

say you'll see me again

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say you'll see me again

by [jarpadsalecki](#)

Summary

Shane Hollander was too far away in the stands for Ilya to see him earlier. Now here he is, up close. Shane Hollander, Canadian boy wonder, who Ilya is just about sick and tired of hearing about.

Shane, the boy he has been dreaming about since he was eight years old.

Notes

this is my first fic in the HR fandom! thanks so much to [theoneiam2277](#) for beta-ing :)

this is canon divergent in the sense that it's supposed to feel like i added a flavor packet to canon. any direct pulls from the book are intentional to facilitate that!

title is from, of course, wildest dreams by tayla swift

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

The first time Shane has the dream he's eight years old.

He's standing in his hometown rink, but there's no one else around. No other kids practicing, no coach. He looks around the stands frantically but doesn't see his parents. He starts to panic, but as he slides forward on his skates, it feels like he's moving through water, and he realizes he's dreaming.

He suddenly feels the weight of a stick in his hands and looks down, unsure if he's been holding it the whole time or not. *That's cool*, he thinks, as a net materializes at the other end of the rink. *Maybe this counts as extra practice!*

He smiles to himself, or at least it feels like he does. His mom will laugh when he tells her in the morning. He loves hockey so much he literally practices in his sleep.

He skates down the ice and stops in front of the net. As soon as the thought pops into his head, a puck appears, and he grins wide. He swings his stick and sends the puck flying towards the net, clean and straight, but as soon as it enters the crease it hits the end of another stick and skitters away.

A save? With no goalie?

Shane snaps his head up and suddenly there's someone standing in the net where there wasn't a second ago. Distantly, he thinks he should be startled, but he isn't. He's had dreams with people in them before and they're usually just a vague person-shaped blob with generic hair and no discernible facial features. This person is crystal clear. And definitely not a blob.

It's a boy about his age, a little taller, with golden curls peeking out of a toque. In general he's got heavier winter clothes on, but like Shane, isn't wearing any hockey gear. He's just holding a stick and frowning at Shane like he did something wrong.

Shane frowns back, immediately defensive. "*You* blocked *my* shot!"

The boy squints at Shane for a moment, then shakes his head. A new puck appears in front of him. The boy passes it over to Shane and then takes a defensive stance in front of the net.

At Shane's confused expression, he jerks his head at the puck. "*Poydem*," he says.

It's Shane's turn to shake his head. "What?" Usually he doesn't dream in other languages. But, he supposes he's had dreams before where people talk gibberish. It doesn't *sound* like gibberish, though, so he won't be rude and point it out.

He glances down at the puck and then back at the boy, who's waiting expectantly. Oh. He thinks he gets it now. "You wanna... play?" Shane asks sheepishly. He's always been awkward on the playground or at recess, always feeling weird and embarrassed when he asks other kids to play.

The boy shrugs dismissively and taps his stick on the ice. Okay, maybe Shane is talking gibberish too. But he's pretty sure the boy wants him to try and make another shot, so he

does, reeling his stick back and then slapping it against the puck.

The boy saves again, and when he passes the puck back to Shane he can see the corners of the boy's mouth twitch up.

Shane furrows his brow in determination. If he can't get a puck past a goalie in his *dreams*, he has serious problems. He decides to skate around with the puck for a second, getting used to the feeling of doing this when he's technically out of his body. He feels...fuzzy, and everything in his peripheral vision is out of focus, like it can't exist quite as well when he's not looking directly at it.

But he has enough control to move the puck around, which is all that matters, so when he maneuvers back in front of the net he takes another shot, lightning fast, and the puck makes it into the upper left corner of the net.

"Yes! Take that!" Shane whoops and pumps his fist, spinning in a circle. Then he freezes.

This is something his dad had talked to him about: not being a sore winner. Shane had understood, mostly. It isn't *his* fault the other kids weren't as fast as him, or better at games than him. Dad says it isn't *their* fault either, but Shane disagrees. They could be just as good as him if they just tried hard like he did... but, even so, he's been working on trying not to rub it in their faces as much.

So, he slowly spins back around to face the net, hoping the boy isn't upset at his jeering.

But, to his surprise, the boy has a wide, crooked grin on his face. His eyes are lit up as he retrieves the puck from the net. Shane immediately feels himself grinning back, preparing to accept the puck and try again.

Still smiling, the boy comes at the puck from the left, and Shane adjusts accordingly, but at the last second the boy switches directions and the puck goes sailing past Shane on the right as he stupidly swings left.

Shane tries to look annoyed, but he can still feel the stretch of his own grin. "Hey!" he shouts, and the boy starts to go after the puck, leaving the net and giggling as he skates past Shane.

"Game on," Shane mutters under his breath, and chases after him, filled with the same mix of relief and joy and anticipation as when a kid on the playground replies, *sure, you can play with us!*

Shane wakes up with a smile on his face. The dream went on for what felt like hours, him and the boy passing the puck to each other all up and down the ice, trying to get pucks past the other into the net. At one point they had forgotten about the puck altogether and had just practiced increasingly complicated skating maneuvers until they both fell over, laughing.

As the dream melts away into wakefulness, he feels a twinge of sadness. He wishes the boy was his friend in real life so they could play hockey together all the time. It had all felt so *real*, even though he had known it was a dream from the start. But, that's all it was, a dream.

He tells his mom about playing hockey in his sleep, and she laughs and ruffles his hair just like he thought she would. For some reason, he doesn't tell her about the boy. Maybe if he doesn't talk about it out loud, he won't jinx it, and the boy will be in his dream tonight.

The boy isn't in his dream again that night, but he does appear again months later. He looks like he's grown as much as Shane has, now closer to nine than eight. There's no awkward figuring out what they're doing this time. They just start playing hockey, and Shane rides high.

The boy sprinkles in some shouted words when he scores, and mutters other ones as he skates by Shane, sporting his crooked grin. Shane still doesn't know what they mean, and he guesses the boy doesn't know what he's saying either, but the playful lilt to them makes Shane smile all the same.

When Shane wakes up that morning, he realizes he still doesn't know the boy's name. Since he's a figment of Shane's dreams, he probably doesn't have one. Shane could make one up for him. But he's curious what his subconscious will come up with if he asks directly.

(Subconscious is a new word he's learned, *and* he can spell it.)

The next time they meet, he's almost ten, and they shoot pucks back and forth for a while before Shane remembers. He catches the boy's eye, and points to himself. "Shane," he says, hoping the boy understands what he means, since *what's your name* likely won't go anywhere.

The boy nods, a good sign. Shane points at him and raises his eyebrows.

It takes a second, but the look of confusion clears from the boy's face and he puts a hand over his heart. "Ilya," he says, as clearly as Shane's ever heard him.

Ilya. Shane feels a little thrill up his spine. That's not a name he's ever heard before, although... he must have, surely? You don't just make up names in your dreams, right?

"Your name is Ilya," Shane says, partly in confirmation, partly to feel the name in his mouth, trying to see if it's familiar even through the fog of sleep.

The boy—Ilya—smiles and nods. "*Tebya zovut* Shane," he replies. His hand is still over his heart.

"Tee-bya za-voot," Shane is saying as he wakes up. He's certain that's a real language Ilya spoke, not just dream gibberish.

He tries to hold on to it in his mind as he wakes more fully, the exact way Ilya pronounced it. But by the time he boots up the family computer and waits for the dial-up to connect, it's hazy and all he can think to type into the search bar is "tee ba voot??" which gets him nowhere.

Shane is twelve when the first bad dream with Ilya happens.

He's at the rink, but he's instantly filled with the sense that something is wrong. The lights are dimmer, the walls feel closer. He looks around and spots a motionless form on the ground. *Ilya*, he thinks.

He runs over, distantly noting that he's not wearing skates, but he can't get closer to Ilya. He just keeps stretching farther and farther away, and no matter how hard Shane pumps his legs, how hard he pushes, nothing works. He feels helpless, then scared, then *really* scared. The fear rises up in him so quickly and intensely that it doesn't feel like his own. Like he's wearing it as a coat.

With a snap, the rink is gone, and Shane is standing in front of a door. He forgets where he is and who he is, he just knows there's a door, and it's ajar. He pushes the door open, because what else can he do?

The room is dark and filled with...well, it seems like it would be furniture, or some combination of decorations and knick-knacks, but every time Shane tries to focus his eyes on something it flickers and morphs and he can't make out what anything is.

Except he can clearly make out a bed in the middle of the room, lit up as if under a spotlight. That's when he feels something brush up beside him—with a start, he recoils and realizes it's Ilya standing beside him.

"Ilya," Shane exhales in relief, but Ilya doesn't seem to hear him. With eyes both wide and unseeing (and colorless, Shane notices with dread; he hopelessly tries and fails to remember what color they usually are), he slowly drifts toward the bed.

Shane looks again and sees there's now a person in the bed, or so he thinks. All he can really make out is a hand dangling off the side, where the light is brightest. He doesn't like the look of that hand. It's too...still. *Wrong*.

Something is wrong, cuts through all of Shane's other thoughts like a megaphone. Ilya takes another step forward and Shane clenches his fists against the fear that rises up in him at the sight. "Ilya," he manages to say. "Don't go over there."

He knows Ilya doesn't understand English, but Ilya straight up just doesn't hear him, and keeps moving. The distance between him and the bed seems impossibly far, but he is crossing it. *Shane* wasn't able to cross the impossible distance between them at the rink but Ilya is doing it here with barely any effort.

"Ilya," he says again, swallowing down his frustration. "Stop."

Again Ilya does not hear him. He gets even closer to the bed and Shane feels a spike of panic so sharp he shoots his arm out to grab at something, anything, to get Ilya to stop. His fingers find the fabric of Ilya's sleeve and he *tugs hard*.

Somehow Ilya still doesn't stop, just drags Shane with him, who grabs fully onto his arm and digs his heels into the nonexistent floor. "Please," he says, desperation creeping into his

voice. This is *his dream*, why isn't Ilya listening?! "*Please* don't go over there, Ilya. Don't look."

He doesn't know who's in the bed, or attached to the hand, or what Ilya will find. He just knows, deep in his bones, that it's terrible. It's awful, and he doesn't want Ilya to see. He wants to go back to the rink and play hockey and see his crooked smile again.

Shane's pulling has gotten Ilya to stop moving, but the bed still creeps closer. Like Shane can't stop it. Like it's inevitable.

But he still tries. "Ilya!" he's yelling now, slapping Ilya's shoulder to at least try to get him to *look* at Shane, to make him understand his words. "Ilya, please *don't* look. Okay? Just don't look."

The bed is even closer now. Shane can make out the fingernails on the hand.

"Please!" he begs, and tears are pricking at the corners of his eyes now. He's so scared. For himself, and for Ilya, which feels like the same thing. "Don't look, Ilya, *please*...don't look...*don't look*..."

Ilya stares straight ahead and slowly reaches for the hand.

"Don't loo—"

Shane wakes up sobbing, tears streaming down his face. He shoots straight up in bed and gasps for air, hugging his knees. He's never been more scared by a dream in his life.

He sits there, trembling as he tries to quiet his sobs. He's too old to be having his mom come in to comfort him after a nightmare.

The fear clings to him like a film, and he's almost too scared to turn on his bedside lamp but he does anyway, reaching out with a shaking hand. The room floods with light and he feels his breathing even out a little. There's nothing there. He doesn't know what he was expecting.

After a few more minutes he's calmed down enough to wipe his face with his sleeve, wrinkling his nose at the mess of tears and snot he leaves there. He remembers the glass of water he left on his nightstand and drinks almost all of it down in one go.

He flips his pillow and manages to settle back down, turning over so he's facing the lamp.

Every time he closes his eyes he sees that hand. The look on Ilya's face. He doesn't fall back asleep for a long time.

Shane doesn't dream about Ilya for a while after that.

He doesn't mind at first because he was...really shaken up by that dream, as embarrassed as he is by that. He's not sure that it won't just be the same dream the next time Ilya shows up,

so he's elated when he goes to sleep one night and ends up in the rink like normal. No wrongness.

He skates right over to Ilya, who looks even older than last time—more like a man while Shane still feels like a boy. To Shane's annoyance, he's considerably taller now, and his curls are long enough that they flop onto his forehead. It's a... good look on him, Shane decides respectfully. He figures that's okay to think since Ilya is a figment of his mind.

He has hazel eyes, Shane notes with a wave of relief.

He's wearing a crucifix around his neck now, though. Huh. That's definitely new. Shane's family isn't very religious so it's weird that his brain would come up with that. Whatever.

They shoot the puck back and forth for a while before Ilya snickers at something, and before Shane can wonder, he says, "Weak backhand."

Shane is so stunned he misses Ilya's pass back to him. "You speak English?" he asks before grimacing at how rude that sounds.

"I am learning," Ilya replies.

"Why?" flies out of Shane's mouth before he adds, "Sorry—I mean, why now? All this time..." he trails off, feeling stupid. He's asking as if Ilya is a real person with a real life who makes real choices.

Ilya shrugs. "Need to know. I will play for NHL, yes?"

At that, Shane narrows his eyes. "*I'm* going to play for the NHL."

"Really? But you are short," Ilya remarks, then gestures with his stick. "And is like I said. Weak backhand."

Shane sputters, feeling his face inexplicably go red. He wants to respond with a hundred things—he is *average height*, for one—but eventually just settles on, "Yes! Really!"

Ilya laughs, and the sound hits Shane like a punch. "Okay. We can both be there. No problem."

No problem, he says. Like it's not Shane's sole reason for doing, well, *anything*.

Rather than arguing with his own dream, though, he decides to satisfy his curiosity instead. "How old are you?" he asks.

Ilya looks surprised by the question, then thinks for a moment. "Fourteen," he replies.

"...Me too."

Ilya nods. "So will be in same draft year."

Shane rolls his eyes and begins to skate away with the puck that had materialized beside him. "Right."

Shane dreams of Ilya a few times over the next several months, and he finds himself getting slammed into the boards more frequently as the nights wear on. Ilya has gotten better at hockey at the same rate as Shane, naturally, so they've long moved past playing games and doing tricks on the ice. They're running actual drills now, and playing just as hard as they would at a real life practice. It leaves Shane not feeling very well rested in the mornings after, but he doesn't care.

There will be no more kidding around for Shane. He will be at World Juniors in a few years and he *will* be bringing home a gold medal.

So when Ilya does slam him into the boards, he takes it in stride, barely letting an *oof* escape before he's battling for the puck with all he's got. He's wondered, vaguely, if Ilya is some manifestation of his hockey ambitions. Someone to push him to be better, the best, even when he thinks he's gotten there already.

It's definitely the most fun he's ever had playing hockey, which is...a little sad, when he thinks about it, considering he's more or less just playing against himself, but whatever. He doesn't play hockey to make friends.

Which is all well and good, because Ilya is an *asshole*. When he's not not stealing the puck from Shane he's chirping at him, and when he's not chirping at him he's blocking his shots. That would be motivation enough to beat his ass if Shane wasn't already so committed to it.

"Careful," Ilya taunts tonight, his breath tickling Shane's shoulder. They really should be doing this with more gear on but it doesn't matter since they can't actually get injured. "Your face will get stuck like that."

"Fuck off," Shane grumbles back, hardening his glare out of spite. It's maybe the first time he's actually cursed at him, but Ilya just laughs, which pisses Shane off even more.

Then, he feels Ilya's hip pressing against his own and becomes acutely aware of all the places they're touching. There's barely an inch of space between them from their shoulders all the way down to practically their ankles. Where Shane is lithe and athletic, Ilya is just...*big*, almost completely engulfing Shane from behind. Brutish and obnoxious, like the rest of him, Shane tells himself, even as his heartbeat quickens.

Between that, and Ilya's breath continuing to skitter across Shane's neck as he laughs, Shane's brain short circuits and in the next second Ilya escapes with the puck.

Shane blinks awake moments later, panting. He looks down at himself and, with a rush of heat, sees that he's got his first case of morning wood. He thinks this is maybe supposed to be some monumental life moment, but all he feels is half-awake and *mortified*.

He flops his head back onto his pillow with a groan, face burning, and wills himself to fall back asleep. By the time he wakes up again he's blissfully forgotten all about it.

As much as he was hoping he wouldn't, Shane does have the dream about Ilya and the room with the bed again.

He has it at least once a year, actually, ever since that first time when he was twelve.

It's the same every time.

He tries to get to Ilya's body at the rink. He opens the door. He sees the bed, and the hand. He *begs* Ilya not to look.

He wakes up crying.

And every time he wakes up, he vows that next time he'll do something different. Next time he'll say something different, or try something different to get Ilya to stop. He won't push the door open, he'll shut it tight. Maybe if he can just get to Ilya's body in time there won't be a door at all.

But it's always the same.

It seems nonsensical to ask Ilya about it, so he doesn't.

The first time Shane reads the name *Ilya Rozanov*, his heart stops.

A player Shane's age making waves in Russian hockey. Named Ilya.

He stares at the wall for several long moments, then dissolves into laughter. *That's ridiculous, Shane. There's no way the Ilya from your dreams is a real person. This is just a big, hilarious coincidence.*

For one, hysterical moment, he thanks his eight-year-old-self for having the foresight to *not* tell his mom about Ilya after that first dream, or any others. He imagines, if he had, what the look on her face would've been upon learning about Ilya Rozanov and bursts into laughter again, alone in his room.

(Privately, he itches to ask his Ilya about it the next time he dreams of him. He doesn't, because he's—*privately*—afraid of what the answer will be.)

A few weeks after Shane turns sixteen, he falls asleep, and when he shows up at the rink something feels... weird. Not *wrong*, like it does when he has the dream about the bed, but different from his regular Ilya dreams.

He finds the source of the *weird* after about five seconds of looking for Ilya. He's sitting in the penalty box, leaning up against the side with his feet propped up on the bench, crossed at the ankles. He smiles languidly at Shane when he skates over.

"*Shaaaaane*," he bellows. Shane is surprised every time he hears his name come out of Ilya's mouth, in his accent.

"Ilya," Shane says in response, crossing his arms and looking down at...whatever this is. "What's up with—oh, what is *that*?" he asks, fanning his hand in front of his face as a strong wave of something sharp and sour hits his nose. He pauses for a moment, then guesses, "Is that *alcohol*?"

And he doesn't mean to sound so...*scandalized*, but he's not used to smelling things so strongly in his dreams, and beyond beer he's not much of a drinker, so he's not sure how he'd have *this* particular smell locked in. And it was a *strong* smell.

"Oh good, you've heard of it," Ilya says dryly.

Shane rolls his eyes but can't fight the smile on his lips. He did walk into that one. "You wanna tell me what's going on?" he asks.

Ilya's grin is comically wide. "I am sixteen today. Is my party."

"Oh! Uh," Shane flounders. "Happy...Birthday?"

I guess that's the polite thing to say to the figment of your imagination you have recurring dreams about.

Ilya nods. "*Spasibo*. Thank you."

"I turned sixteen last month," Shane offers, for lack of anything better to say.

"Wow! Happy Birthday!" Ilya crows, beaming. "Did you have party too?"

Not really. Unless you count a nice dinner with his parents as a party. But that sounds lame, and it's *his* dream, so he just says, "Yeah. It was awesome."

Ilya nods, pleased. "You deserve nice birthday party," he says, words slurring. Shane has no idea what to say to *that*, but thankfully Ilya continues. "My party is full of people I don't like. You have lots of people you like, who will go to your party."

Shane isn't sure how Ilya figures that, but he's curious about the other thing he said. "You didn't like anyone at your birthday party? It seems like you're having," he pauses, gesturing at Ilya's general condition, "a great time."

"Is better now you are here," Ilya says, which Shane *definitely* doesn't know what to say to. "Was fine," Ilya sighs. "Not bad. Everyone happy to..." he pauses, searching for the right words. "To *celebrate* me. Just was not..." he trails off, shrugging.

Shane thinks he's picking up what Ilya's putting down. "Not...great?"

Ilya nods. “*Da*. Not great.”

“Well,” Shane says, nudging Ilya’s legs until he scooches over enough for Shane to sit down. “I’m sorry your party wasn’t great. But I’m more sorry that now you’re too drunk to play hockey.”

It takes a second, but then Ilya is howling with laughter, bending forward a little and clutching his stomach. Shane laughs too, and they don’t stop until they’re wiping tears from their eyes.

“You have had vodka?” Ilya asks, conversationally, once they’ve calmed down.

Shane wrinkles his nose. “Yeah, I’m not a big fan.”

Ilya lifts a hand up, holds it in the air between them for a moment, then lets it drop back down. Before Shane can ask about that, Ilya says, “Hm. You are a bit boring, I think.”

“Hey!” Shane squawks, scrunching his face up. Ilya laughs at him again. “I’m not boring just because I don’t *love* hard liquor! I do drink beer, you know.”

“Ohhh,” Ilya says with faux reverence. “You drink *beer*? Wow. I hope I can keep up.”

“Shut up,” Shane shoots back, but goddammit, he’s smiling again. “I’m not even legal yet.”

Ilya barks out a laugh. “Neither am I!”

Shane rolls his eyes. “Okay, yeah, but I’m not exactly a *party animal* like you,” he says, poking Ilya’s knee for emphasis.

“I thought you said you had big awesome birthday party,” Ilya says with a smirk.

Oh, shit. Shane had kind of said that. “Well...” he says, feeling a blush creep up his neck. “It was more of a...*dinner* than a party, per se.” He pauses, glances at Ilya, then looks away. “With my parents.”

He hears a low chuckle rumble through Ilya, and a finger pokes him in the thigh. When Shane looks back up at Ilya, his smile is impossibly warm. It rattles Shane. “Is okay. Sounds nice. Boring, but nice.”

“It *was* nice,” Shane insists, rolling his eyes again. “And not boring.”

“Okay,” Ilya accepts with a shrug.

Shane tries to say, “I’m serious!” But it comes out as a cackle instead, so he reaches out and pinches Ilya in the knee.

“Ow!” Ilya yelps, recoiling in mock pain. He attempts to look affronted but it ends up more like a deranged grin. “I said okay!”

“Hmm,” Shane hums, narrowing his eyes and crossing his arms. He pretends to survey the rink for a moment until he spots movement in his peripheral. He snaps his gaze back and shoots a hand out to clasp around Ilya’s wrist, inches away from pinching his own knee. “Gotcha,” he says, smirking at Ilya in victory.

Ilya stares at him for a moment, and Shane finds himself tracking the movement of Ilya’s throat as he swallows. He realizes he’s still holding Ilya’s wrist and drops it.

Shane glances away, feeling the silence becoming awkward, and is fighting the urge to flee when he hears Ilya ask, “What does this mean? *Per se?*”

Shane lets out a heavy exhale of relief that dissolves into a laugh at the end. When he looks back up, Ilya gives him another one of his crooked smiles and leans back against the glass of the penalty box, arms crossed.

Shane shakes his head at Ilya, in exasperation and maybe something else. Then he explains.

“You’re supposed to smoke over there.”

When Ilya looks up to see who’s speaking, he almost falls over right into the snow.

Shane, he thinks.

Shane Hollander was too far away in the stands for Ilya to see him earlier. Now here he is, up close. Shane Hollander, Canadian boy wonder, who Ilya is just about sick and tired of hearing about.

Shane, the boy he has been dreaming about since he was eight years old.

Never once did Ilya consider they would be the same person. But there’s no mistaking it. His features are sharper in real life, of course. No softness at the edges. He even has *freckles*, Christ above. Even at this distance Ilya can make out individual ones.

This is, without a doubt, his Shane. Standing right in front of him, live and in person.

He desperately wants to reach out and grab him by the arm, just to prove it, to reconcile his racing heart with his equally racing mind. To feel him. He wants to ask, *are you real?*

But that would be an insane thing to do and say to a person he’s never met. He tries to school what must be the completely gobsmacked expression on his face into cool indifference.

Does Shane know him too? Other than a brief flash of something across his face, Shane’s expression is open and expectant. Waiting for Ilya to respond, he realizes.

“What?” is the best he can come up with.

“The smoking area is over there,” Shane says, pointing to a snowbank. Ilya barely registers the movement, too shaken by the sound of Shane’s voice, the same one that’s echoed through

his mind for years, now crisper and clearer and louder and *real*. He does the only thing he can think to do and lights his cigarette.

“I’m surprised you smoke.”

Ilya has the sudden, manic urge to laugh. And laugh and laugh. Instead he just says, “Okay,” and exhales a stream of smoke.

“I wanted to meet you,” Shane says, extending a hand out to him. “Shane Hollander.”

I have known you since we were eight years old, Ilya thinks immediately. He has to fight the urge to laugh again, lips twitching. This is fucking batshit. *He* is fucking batshit.

He reaches out and shakes Shane’s hand. He tells himself he imagines the way his skin lights up at the contact, but watches Shane’s face for a reaction, any reaction, all the same. For all he can tell he’s the only one having a meltdown about this. About Shane being real and in front of him, *touching* him.

Shane Hollander. Fuck.

“I met Ilya,” Shane says numbly after he shuts the car door.

“Ilya Rozanov?” His mom asks.

Shane almost says, *who*? Before he remembers that they’re the same person. Ilya Rozanov is *his* Ilya. It wasn’t a coincidence at fucking all.

He manages to make eye contact with his mother in the rearview mirror and nods.

“What’s he like?” she continues.

Shane swallows hard against the lump in his throat. “Kind of a dick,” he says.

Just like in his dreams.

Yuna hums but doesn’t press further. Which is for the best, because Shane feels like he’s going to throw up the whole way back to their hotel.

That night, Shane lies awake, staring at the ceiling of his hotel room and replaying his interaction with Rozanov over and over. It feels weird now, calling him Ilya in his head.

He analyzes every moment, trying to figure out if Rozanov recognized him too. He looked a bit surprised when he first saw Shane, but also a little confused, like he was still translating the words Shane had said. It was a face Shane had seen on his Ilya dozens of times.

So, maybe Rozanov was mentally translating, and maybe he was also just surprised that Shane was coming up to talk to him at all. Which, sure, that *was* a little out of the ordinary, but after hearing so much about this Ilya Rozanov, and watching him practice on the ice from a distance, he just had to.

Partly to size up his competition, and partly because there had been a kernel of dread in his chest that had grown bigger and bigger from the minute he spotted Rozanov on the ice. From where he sat with his parents in the stands, he couldn't make out hard details, but something about the way he moved around the ice, his mannerisms, were unmistakably familiar.

There's no way, he had thought to himself. But he had to be sure.

Lo and fucking behold, there he was, smoking a cigarette of all things. His Ilya. Crucifix and all.

He almost asked him right then. *Have you also been dreaming about me since we were kids?* Yeah, that would've gone over well. Shane might've ended up with a black eye and a formal complaint made against him. Actually, he's almost certain he would have. Rozanov was, yeah, kind of a dick during their conversation, and he was also cold and distant in a way that was unlike his Ilya.

Not your Ilya, he reminds himself angrily, turning over in bed. *His name is Ilya Rozanov and you are going to destroy him on the ice tomorrow.*

But, wasn't the Ilya in his dreams technically still *his* Ilya? Sure, he's a replica of the real Rozanov, but he's still just a figment of Shane's mind. The literal Ilya Rozanov isn't in his dreams. That's impossible, it's a *dream*. The Ilya in his dreams is a copy/pasted version of Shane's own making. All in his head.

Sometimes he'll have (regular, non-Ilya) dreams where, while he's in it, it feels like a continuation of *another* dream he's had in the past. He'll have this sensation of *oh yeah, I remember this* while in the dream, but then realizes upon waking up that nope, it was all a singular unique experience that his brain had tricked him into thinking was partly a memory.

He wonders if the Ilya/Rozanov thing was like that. Maybe, after reading about Ilya Rozanov for the first time, his subconscious tricked him into thinking *all* his dreams about the hockey rink up until then starred a boy named Ilya. Maybe he actually only conjured up the name Ilya after the fact, and his brain just *thinks* he's been dreaming about the same boy the whole time.

That doesn't explain how Shane would've dreamed about Ilya's face, body, accent, and mannerisms with 100% accuracy prior to ever seeing him in real life. But it's fine. He'll say *the brain is a weird, fucked up place* and move on.

Mainly, he can just...continue having dreams about Ilya while taking comfort in the fact that it wasn't *actually* Rozanov. Sure, it's weird as hell, but it's not like he can control it. Maybe he'll somehow figure out Rozanov's weaknesses and it'll give him the upper hand on the ice.

Shane snuggles further under the covers, smiling sleepily. That's a nice thought.

Thankfully, Shane doesn't dream about Ilya again until after the tournament is over. He was replaying his last exchange with Rozanov over and over again as he fell asleep, which is probably why he stomps right over to Ilya (not an easy feat in skates) and growls, "What the hell is your problem?!"

Ilya blinks down at him in surprise, but still has the audacity to smirk. "What do you mean?"

"*See you at the draft*," Shane gripes in a poor imitation of Rozanov's accent, which Ilya snickers at. Shane puts his hands on his hips. "Why can't you just say *thank you* like a normal person?!"

"Thank you," Ilya purrs. Shane feels a tingle up his spine. "Is that better?"

"No," Shane says, petulant. He feels a sudden weight around his neck and looks down to see his silver medal glinting against his chest. He looks up and sees the gold medal around Ilya's. "Ugh!" he groans, and whips his stick at the nearest puck so it slams loud against the glass.

"You are angry," Ilya states. Not a question.

"Of course I am," Shane snaps. "Your team played dirty."

"Is, um...what is it?" Ilya trails off, thinking. "Oh. Means to an end," he says with a shrug like *no big deal*.

"I'll means to an end *you*," Shane grumbles under his breath. Ilya cocks his head at him, his face one big question mark. "Nevermind," Shane says, shaking his head, then points at Ilya's gold medal. "At the very least, I'm the one who should be wearing that here. It's *my* dream."

Ilya raises his eyebrows. "*Your* dream?"

"Uh, yeah?"

"How do you know is not *my* dream?"

Shane pauses at that, then scoffs. "Because it just isn't. I went to sleep and now I'm here. That's how dreams work."

"I know how dreams work, Hollander," Ilya says, rolling his eyes. "But what if I told you *I* went to sleep and now I'm here?"

He sort of had a point. But Shane shook his head. "You *could* say that, but you're a figment of my imagination. You could say anything. Because this is a dream." After a moment, he adds, "Besides, if this was *your* dream, I'd probably be wearing a clown nose along with the medal."

Ilya laughs. "Would be funny. Maybe next time."

“Ha,” Shane says dryly, then skates over to the net. Blocking some of Ilya’s shots will make him feel better.

He realizes something a few minutes later as Ilya goes to retrieve a puck that went wide. “Wait,” Shane says. “You called me Hollander.”

Ilya arches an eyebrow. “Is that not your last name?”

“Yeah, but...” Shane trails off. *You usually call me Shane. Rozanov is the one who calls me Hollander.*

“Is apparently *your dream*, so,” Ilya continues with a shrug.

Shane shakes his head and takes a defensive stance. “Whatever. Let’s just play hockey already.”

“I am not the one who interrupted with weird, obvious statement.”

“Shut up!”

The first time Shane dreams of Ilya somewhere other than the rink (with the exception of the bed dream, which he tries not to think about) is the night of the NHL draft.

He’s back in the hotel gym, sitting on the floor across from Ilya. They’re dressed the same as earlier, flushed and sweating from their workout. Sneakers nearly brushing each other’s ankles.

The dream picks up right where Ilya—or rather, Rozanov—had been taking a drink from his water bottle, while Shane stared at his throat, then his mouth.

Just like Rozanov had earlier, Ilya extends the bottle towards him when he’s done.

Shane feels like he’s on autopilot. “Oh. I’m all right. Thanks.”

Then Ilya shakes the bottle at him, and their fingers touch, and Shane squirts water into his mouth. Notices Ilya watching.

Shane goes to pass the water bottle back but stops himself, finding that he wants it to go differently this time. Instead, he lifts the bottle again and wraps his lips around it rather than hovering it over his open mouth. He dares to keep eye contact with Ilya as he takes a long swig, and feels a little thrill at the way Ilya’s expression turns hungry.

This is a dream, Shane reminds himself, giddy. *Nothing I do here matters. It’s not real.*

Shane licks his lips and passes the water bottle back to Ilya. This time it *definitely* feels like it’s on purpose when Ilya brushes his fingers against Shane’s wrist. Very on purpose.

This was the part earlier where Shane had run away, back up to his hotel room.

He wants Ilya to touch him again. He wants to touch him back. He wants to kiss him. And if only in dreams, he *can*.

“Fuck,” Shane murmurs, and Ilya must take that as his cue because in another second they’re scrambling onto their knees to meet each other halfway, mouths crashing together.

Shane’s hands are everywhere, roaming over Ilya’s big shoulders and biceps, up the back of his neck and into his curls. He feels like he’s going crazy, like he’s in overdrive, but Ilya’s doing the same thing, running his hands from behind Shane’s back up under his sweat-soaked shirt, brushing fingers over one of his nipples.

Shane lets out a moan, to his horror—but then he remembers this is a dream and moans again, louder, because he *can*.

The sound spurs Ilya on and he hauls Shane in even closer by the waist, pressing them together from thigh to chest. Ilya slides his tongue across his lips and Shane feels the hard length of him against his hip at the same time. He gasps, and Ilya takes the opportunity to tip Shane’s head back and come down on his open mouth, pressing their tongues together.

Shane whimpers at that and tugs hard at Ilya’s curls. The guttural sound it draws out of Ilya drives Shane so wild that he feels brave enough to push at Ilya’s shoulders until he’s back on the floor and Shane is clambering into his lap, thighs bracketing Ilya’s hips.

Immediately Ilya’s hands find his ass. Shane should be embarrassed by the squeak that comes out of him at that, but he isn’t. He doesn’t care about anything at all other than the feeling of Ilya squeezing and kneading him with both hands, greedily taking his fill.

You can have it, Shane thinks feverishly. He feels insane. He grabs at Ilya’s face and kisses him harder, hips twitching until his cock brushes up against Ilya’s stomach and oh, *that* feels fucking amazing.

Shane experimentally rolls his hips harder, seeking more friction, moaning into Ilya’s mouth when he finds a good angle and increasing the rhythm. Shane loses himself in it, holding onto Ilya’s shoulders for balance, until it feels like he’s burning up from the inside out and he just wants *more*, with no idea how to get there.

He nonsensically bites down hard on Ilya’s lip to try and convey the message, and Ilya pulls back with a hiss and sort of not-so-gently maneuvers them so Shane’s laying flat on the floor. Shane doesn’t mind. He’s actually surprised that it worked, that Ilya somehow knew what he wanted without being told, what Shane himself didn’t even know how to put into words.

Ilya covers Shane’s body with his own and reaches up to pin both of Shane’s arms above his head with one hand, the other gripping his hip firmly. He makes eye contact with Shane, eyes wild and lust-blown. “Okay?” he asks.

Shane nods a little too hard. “Okay,” he confirms. More than okay. It’s a little shocking *how* okay he is with being pinned to the floor like this. It’s mind-numbingly hot, actually, that Ilya is able to encircle both his wrists with one hand, and Shane wriggles a little, seeking friction on his cock. “Please,” he murmurs, to his mortification, with no idea what he’s asking for.

The smile Ilya gives him in response is feral, and he slowly drives his hips against Shane's, planting his hand on the floor beside Shane for leverage, their cocks sliding against each other through their athletic shorts. For some reason the fact that they're both still fully clothed, that they couldn't wait another second before having each other like this, brings Shane's arousal to a new peak and he lets out a whine.

"God," is all he can choke out, lifting his hips to meet Ilya's.

"No, just me," Ilya gets out between labored breaths, grinning.

Shane tries to laugh, but it comes out more like a moan when Ilya adjusts his angle and starts to speed up. "Sh-shut up," he gasps anyway.

Ilya lets out a single laugh in response before crashing his mouth against Shane's again, effectively following Shane's order, which is a nice change of pace. Shane is rocketing closer to the edge and they're kissing more frantically, chasing each other's gasps and sighs like this is their one and only chance, and they're gonna make it count.

It is our only chance, Shane remembers, and that makes him brave. "More," he groans.

As Ilya starts to roll his hips even faster, Shane lifts one of his legs and Ilya takes the hint, grabbing at Shane's thigh and hooking it around his hip. This switches the angle again and Shane has to break away from Ilya's mouth with a gasp. "Fuck, *fuck*," he hisses.

"Yes, come on," Ilya grunts.

Shane glances down and watches where Ilya's dick is pressing against his, over and over, and he has to bite down on his bottom lip to avoid letting out a truly embarrassing sound. Deliriously, he wishes they actually had removed at least their shorts, because he's already mourning the loss of not getting to see their actual cocks sliding together, skin on skin.

The thought of it alone has him rolling his head back and arching himself further into Ilya. "God, it's like you're really fucking me," he whispers.

It must not have come out as quietly as he intended because Ilya moans loudly in response, removing his hand from the floor and grabbing Shane's hip tightly enough that Shane hysterically thinks he might wake up with marks.

Ilya takes advantage of the long line of neck Shane is offering to him and dives in, licking and biting with no real aim as his hips start to lose rhythm. "I knew you would be good for me," he breathes out next to Shane's ear, then whispers something else in Russian.

"Oh god," Shane says, loud enough to echo around the gym. Suddenly he's right on the edge, and he tightens his leg around Ilya's hip with a gasp. "Fuck, oh my god, I'm close."

"Me too," Ilya pants.

Shane's brain zeroes in on that, the confirmation that Shane was successfully getting Ilya Rozanov off. That it's *him* taking him there. Even if it is just a dream. "Yeah?" He pushes, needing to hear it again. "Are you gonna—*shit*—are you gonna come?"

Ilya curses loudly in Russian, hips stuttering again. “*Fuck*, Shane. Yes,” he replies, bending down to press more open-mouthed kisses to Shane’s throat.

Shane hums in satisfaction as they hurtle closer and closer, flexing his fingers, wrists still held firm in Ilya’s hand. In another few moments he’s gasping, “Oh, shit—I’m gonna—”

“Come on, Shane,” Ilya groans, leaning back so he can fix his eyes, wide and wild, on Shane’s face.

“*Ilya*,” Shane manages weakly, and then his whole body seizes up, back bowing, and then—

Ilya wakes up panting and on the very brink of orgasm. He clumsily reaches under the covers and into his sweatpants and pumps once, twice before he shoots off, groaning in relief.

Fuck, he thinks. That was intense. Certainly one of the most vivid sex dreams he’s ever had.

He stares at the ceiling as he comes down, still breathing hard. It was pretty much exactly what he’d imagined doing to Hollander while he’d jerked himself off last night after leaving the hotel gym.

Except his brain got really creative with how Hollander had responded so beautifully to all of Ilya’s touches. He wonders if Hollander would ever be bold enough to say half of those things if they ever actually...

He gets out of bed so he can clean up and think about something else. He doesn’t feel *guilty*, per se (ha!), that he’d had a sex dream about Hollander. That would happen to anyone with eyes. No big deal. But the fact that it had felt *so* real, much realer than other sex dreams he’d had...well, it had him a little shaken.

But it was like Shane had said in his dream after the World Juniors. It’s a little weird that the Shane in his dreams is the one who thinks he’s having the dream, but it’s far from the weirdest thing his brain has ever come up with in his sleep. The point stands that *that* Shane is a figment of his imagination, and says whatever. He said a *lot* of whatever in that dream just now, actually, and it’s *no big deal*, because it was Ilya’s dream.

He’ll be over it once he’s fully awake. Maybe this dream got his weird thing about Hollander out of his system at last and he won’t come to Ilya in his dreams anymore.

Either way, he definitely will not be forgetting the sounds Shane made in the dream anytime soon. The way he said Ilya’s name. He’s fucking pissed that he woke up before he could see Shane’s face when he came.

Shane tries to keep as straight a face as possible the next time he sees Rozanov. He’s sure that if he lets one iota of emotion show, Rozanov will immediately be able to tell that Shane has had a crazy sex dream about him. Which would put Shane back in the *potential-black-eye-and-formal-complaint* category. So, poker face it is.

Except Shane is famously not very good at poker and he feels the tips of his ears go red as soon as he spots Rozanov in his periphery. Dammit.

He avoids eye contact for as long as possible but it's inevitable. They don't exchange many words, and the crooked smirk Rozanov gives him is the same as always, but it also looks decidedly...*knowing*.

God, that's impossible. *Get a grip, Hollander.*

It's just that Shane had been so...well, there's no other way to put it. He was kind of slutty in that dream. It was like whatever he had felt in that hotel gym on the night of the draft had dialed up to ten and he just...went for it. Which is confusing for many reasons. Mainly because Rozanov is a dude.

Suffice to say, he gets out of Rozanov's general vicinity as soon as he can without looking rude, and resolves not to think of *that* dream ever again.

(He fails.)

Ilya watches Hollander's back as he leaves the room and sighs irritably to himself. No, the dream hadn't gotten it out of his fucking system.

**

Shane dreams about Ilya less after he starts hooking up with Rozanov. Which, you'd think he'd be thrilled to see *less* of Ilya, who he already has to share a spotlight with in the waking world. It's actually the opposite, because *hooking up with Rozanov is not exactly a solution*.

And he finds himself...missing his Ilya, sometimes. Both iterations of Rozanov are annoying as hell, sure, but he has a lot of fun with Ilya in that dream rink. If Rozanov was more like his Ilya, Shane would probably get less headaches.

When he thinks about it, the times when Rozanov is most like his Ilya *are* during their hookups, which just makes everything worse. (Well, everything *but* the hookups. Which are somehow even better in real life than in Shane's dreams.)

Rozanov is a lot more patient and gentle in bed than Shane had anticipated. Not that he had *been* anticipating it—whatever. He teases the hell out of Shane still, but Shane can admit he probably wouldn't be as into it if he didn't. He feels surprisingly comfortable with Rozanov during sex, which he privately appreciates since this is his first time...doing *this* with a man.

Rozanov is still an absolute menace on the ice, though. Obviously. Shane is almost grateful for it, at times, the reminder that Rozanov truly is an asshole. He wouldn't be able to handle seeing that soft expression Rozanov gets on his face sometimes during sex directed at him during a *game*. Shane would have to leave the ice immediately.

Or worse, kiss him right there.

He's currently trying to abandon that particular line of thought as he bends for a face-off with Rozanov during a home game. He looks up and nothing about Rozanov's face right now is soft. Good. He *does*, however, flash his crooked smile at Shane.

Fucking hell.

"I wonder if everybody watching at home has fallen asleep," Rozanov muses. "I would. Is boring when only one team scores, yes?"

"Fuck you," Shane grits out. It's true, though. Montreal is playing like shit tonight. They're about to end the second period with Boston leading by three goals and Montreal at zero.

But it's Rozanov's response that turns Shane's blood cold:

"In your dreams, Hollander," he says while holding eye contact with Shane. Then he *winks*. Then he wins the face-off. In that order.

"Come *on*," groans one of Shane's teammates to his left, but he barely hears it.

In your dreams, Hollander.

Shane manages to get through the last few minutes of the period and then he can't get off the ice fast enough, barreling through his teammates.

Hayden finds him during intermission. "Uh, buddy?" he tries. "You okay?"

Shane doesn't blame him for being concerned. His usual response to losing this badly is to keep his chin up, make a plan to pull ahead in the next period, and get his teammates on board. Sitting in his stall with his head between his knees is very not that.

"Yeah," he lies, lifting his head just enough to be eye level with Hayden's shins. "Just, uh. Thinking about what Coach said."

He hadn't heard a single word of what Coach said.

"Okay..." Hayden says, clearly unsure where to go from here.

"I'm fine," Shane insists, a little too forcefully for someone who's *fine*, but Hayden blissfully leaves him be.

In your dreams, Hollander.

He's trying not to freak out the same way people try to put toothpaste back in the tube. Of all the comebacks for Rozanov to come up with, of all the ones he *has* come up with before, why that one?

Shane knows rationally that it was probably just a stupid way to refer to their *arrangement* without anyone around them knowing. Like it's some fucked up inside joke between them.

But *in your dreams* just felt so specific, so pointed. Because they literally have fucked in Shane's dreams! Multiple times at this point!

Rozanov doesn't know that, he tries to tell himself. He can't read your mind, he's not hocus focusing his way into your subconscious, he can't possibly know.

But how else would he know that saying *in your dreams* would get under Shane's skin like that?! Getting under his skin is pretty much the only reason Rozanov ever says anything!

Shane puts himself marginally back together by the time the third period starts. He avoids Rozanov the best he can until it's over. They lose, but Comeau's able to make one goal in the last five minutes off an assist from Shane.

Take that, fucker, he thinks hard in Rozanov's direction. Just in case the mind reader thing turns out to be true.

And because the universe hasn't made fun of Shane enough, he dreams of Ilya that night for the first time in months. Shane mostly loses himself in the motions of playing hockey, trying to replicate all the mistakes he made earlier tonight and figure out how to prevent them from happening again, but he's starkly aware of Ilya's presence at every turn.

He comes so close to asking him about it. Every way he can think to ask the question sounds more ridiculous than the last.

Hey, Ilya, do you know that I'm having these dreams? Not you you, but the you in real life. Obviously you you know that I'm having these dreams because you're in them.

Yeah, no.

He also doesn't think he'd be able to trust any answer Ilya gave anyway. Because, again, as far as Shane can tell he's just part of his dream and will just say whatever Shane's subconscious comes up with.

And even if he did say something legit, it's not like Shane would ever, *ever* bring it up to Rozanov in real life.

Shane has the nightmare about the door and the bed twice while they're in Sochi. Not only is it the first time he's had the dream twice in a year, he has it *back to back*.

He tries not to think about what it might mean.

Ilya falls asleep alone in his Las Vegas penthouse suite and wakes up with Hollander in his arms.

No, that's not right. Hollander left him after they had finished. And the room is too brightly lit for all that there aren't any lights on.

A dream, he realizes, as Shane lifts his head up from where it had been laying on Ilya's chest. "Oh," Shane says. "Hi."

"Hi," Ilya echoes, then doesn't waste another second before cupping Shane's jaw and bringing their mouths together.

He hadn't let himself have this when he and Hollander were together earlier, but in his dreams he can, so he kisses Shane, and kisses him, and kisses him...

Shane doesn't complain. Doesn't say much of anything, really. For the most part he just kisses Ilya back and brushes his fingertips up and down Ilya's spine, up and down, up and down. If Ilya dies in his sleep tonight he won't be that upset about it.

After what feels like hours, or maybe minutes, who the fuck knows in a dream, Ilya pulls back and slowly runs both of his thumbs along Shane's cheekbones. Not for the first time, he mourns that Shane's freckles are muddled and undefined in his dreams. He doesn't get enough time when he's awake to admire them the way he wants to.

"I wish I could see your freckles," he murmurs in Russian.

"Hm?" Shane blinks up at him sleepily and mumbles, "Wha'ssat mean?"

"Means go the fuck to sleep," Ilya says in English.

Shane scrunches his face up in a scowl. He's so fucking cute that a laugh bubbles out of Ilya. "I'm already asleep," Shane says. Then, around a yawn, continues, "This is *my*—"

"Yes, yes, this is your dream, I know, *mily*," Ilya cuts him off. It's endlessly amusing that the Shane in his dreams is just as stubborn as Hollander. Maybe even more.

Shane makes an "mm" sound that Ilya assumes either means "*that's right*" or "*Rozanov you are so fucking annoying*" or some other thing Hollander shouts at him when they're on the ice. Then Shane burrows his face back into Ilya's chest, closes his eyes, and goes, "M'kay, g'night."

Ilya wraps his arms fully around Shane and pulls the rest of his body closer. He dares to press a featherlight kiss to the top of Shane's head and then calms his racing heart by reminding himself this is a dream.

He holds on for as long as possible, clings to sleep as tightly as he can, but he can't stop the hollow ache that blooms in his chest when he inevitably wakes up, alone.

It's always a surprise to Shane when he dreams of Ilya somewhere other than the rink, that's how infrequently it happens over the years, but he won't lie and say he didn't have an inkling where his dream would take him tonight as he tried to fall asleep through Hayden's snores.

He pushes Ilya's apartment door open and finds Ilya standing there in the middle of the room like he's lost, right where he'd left Rozanov earlier.

“I’m sorry,” Shane says immediately. Ilya startles and whips around to face him. Shane winces at the indisputable sadness in his eyes.

God, what the fuck is wrong with him? Rozanov probably got over Shane leaving after, like, five minutes and now here *Ilya* is, looking sad and disappointed and like he missed Shane because that’s how Shane secretly hopes he felt.

“I’m sorry,” he repeats, quieter.

“For what?” Ilya asks.

“You know what,” Shane says. “I ran away. That was shitty.”

Ilya shrugs, glancing away. “You had team meeting.”

“That was bullshit and you know it.”

Ilya is silent for a long time, then says, in a small voice, “I wanted you to stay.”

“You did,” Shane sighs, heart cracking, and crosses the distance between them. The desire to reach out and touch flares up in him, but Shane staunchly keeps his arms at his sides. He doesn’t deserve that yet. “I did too,” he admits. “I wanted to stay so badly it scared me. Like, a lot.”

Ilya’s lips twitch. “You? Scared?”

Shane barks out a laugh. “I’m trying to be nice!”

“You are not doing a very good job,” Ilya says, peeling into a full smile. Seeing it fills Shane with relief. “I fed you and gave you two orgasms and you ran out of here like there was a fire.”

“Technically I gave *you* the second one,” Shane can’t help but point out. “My point is,” he cuts Ilya off when he opens his mouth to reply. “I got scared and I’m sorry. I did want to stay.”

Ilya just gazes down at him silently, as if sensing that Shane has more to say.

“I’m...I think I have some stuff to figure out. Well, obviously,” he continues. He chews his lip for a moment then says, “I might not ever let go of my fear. Not enough to stay, anyway. I definitely don’t think I’ll ever be brave enough to say any of this to your face.”

“You’re saying it to my face now,” Ilya points out.

“Yeah, but this doesn’t count,” Shane says, waving a hand dismissively. “The you in real life is completely separate.”

Ilya considers this for a moment, then shrugs. “Sure.”

Shane nods, mostly to himself, and before he can second guess it he lifts up on his toes and wraps both arms around Ilya's neck. Ilya hums happily and rests his hands at the small of Shane's back. "You called me Shane," Shane whispers.

"I always call you Shane," Ilya says.

Shane shakes his head. "Not in real life."

"No," Ilya agrees, then lowers his forehead to rest gently against Shane's. "But I am not so brave either."

Shane closes his eyes and just breathes Ilya in for a minute. This could've been so nice, if he had just stayed earlier.

"You called me Ilya," Ilya murmurs.

Shane nods against Ilya's forehead, eyes still closed. "I did." He takes a deep breath and says it again, "Ilya."

Ilya exhales, "Shane," and brings their mouths together, kissing Shane just as tenderly as Rozanov did in his bed earlier.

Shane quickly loses himself in it, reaching up to tug at the curls at the back of Ilya's neck and chasing his lips. Ilya wraps his arms more fully around Shane's back and pulls him closer.

After a few minutes, Shane is curling his ankle around Ilya's leg when he freezes and pulls back sharply with a gasp. "Oh my god."

"What?"

"I left my underwear here," Shane says, mortified.

Ilya blinks down at him and then bursts into laughter, throwing his head back and covering his mouth with the back of his hand. "You fucking did!"

Shane smacks him in the shoulder but now he's laughing too. "Fucking dickhead, where are they?!"

Ilya shrugs. "Maybe in my bedroom. Maybe in my garbage. Maybe sold on eBay for like fifty dollars."

"Oh my god," Shane scoffs and pushes past Ilya towards the bedroom. "I am not about to start a *whose-underwear-is-worth-more* argument with you."

"Because you know you will lose," Ilya says, following him.

"Because it's *stupid*, and no, I would win, obviously," Shane protests, and suddenly his back is pressed up against the wall next to the bedroom door, Ilya looming over him with a smirk.

He bends down to pepper kisses along Shane's neck. "About earlier..."

“Earlier?” Shane tilts his head to give him more access.

“I gave one orgasm, you say you gave the second...” Ilya pulls back with a grin. “What do you say, best two out of three?”

Shane can’t believe this man is like this even in his dreams. He rolls his eyes and at the same time reaches for the waistband of Ilya’s sweatpa—

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Shane jolts awake to the sound of what must be tornado sirens, or a fire alarm, or—

“Shit, shit, sorry,” he hears Hayden hiss from the other side of the room.

“What the fu...” Shane croaks.

“My alarm,” comes Hayden’s reply, and the beeping noise stops.

Shane blinks, groggy. “We don’t even have practice today...”

“I know,” Hayden says regretfully. “It’s a recurring one. I forgot to shut it off before I went to bed last night. My bad.”

“S’okay,” Shane mumbles. But as he’s rolling back over, it all suddenly comes rushing back, and Shane remembers exactly what Hayden’s alarm interrupted.

He groans into his pillow.

Shane does not dream about Ilya once while he’s dating Rose. He pretends not to be disappointed.

There is one night, though, that he dreams he’s standing in the middle of a club—*that* club, except with more pockets of darkness than people, the flashing lights all blending together in a colorful blur that stings his eyes.

He’s wading through the endless sea of bodies, so slow, like he’s made of molasses. He keeps thinking he spots a head of golden curls behind the shapeless mass of one person, or the left side of a broad torso flitting between a cluster of shadows as they shift and writhe. But when he moves in that direction, or tries to look closer, there’s nothing there.

Frustration thrums under his skin as he goes in circles, around and around, until he can’t remember where he is or what he’s looking for. The sensation nags at him, that *it’s right there on the tip of his tongue*, but he can’t pinpoint it.

Eventually he can’t take it anymore. He rakes his hands through his hair. He opens his mouth and *screams* but no sound comes out.

This continues for what feels like an eternity until he quietly slips back awake, blinking up at the ceiling. He's bone tired, like he's lived several lifetimes in the span of a few hours.

Rose is already awake next to him in the bed, propped up against the headboard and scrolling through her phone. "Morning," she chirps happily when she notices he's awake. "I think I'm gonna Postmates a smoothie, you want one?"

Shane studies her for a moment and then slowly nods. Maybe this is what he kept looking for in the dream. Rose.

Yeah. That makes sense.

When Ilya dreams of finding his mother's dead body, he's sometimes vaguely aware of another presence beside him, tugging at his sleeve and begging him to stay put.

He never does, he *can't*. There's no world or timeline where Ilya's mother doesn't die and he isn't the one to find her.

But it's nice to think that someone is trying to spare him from the pain. Even if no one really would. It's probably just his own subconscious protecting him or some other poetic bullshit, but all the same.

When Ilya leaves Florida after the All-Stars game, he decides it's one of his favorite places.

Shane Hollander is not compatible with Rose Landry, he thinks, practically giddy. He's probably got the definition of compatible memorized at this point: *capable of existing together in harmony*.

Ilya wonders if Hollander thinks they're compatible. By definition alone, Ilya would certainly say so. They've *existed together in harmony* many times over the years. Sometimes in a bed, sometimes against a wall, sometimes in the shower. *Lots* of harmony.

He finds that thought very amusing and wants to say it to Hollander to see the look on his face. He settles for trying it out on Shane first the next time he dreams of the hockey rink.

"...against a wall, sometimes in the shower. Lots of harmony."

Just as Ilya suspected, Shane draws his face into a scowl but he can tell he's trying not to laugh. "You're awful," Shane says.

"Yes, but do you think Hollander will laugh?"

"Well, *I'm* not laughing."

Debatable. "Mm, but you are not the real life Hollander. Maybe he has better sense of humor."

“My sense of humor is just fine,” Shane says with an eye roll. “You’re the one who’s not funny.”

“Then why are you laughing?”

“I’m not,” he insists, even as he lifts his wrist to hide the wide smile stretched across his face. Ilya skates closer, helpless but to be drawn in by that stupid, beautiful smile.

Shane beams up at Ilya as he skates closer. It’s a shame that Ilya’s smile usually comes with a side of smart-ass chirping, because it really is a nice one.

That thought reminds Shane of one of the times Rozanov had smiled the widest at him this weekend, open and unapologetic, and it gives him an idea. Shane mostly dreams of Ilya at their hockey rink, but there have been a few (memorable) times he hasn’t. He closes his eyes and imagines it. *I wonder if...*

Now they’re back at the pool in Florida, Ilya standing over Shane. This time they’re alone, only the vague sound of water splashing behind them and the imitation heat of a sun that isn’t really there bearing down on them.

Ilya had clocked the hungry way Hollander had looked him up and down before, after Ilya had pretended to hug him. Yes, it had been reckless, but Ilya is finding it harder and harder these days to resist opportunities to touch Hollander regardless of where they are or who can see. Hollander makes him want dangerous things.

He’d had to turn away after Hollander had licked his lip at him earlier, or else he’d *really* been about to do something stupid. Now, he stays put to watch Shane lean forward in his seat and press his mouth to Ilya’s abs. Ilya flicks his gaze between Shane’s face and the way his shirt clings wetly to his skin, mismatched patches revealing themselves to Ilya like a goddamn treasure map.

Ultimately he decides on watching Shane, who looks up at Ilya and slowly, agonizingly slowly, traces a rivulet of water from the waistband of Ilya’s trunks all the way up to his solar plexus. He collects the water on his tongue and pulls back, making a big show of swallowing it as he keeps eye contact with Ilya.

“Jesus, Shane,” punches out of Ilya.

Shane just exhales on a laugh and reaches into Ilya’s shorts to pull him out, wasting no time before leaning in and swirling his tongue around the head.

Fuck. “Doesn’t it taste like...uh,” Ilya pants, and who the fuck cares, but he can’t let the moment pass without teasing polite-neat-good boy Shane Hollander (or a version of him) for being so eager to blow Ilya that he’s licking pool water off of him.

Shane releases him with a soft *pop* and starts to jerk him with his hand, glaring daggers up at Ilya. God, why is that so hot? “You’re really talking about chlorine right now?” Shane rasps.

Ilya snaps his fingers, delighting in the way it makes Shane scowl. “*Chlorine!* You don’t mind the taste?”

Shane rolls his eyes and jerks him a little faster. “It doesn’t taste like anything. It’s a dream.”

“Oh,” Ilya says, pretending to sound disappointed but it doesn’t land with the way Shane has him gasping. “Well that’s—*ah*—no fun.”

“*No fun?!*” Shane squawks, and thumbs Ilya’s slit—

“Fuck, Shane—”

—before grumbling, “I’ll show you fun,” under his breath.

Ilya smiles down at him, endlessly fond. He finds his words and says, “No, you can go back to what you were doing. That sounds like a threat coming from boring guy like you.”

Shane laughs as he leans back in to lick a stripe up the length of Ilya’s cock, which gives Ilya the magnificent image of Shane Hollander grinning while blowing him. Now *that* is something out of his wildest dreams.

Shane quickly builds a rhythm, wrapping a hand around the base and stroking up to meet his mouth. His eyes are shut in concentration as he works Ilya, moaning in response to every sound he draws out of him, and god does Ilya love when Shane is like this. When Hollander is like this in real life. So determined to make Ilya feel good, so eager to *be* good.

For Ilya.

The thought makes Ilya’s heart suddenly swell up with something that he tries to push down, then he remembers this isn’t real and dares to let himself feel it.

(It occurs to him that maybe it’s not normal that real life sex with Hollander is just as good, if not better, than his sex dreams where every fantasy is possible. Ilya chooses to ignore this for now.)

He gently brushes Shane’s hair out of his eyes. “Everything is fun with you,” he admits quietly.

Shane makes a noise and looks back up at him, a smile in his eyes, the light from the sun reflecting off the pool behind them and dappling across his cheeks. Once again Ilya misses his freckles. Even so, this is one of those times he forgets English for how beautiful Shane is.

Although, he does remember enough to add, “Especially blowjobs.”

Shane has to pull off of Ilya for how hard he busts out laughing, covering his face with his hands as his shoulders shake.

Beautiful, Ilya thinks again.

While Ilya is in Russia tending to his family, Shane dreams of them together at the cottage.

The dream morphs and changes shape and flashes through what it might look like to have Ilya in his favorite place, all to himself. It's more run-of-the-mill than his other dreams about Ilya—he knows it's Ilya with him, but a muted version that Shane's mind just pulls along with it.

Them making breakfast together, Ilya pressing a kiss under Shane's ear from behind, Shane spinning around in his arms to kiss him until they almost burn the eggs.

There wouldn't be a single rainy day. They'd take the kayaks out, relishing in the mere act of being together, in the stillness of the lake. Until Ilya would splash him with a paddle and Shane would make it his mission to get Ilya to capsize in return. They could lay out on the dock and dry out in the sun, and Ilya would point at clouds and say each one looks like Scott Hunter until Shane's crying with laughter and shoving him away.

Or maybe it *would* rain, and they'd watch the patterns the raindrops make on the windows from the safety of the couch, wrapped up together in Shane's coziest blanket. Maybe Shane would play with Ilya's hands as he tells him stories of growing up in Russia, each word pressed into Shane's hair like a kiss. They'd fall asleep together like that and wake up after the rain passes, the sky bleeding red and gold as the sun dips below the horizon.

Shane would take Ilya to his bed and Ilya would thread their fingers together as they took each other apart, again and again. Days could pass in that bed and Shane would barely notice.

They'd play footsie with each other under the dining table as they ate dinner. They'd brush their teeth at the sink, side by side, and kiss each other goodnight, and good morning.

At night, Shane would bring them out to the porch so Ilya could see the endless sea of stars. Shane would lean in close, letting their shoulders brush, to watch Ilya take it in. And when Ilya would look down to meet Shane's eyes, it would be like seeing daylight.

Shane blinks awake and takes a second to remember where he is. His bedroom in Montreal, alone under the covers. He feels a sudden rush of tears and rolls over, trying and failing to shut his eyes against it.

The pang of loss sits heavy in his chest. Another dream so real it feels like he really lived it, a happy life with Ilya. All ripped away when he woke up, replaced with inexplicable grief. How can it feel like he's mourning something that never happened?

He bites back a sob and buries his face in the pillows, as if he can hide from the fact that of all the things he could dream about, of all the things he could wish for, it's doing ordinary, mundane things with Ilya that feels the most precious. Because he has realized that, colored by Ilya's smile and his kindness and his wit and his fire, nothing would seem ordinary again.

“Shane? We need you to keep your eyes open, okay?”

“Sorry,” Shane mumbles, blinking up at the harsh lights passing above him.

The panic starts to rise again as the medics begin to maneuver him into an ambulance. He focuses on wiggling his toes some more to calm himself down.

Later, an eternity later, after all the nurses and doctors and beeping and *keep your eyes open* and his parents’ concerned voices over the phone, when Shane is finally allowed to sleep, he sinks into it hard and abruptly.

When he gains awareness, he’s at the rink, his and Ilya’s rink, but he’s filled with the sense that something is wrong. The lights are dimmer, the walls feel closer. He looks around and spots a motionless form on the ground.

He runs over, distantly noting that he’s not wearing skates, but he can’t get closer to the body. He just keeps stretching farther and farther away, and no matter how hard Shane pumps his legs, how hard he pushes, nothing works. He feels helpless, then scared, then *really* scared. The fear rises up in him so quickly and intensely that it doesn’t feel like his own.

He focuses his gaze on the body and sees a flash of blue and red.

That’s new.

The thought startles him. Has he dreamed about this before? *I have*, he thinks.

Something clicks in Shane’s head and for the very first time, he makes it across the ice. He’s there, right in front of the body.

“Ilya,” he gasps, and bends down to roll the body over. “Ilya—”

He recoils in horror, falling backwards onto the ice, as his own face stares up at him, lifeless and unseeing. *What the fuck?!*

He’s so afraid that he can’t even make a sound. He scrambles backwards on the ice, his breath coming out quick and shallow. He keeps his eyes on his body on the ground—wearing his Voyageurs uniform, he realizes—in case it fucking moves or something. His back brushes up against something and now he does scream, whipping his head around.

With a snap, the rink is gone, and Shane is sitting up against a door. He forgets where he is and who he is, he just knows there’s a door. He stands and pushes the door open, because what else can he do?

The room is dark and filled with...well, it seems like it would be furniture, or some combination of decorations and knick-knacks, but every time Shane tries to focus his eyes on something it flickers and morphs and he can’t make out what anything is.

Except he can clearly make out a bed in the middle of the room, lit up as if under a spotlight. Something else clicks in his head. *I know*, he thinks. *I know who I am, I'm Shane, and—*

He remembers what's next and instinctively turns to find Ilya beside him.

"Ilya," he exhales in relief, but Ilya doesn't seem to hear him. He slowly drifts toward the bed, with eyes both wide and unseeing.

And colorless, Shane notices with a pang of dread; he hopelessly tries and fails to... *no*, no he *does* remember. Ilya has hazel eyes. Shane blinks rapidly and when he looks again, there they are. Ilya's eyes as they should be.

Shane can now see there's now a body in the bed, or so he thinks. All he can really make out is a hand dangling off the side, where the light is brightest. He doesn't like the look of that hand. It's too...still. *Wrong*.

Something is wrong, cuts through all of Shane's other thoughts like a megaphone. Ilya takes another step forward and Shane clenches his fists against the fear that rises up in him at the sight. "Ilya," he manages to say. "Don't go over there."

He looks closer and the hand changes. It's *his* hand, he realizes with a jolt of fear. That's his hand, the sleeve of his Voyageurs jersey. Oh god.

"Ilya," he says again, trying to calm down. "Please stop."

Again Ilya does not hear him. He gets even closer to the bed and Shane feels a spike of panic so sharp he shoots his arm out to grab at something, anything, to get Ilya to stop. His fingers find the fabric of Ilya's sleeve and he *tugs hard*.

And, for the first time since Shane had this dream when he was twelve years old, Ilya stops and looks at him.

Ilya has to blink several times, like he's getting a speck of dust out of his eyes, but yes, that's Shane beside him, coming into focus.

"Shane," he croaks. His mouth feels like it's full of sand.

Shane looks so surprised to hear Ilya speak, to have his eyes on him, frozen where he's still clutching Ilya's sleeve.

"You are the one who has been trying to get me not to look," Ilya realizes.

Shane furrows his brow a little but nods slowly. He goes to release Ilya's sleeve but Ilya catches his hand in his. "Of course it is you," Ilya says, a little bitter and a lot sad. "It has always been you."

"I..." Shane starts, a blush creeping onto his face. "This is different than before. You never stop. You always—" he turns his head to look at the bed and then flinches away. "You always

look.”

“Yes.”

“It’s always you, the body on the ice,” Shane says, and Ilya doesn’t know what he’s talking about, doesn’t remember dreaming about a body on the ice, but then Shane continues, “Tonight it was...me. It was my body. My hand, in the...bed.”

Ilya sighs and lifts his other hand to cup Shane’s face, heart squeezing when Shane leans into it. He doesn’t want to talk about who is supposed to be in the bed. “I was very scared tonight.”

“Tonight?” Shane asks, then, “Oh.”

“You weren’t moving,” Ilya says, cursing the tremor in his voice. “For so long you didn’t move. I...” he pauses to take a rattling breath.

“Ilya,” Shane whispers, and places his other hand on top of Ilya’s.

“I cannot lose you,” Ilya finishes. There. He’d said it. It isn’t real here, so it was cowardly, but he’d said it. “I was scared I would. I think that is why the dream is different this time.”

“You didn’t,” Shane said, voice tight. “I’m okay.”

Ilya smirks. “You’re a figment of my imagination. You could say anything. Because this is a dream. Remember?”

Shane scoffs at his own words from years ago being used against him, but then he chews his lip. “I wonder if... it’s crazy, but what if it’s... not just my dream?”

Ilya nods. “I have thought about this.”

“Wait, you have?!”

“Of course,” Ilya says, then leans in. “Not even in my imagination could I have come up with half the shit you say and do in here, Hollander,” he murmurs.

Shane flushes all the way down his neck. “Well...”

Ilya laughs, and the next time he blinks they’re back at the rink, standing at center ice. Good. He’s happy to leave that room behind him. At least for a night.

“Well, why didn’t you say anything?!” Shane finishes.

“I tried!” Ilya insists. “Every time it was like, *oh well you are in my head, nothing is real, blah blah blah, now let’s fuck.*”

“Hm,” Shane grunts, but he doesn’t deny it. “Well, I hate to say it, but it still could be true.”

Ilya gives him a look.

“I’m just saying! Dreams are weird,” Shane says, then gestures around at the rink and then at the two of them. “Obviously.”

“You are not wrong,” Ilya says, even as he rolls his eyes.

Shane rubs his thumb over Ilya’s knuckles. “I wish there was a way we could prove it. I haven’t exactly wanted to ask you about it, you know? Like in real life. What if I’m wrong and then you think I’m, like, crazy?” he huffs.

“That is silly,” Ilya says. “I already think you’re crazy.”

“Hey!” Shane releases Ilya’s hand to reach up and probably flick him in the forehead. Ilya just catches him by the wrist again and kisses his palm. Shane’s eyes go impossibly soft. “Crazy about *you*,” he mumbles.

“Aw, Hollander,” Ilya teases, sure that he’s glowing from the inside out. “So romantic.”

“Shut up.”

“No,” Ilya croons, then kisses Shane’s palm again. “I might have an idea. About how to figure out if we are...sharing dreams,” he says.

“What is it?”

“I’m not going to tell you,” Ilya replies, shaking his head. “Because then when I go to do it, you will think it’s just a, um... thing that happens at the same time?”

“A coincidence?”

“Yes.”

Shane hums. “Okay. I guess that makes sense. But how will I know? God, I hope you’re not gonna just *ask* me. I think I’d die.”

Ilya leans in and presses their mouths together. Shane sighs happily. “No, I’m not,” Ilya replies, then kisses him again. “I think you’ll know.”

“Okay,” Shane repeats, muffled against Ilya’s lips. “I guess I’ll see you when we wake up?”

Ilya smiles. What a simple, perfect thought. “I’ll see you when we wake up.”

Ilya is given Shane’s room number by an overly interested woman working behind a desk. She’s seemingly impressed and elated at Ilya’s display of sportsmanship.

If only you knew, he thinks darkly.

The door is ajar, so Ilya gently pushes it open, trying not to think about all the times Shane has dreamed of going through a door just to watch Ilya suffer over and over again.

Shane's bed is elevated so that he's almost sitting up. The room is blessedly otherwise empty. "Ilya!" Shane exclaims, smiling happily, but, Ilya notices, with a hint of nervousness.

For a moment all he can do is stand there in the doorway. Depending on how the next thirty seconds go, this could be a point of no return.

He doesn't have to do this.

He can just have a normal, civil hospital visit with Hollander. A concerned team captain checking on an injured player. The next time he dreams of Shane he can pretend like nothing happened, give them both an out.

If they even are sharing dreams. Which, there's still a possibility Ilya made it all up! God, this is fucked. He could fuck all of this up right now. He doesn't know if it's worth losing what he does have with Shane.

But then his eyes find Shane's freckles, clear and sharp in the light of day, and it isn't even a choice. He steps over the threshold and walks straight over to the bed.

"Um, I'm okay," Shane is saying. "I mean, I have a concussion, and my collarbone is broken, and I'm out for the playoffs, but..."

Ilya comes to a stop right beside Shane's pillow, which effectively stops the rambling. Shane is staring up at him, eyes wide and a little scared.

Here goes nothing, Ilya thinks, then takes Shane's hand. He hears a sharp intake of breath.

"Hollander," he begins. "I looked up the word *compatible*."

Shane lifts an eyebrow. "Uh, yeah, you told me."

"It means: *capable of existing together in harmony*."

"...Okay."

"This means we are compatible."

Shane's jaw drops and he blushes spectacularly. "I—uh, what?"

Doubt starts to creep in. This really might end badly. Or, at the very least, stupidly. Still, Ilya's made it this far, and so, deciding he can just blame it on the pain meds if Shane brings it up later, he continues.

"We have *existed together in harmony* many times. Sometimes in a bed, sometimes against a wall, sometimes in the shower," Ilya says this part quieter, in case that nurse is feeling nosy.

Shane gasps, and with a wave of relief, Ilya sees recognition dawn on his face. "You..."

Ilya grins. "Lots of harmony," he finishes, and squeezes Shane's hand.

All Shane does is blink for a second, then he throws his head back and laughs. Ilya starts to laugh too but then he realizes that actually Shane's crying.

"Oh, Shane," he coos, releasing Shane's hand so he can cup the side of his face instead.

"I t-told you my sense of humor was...just fine," Shane gets out between sobs.

Ilya laughs and bends down to gather Shane in his arms, heart nearly bursting. He plants kisses up and down Shane's neck all the way up the side of his face, the corners of his eyes stinging. This is so fucking dangerous, someone could walk it at any minute, but he doesn't give a *shit* right now.

Shane tangles his fingers in the curls at the back of Ilya's neck. "I can't believe it," he sniffles. "All this time, we were—wait," he pauses, and Ilya pulls back to look at him, but not before pecking him on the nose. "*Was* it the whole time? When did you first dream about me?"

So begins a debrief of many long, long years of appearing in each other's dreams.

Ilya pulls a chair over and plays with Shane's fingers as they go through basically every dream they've ever had about the other. It all matches up, to Ilya's amazement. To finally know that he *hadn't* made it up, that he *wasn't* crazy, is an overwhelming relief.

It started when they were eight, practicing hockey together. They both didn't realize the other was an actual person until they met in real life—

"I almost fainted."

"Me fucking too."

—and they both tried to go on like normal, assuming it was all one-sided and that surely they weren't both having identical dreams.

"So, when you went to sleep the night of the draft... oh no."

Shane is blushing adorably.

"Oh *yes*, Hollander."

"That is so fucking embarrassing—"

"No, was fucking hot."

"...yeah, it was."

They conclude that yes, every single dream they had about each other since the first time was shared. It had always happened when they had both been asleep. They both have full memory of everything, as if they had been real life conversations.

“This is nuts,” Shane says. “What the hell does it even mean? Have you ever heard of this before?”

Ilya shrugs. “Never.”

Shane tilts his head, thinking. “Do we have some kind of, like, psychic link? Is that why we’re so well-matched in hockey?”

“Maybe we are soulmates,” Ilya says matter-of-factly.

Shane sputters. “Soulmates?!”

“*Da*, like we were always going to meet,” Ilya explains; it’s the most logical thing he can imagine. If soulmates do exist, he would not be surprised to hear that Shane was his. “Maybe is why we are always competing, like you said. Meant to be.”

“Maybe,” Shane says, still blushing. “I guess that could be it.”

Ilya pats Shane’s leg reassuringly. “Could also be nothing. Like, just some weird thing that happens to us.”

“Yeah...”

“You are going to look this up on the internet as soon as you can look at your phone again, aren’t you?”

“No!” Shane shouts. Ilya gives him a flat look and he reconsiders. “Maybe.”

Ilya chuckles fondly. “Let me know what you find. I am curious.”

“I will,” Shane promises, then tentatively reaches for Ilya’s hand. Ilya gives it with no hesitation. “I guess, uh...I guess we can’t take back anything we said in those dreams, then, huh?”

I cannot lose you.

I wanted to stay so badly it scared me.

Please don’t go over there, Ilya. Don’t look.

Everything is fun with you.

Crazy about you.

It has always been you.

Ilya notices the nervous expression on his face and takes pity, sparing him from the teasing for now. He reaches forward with his free hand and runs a thumb along Shane’s cheekbone. “Did you know I could never see your freckles in the dreams?” he asks.

Shane blinks at him. “Huh?”

“Always they were blurry, or not there at all. Only when I was awake could I see them clearly. Was terrible,” Ilya said, shaking his head. He starts tapping individual freckles with his index finger. “So rude of you to hide them from me.”

Shane wrinkles his nose at him, but his eyes are gooey. “Well, you can see them now.”

“Yes.” Ilya lifts the hand still holding Shane’s and kisses his knuckles. “Looks like we were both being brave. We just didn’t know it.”

Shane smiles shyly at that, and kisses Ilya’s knuckles in return. “Looks like it.”

They sit there for a minute, two googly-eyed idiots, with so much between them still left to say. But there will be time for that, Ilya knows. For now he’s just happy to be on the same page as Shane Hollander for once.

“Wait a second,” Shane says abruptly. Then he smacks Ilya in the shoulder.

“Ow! Fuck was that for?” Ilya groans.

“*In your dreams, Hollander?!* ” Shane screeched. “Are you fucking kidding me?”

Oh, yeah. Ilya had forgotten about that. He had mostly just been fucking with Shane, but had also secretly hoped to see some sort of recognition on his face. He hadn’t, but clearly it had rattled Shane if he’s bringing it up now. Ilya starts to laugh.

“Oh, fuck you, Rozanov,” Shane scoffs, then freezes. Ilya grins. “Don’t you dare,” Shane warns.

“Come on, I have to. You walked right into it.”

“Don’t you fucking *da—*”

“In your dreams, Hollander.”

Without another word, Shane reaches for the nearest pillow and tries to smother Ilya with it.

They don’t dream about each other again after that. One morning at the cottage, much later, Shane asks Ilya about it, and he confirms it’s the same for him.

“Hmm,” Shane hums in response, poking at his sizzling eggs with a spatula.

“What is it?” Ilya asks, sidling up to him and planting a kiss on his cheek.

“I don’t know,” Shane sighs. “I guess I’m... a little sad? That we don’t share dreams anymore?”

“Aw,” Ilya says, wrapping his arms around Shane from behind and kissing the back of his neck. “Is not enough to have me during the day, *moy lyubimyy*? You need me to fuck you all

night, too?”

Shane shivers, but he elbows Ilya in the rib. “No! Well...” he considers. “Not *no*—oh, shut up—because that was fun, obviously.”

“Obviously,” Ilya purrs, kissing underneath his ear.

“But mostly I guess I just... miss that bit of extra time with you. Our rink. Just us.”

Ilya hugs him fully and hooks his chin over his shoulder. “Mm, I miss it too. Was nice to feel like we were the only two people in the universe.”

God, is that an understatement. But the comment reminds Shane of the one other person who had played a part in their dreams. “Do you...” he begins, cautious. “Do you still have that...other dream?”

Ilya nuzzles into his neck. “About my mother?”

Shane nods and chews on his lip.

Ilya pauses for a moment, thinking. “No,” he replies, sounding as surprised by the answer as Shane feels. “I have others about her,” Ilya continues. “But not that one.”

Shane turns his head so he can kiss Ilya on the cheek, not knowing what to say. He’s happy that Ilya isn’t plagued by that particular dream anymore, but he’d do it all again, try to get Ilya not to look, over and over, even if it was only the smallest comfort he could offer.

“I wonder what it was,” Shane muses, watching the eggs. “Maybe it was something to do with my concussion.”

“Ah, another reason I should have killed Marlow right then,” Ilya says.

Shane chuckles. “Maybe if you get a concussion we’ll sync up again,” he says. Then he grabs onto Ilya’s arms. “That was a *joke*, do *not* get any ideas.”

“I won’t,” Ilya laughs, like Shane can’t tell he was considering turning around and banging his head on the counter until something stuck. (Shane can’t blame him; the sex dreams were *really* great.) “I am okay not being the only two in the universe, I think,” Ilya adds.

“Oh yeah?”

“Is good enough that you are my world,” Ilya continues.

Oh, Shane’s heart is going to fly out of his throat. He turns himself around in Ilya’s hold and flings his arms around his neck. “That is so cheesy,” he says, failing to hide the emotion in his voice.

“You love it,” Ilya hums, leaning in to brush his nose against Shane’s.

God help Shane, he does. “I love *you*,” he says, lips hovering above Ilya’s.

“Ya tozhe teblya lyublyu,” Ilya says back, then brings their mouths together.

They exchange slow kisses for a few minutes, running fingers through each other’s hair, content to let the heat between them simmer. Shane marvels at the endless expanse of a new day before them: the joy in not knowing what the day will hold, but absolutely sure it will be a happy one.

Then he smells burning.

“Oh shit!” Shane yelps, clambering out of Ilya’s embrace to remove the now charred, ruined eggs from the stovetop. Ilya, not looking sorry at all and doing a piss poor job of hiding his grin, takes the pan from Shane and brings it to the sink.

Shane is annoyed at himself for exactly one second before remembering a dream he had about this once. “What?” Ilya asks when he catches the open delight on Shane’s face.

“Nothing,” Shane says with a grin, reaching up to smack a kiss on Ilya’s cheek. He opens the fridge to grab more eggs. “Just thinking about how dreams really do come true.”

End Notes

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