is thankful as they round the corner and see the ambulances waiting for them.

A third paramedic is waiting in the driver's seat, Troy, and Ilya is sure he's been notified of the situation. The engine is already running as Svetlana and Ilya get Shane loaded into the back of the truck. Once the doors are closed they take off, sirens wailing as they head to the hospital.

"Shane? Hey, Shane. I need you to stay awake," Ilya instructs as Shane's eyes flutter shut again. The hockey player whines and lets his head lull to the side as his dark eyes open and

meet Ilya's. Shane's brow is furrowed in pain, and his lips are tugged down at the corners as he looks towards Svetlana now.

"I want to sleep," Shane whines. His eyes droop, and Ilya crouches down so he's on eye level.

"I know, I understand. But you have to stay awake. You probably have a concussion, and we'll be to the hospital soon –"

With those words, concern floods Shane's face.

"My parents…"

"I'm sure they're on their way," Ilya reassures him. Shane reaches out then, and takes Ilya's hand in his. His grip strength is weak, but he clings to Ilya's fingers as they pull into the emergency bay at the hospital.

"I need… can you just…" Shane's cheeks flush, then, and Ilya's head cocks slightly.

"What do you need?" He asks carefully, and Shane's fingers curl in Ilya's. It makes Ilya's heart skip a beat in his chest, and he doesn't ever want Shane to let go. He knows it's just because Shane is scared and in pain, but god, Ilya has dreamt of this moment.

"Stay?" Shane begs, and his voice is small, like a scared child who can't find his parents.

Ilya wants to comfort him. He wants to run his fingers through Shane's silky hair and promise him it's all going to be alright. He wants to hold Shane's hand as he's wheeled into that hospital, to kiss his cheeks and provide him the warmth of comfort.

But that's not Ilya's job. That;s so far out of the scope of Ilya's job, it's almost laughable. Still, the fact that Shane wants *him* to stay floods Ilya with warmth, like he's being set alight from the inside out.

Someone tugs open the ambulance doors, and then there's a rush of activity. Shane's fingers cling tighter to Ilya's, and it breaks Ilya's heart that he has to pry himself away. "Shane, it will be ok. The doctors will take good care of you," Ilya promises as he unwinds his fingers from Shane's.

Shane nods then, and his sad, dark eyes meet Ilya's one last time as he's wheeled into the hospital.

This was a stupid idea, and Ilya should have known better. He taps his foot impatiently as he waits for the receptionist to give him an answer, but she's currently on the phone and mhmming into the receiver with vehemence.

"Who did you say you are?" She asks Ilya again, for the second time today, as she eyes him warily.

“Ilya Rozanov. I was the paramedic who was at the scene of the accident,” Ilya informs the woman. She relays the information to whomever is on the other end of the line, then mhmms again, nodding emphatically.

“Uhhuh, sounds good. I’ll send him up.”

At those words Ilya brightens, his chest filling with hope. He feels light with it, and he can’t fight off the grin that spreads over his lips and tugs at his cheeks as the woman sighs and turns to him.

“Mr. and Mrs. Hollander said you can come up,” She says as she pushes her glasses up her nose. “Room 8124, it’s on the eighth floor at the end of the hall.”

“Thank you,” Ilya says as he shifts the bouquet of flowers from one arm to the other. The woman arches her eyebrow at him and waves him off, and Ilya doesn’t hesitate to hurry over to the elevators. He takes them up to the eighth floor and turns left, following the signs for Shane’s room number, then stops hesitantly in front of 8124.

Inhaling deeply, Ilya raises his hand to knock. Anxiety blooms in his chest, ugly and malignant. It whispers that he shouldn’t have come, that Shane only clung to him because he was desperate and in pain and had no one else. Ilya shouldn’t have taken it to heart. He shouldn’t have hoped. The flowers are silly and he looks like a fool.

Shit. Maybe he should just leave.

As he’s thinking about turning around and high-tailing it, the door pulls open and an older gentleman steps back, startled to find someone there.

“You must be Ilya,” The man says with a smile that lights up his eyes. Ilya nods as his hand falls back to his side, and he returns the man’s smile cautiously as he steps forward.

“Yes. Yes, I… I am so sorry if I am intruding,” Ilya says as he fidgets with the flowers. A woman appears beside the man, Ilya assumes Shane’s mother. He has her dark eyes and hair. She grasps the man’s arm and smiles softly at Ilya, a look of understanding in her gaze.

“You aren’t intruding at all. We were going to go get some lunch. You can keep Shane company!” She says brightly, like Ilya isn’t a complete stranger but an old friend. He feels relief flood through him at the warmth in their welcome, and finds it in him now to step into the room. Shane leans forward in his bed and when his eyes meet Ilya’s, his lips curl up into a grin, one that’s genuine and soft and maybe melts Ilya’s heart like chocolate out in the hot summer sun.

“Wow, you’re real. I thought maybe you were a fever dream my pain-ridden mind made up,” Shane jokes with a small chuckle.

Shane’s mother rolls her eyes. “He’s on the good stuff,” she says as she gestures to Shane’s IV, and Ilya laughs at that, a soft thing that parts his lips and steals his breath. Or maybe Shane’s stolen his breath, because how can he look so handsome laying there in a hospital gown? His hair is mussed and his pink lips are parted, and he looks… hopeful, maybe.

“These are for you,” Ilya holds out the flowers and Shane accepts them, careful of his IV as he tugs them into his arms and buries his nose in the beautiful blooms. The bouquet is made up of roses and daisies and eucalyptus and delphinium, and the colors are brilliant in their simplicity. Ilya picked them up at a local florist, and the woman had assured him this bunch would woo his lover.

It had made him snort – if only she knew.

“Thank you, they’re beautiful,” Shane says honestly, truthfully, his face an open book as he looks at Ilya with those wide, bright eyes. *Just like you*, Ilya thinks, and he doesn’t speak on it, because he doesn’t *know* Shane. Shane isn’t *his*, as much as he wishes he could be.

Ilya settles himself in the chair beside Shane’s bed and rests his elbows on his knees then his chin in his hands. “I’m sorry you took such a bad hit last night.”

Biting his lips, Shane shrugs, then winces. “Broken collarbone,” he says with a small sigh. “I’m out for the rest of the season.”

Shit. So it was more than a concussion. Ilya had been hoping maybe it would just be the concussion and Shane wouldn’t have to take too much time off.

“I’m sorry to hear that. Watching you play is my favorite part of being at the games.” Maybe it’s a bold admittance… but he doesn’t regret saying it. He doesn’t regret saying it because Shane’s face lights up, a bright thing that makes Ilya’s heart flutter in his chest.

“You watch me play? I figured you guys get bored being at all the games,” Shane asks. His hand twitches closer to Ilya, and all Ilya can think about is how those strong, calloused fingers had held his yesterday, so fearful and desperate for connection during a scary time. Ilya wants to hold his hand again, wants to feel their skin press together during better circumstances.

“I love watching the games. And watching you.” Ilya says it plainly, the words bold and truthful.

When he looks up, Shane’s cheeks are flushed. His eyes are downcast, looking at the flowers again, and the way his eyelashes fan against his freckled cheeks… it might be too much for Ilya to handle. He wants to reach out and feel the heat from that blush. He wants to count each one of Shane Hollander’s freckles, wants to trace constellations across Shane’s cheeks with the delicate pads of his fingers, to feel Shane’s supple skin give beneath his own. He wants to know what Shane *tastes* like, and Ilya wants so much in this moment that he *aches* with it.

“Do you wanna take me out on a date?” Shane’s eyes meet Ilya’s, and Ilya’s brows arch at the braveness of the statement. They just stare for a moment, and then Ilya chuckles as he straightens up and folds his hands in his lap.

“Shane, you’re…” He trails off, uncertain of how he wants to finish that. “You’re going through a lot right now. Maybe we should –”

“Do you, though?” Shane pokes at the tender spot, prods at the bruise and makes Ilya suck a breath in through his teeth. This almost feels mean, except Shane seems so sincere and so… earnest in asking it. Ilya can’t lie to him, not when Shane’s looking at him with doe eyes and a small pout jutting his lower lip out.

“I would like that, yes,” Ilya finally admits.

The smile that breaks over Shane’s features is clouds parting after a storm to reveal the radiant sunshine on the other side. His hand reaches out and takes Ilya’s, and their fingers intertwine as Shane leans back in his hospital bed.

“I really like Italian food,” Shane hints, and Ilya laughs, light and vibrant and *warm*, because he didn’t come here with any kind of motive, he’d only wanted to check in on Shane. Now there’s the promise of a date, and Ilya feels giddy with excitement.

“Then we’ll get you some Italian food,” Ilya promises as he squeezes Shane’s hand.

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