

baby, kiss it better

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baby, kiss it better

by [justhockey](#)

Summary

He'd known that this thing between them - this thing that he wasn't allowed to want, but couldn't ever imagine giving up - was already so much more than it was ever supposed to be.

But when he'd left Ilya's hotel room that night, with his heart still racing and his thighs still shaking, all he could think about was that they hadn't even kissed. Not once.

Notes

Title from *cardigan* by Taylor Swift.

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

It's silly, is the thing. Shane knows it is. If Ilya ever found out, well. He wouldn't laugh, probably. He wouldn't make fun of him in a way that stung, but he might tease Shane for holding onto it for so long...for clinging to a moment that, realistically, was just a blip on the timeline of their relationship that has spanned decades, and countries, and teams.

But. Shane just can't let it go.

He knows where the hang up comes from. He can remember the moment as if it were yesterday, can still recall the exact way that he felt when it happened. He's just not sure when it became, well, *a thing*. He doesn't know when it shifted into...*this*. Something of a compulsion, maybe, if he dares to examine it closely.

All Shane knows is that somewhere between the awards show in Vegas - back in 2014 - and now, Shane stopped being able to walk away from Ilya without kissing him first. It doesn't matter if Ilya is leaving to go to the store, or Shane is heading out for a run, or if one of them is going to the rink a little bit earlier, Shane needs a kiss from Ilya. A kiss hello, a kiss goodbye, a kiss *I love you*, whatever. He needs it.

They were barely more than kids at that 2014 awards show. Ilya had just won the cup and then the Conn Smythe, and both Montreal and Boston were resting all of their expectations on Shane and Ilya's shoulders, but they were still so fucking young. So fucking *afraid*. And on top of it all, they had this secret between them. A secret bigger than either of them - and especially the fucking league - could handle.

Shane had known back then - had probably known since that moment in the gym when their hands had touched - that he was falling in love with Ilya. Hell, maybe he was already there, because he certainly never stood a chance. He'd known that Ilya made his palms sweat, and his heart race, and his cock hard.

He'd known that this thing between them - this thing that he wasn't allowed to want, but couldn't ever imagine giving up - was already so much more than it was ever supposed to be.

But when he'd left Ilya's hotel room that night, with his heart still racing and his thighs still shaking, all he could think about was that they hadn't even kissed. Not once. After six months of complete silence and an orgasm that made Shane believe in heaven, they didn't even kiss each other.

And he knows why, of course.

After all this time - after years of getting to love his husband out loud, for the world to see - they know everything about each other now. Shane knows that back then Ilya had been just as scared as he was, maybe even more so. He knows that they were both pushing each other away because they were terrified of how desperately they wanted to hold on...how desperately they wanted to pull each other closer.

And Shane especially knows that they're not those people anymore. They've come so far that he almost doesn't recognise those versions of who they used to be. He's not scared to love

Ilya anymore. He's not scared to show him off. He's not scared to be loud about how embarrassingly, desperately in love with his husband he is.

But.

Somewhere along the line the kissing became a habit. A conscious decision. A thing Shane is simply unwilling to change now, even with rings on their fingers, and two joint Stanley Cup wins, and a house and two dogs and conversations about kids.

He loves Ilya too much waste a single second; he loves him too much to miss out on a single opportunity to prove it.

He's right on the cusp of being asleep and awake, and he can hear shuffling: careful footsteps, drawers being closed quietly, a whispered goodbye that he can't quite process through the haze of sleep that he's still basking in.

By the time Shane blinks his eyes open, the room is silent and empty.

He stretches a hand out, subconsciously seeking out Ilya but finding only cold sheets and an empty space where his husband is supposed to be. Shane glances at the glowing red numbers on their alarm clock - a back up, after that one time they both forgot to put their phones on charge after a week-long road trip to the west coast - and he groans when he realises how early it is.

It's their day off, why the *fuck* is Ilya out of bed?

Shane hears the soft rumble of Ilya's voice coming from downstairs, and he can't help the smile that twists the corners of his mouth upwards. He's talking to Anya and Tuna - the latest rescue dog that they acquired through Harris - in the voice that Ilya reserves solely for animals and babies. Shane laughs a little, rubs the sleep from his eyes, and climbs out of bed.

As he's making his way down the stairs he hears the jingle of keys and he quickens his pace. Right as he reaches the bottom he catches Ilya about to unlock the front door. Shane clears his throat.

Ilya flinches, cursing in Russian as he spins around to look at Shane.

The smile that lights his face up is...yeah. Even after all this time, Ilya still makes Shane's heart soar. His curls, and his hazel eyes, and the hickey on his collarbone that's peeking out over his running t-shirt all make Shane feel dizzy. The look on his face is soft, and gentle, and so obviously adoring that, embarrassingly, it sometimes makes Shane want to cry a little.

"Good morning solnyshko," Ilya greets him.

Shane hums. "Where are you going?"

"For a run," he says with a shrug of his shoulders. "I didn't sleep so well last night."

Shane frowns a little, taking a step forward just so he can be closer to him. He doesn't like it when Ilya has a bad night. He's doing well these days, keeping up with therapy and medication and talking to the people he loves about his problems, but Shane still worries. He's going to worry about Ilya for as long as he loves him, and he's going to love him for as long as they both live. Maybe even longer than that, if he can swing it.

"You should have woken me."

Ilya smiles, closing the distance between them and reaching up to brush the back of his finger across Shane's cheek.

"But you look so pretty when you are sleeping," he says, and it's so honest - so heartfelt - that Shane feels his heart squeeze a little in his chest.

"You were gonna leave without kissing me," Shane points out.

He knows he's still frowning because Ilya smiles before rubbing at the spot between Shane's eyebrows, as if he's trying to smooth out his discontent. Shane can't help but reach up and take hold of Ilya's hand. It's his left one so, completely by habit, Shane seeks out the ring on his finger and touches it as he waits for Ilya to respond.

"I did not want to wake you," Ilya says. "Is day off, you should rest."

"I don't care. You should have kissed me."

Shane is maybe being a tad unreasonable in response to his husband's thoughtfulness, but Ilya doesn't seem to mind in the slightest. Instead he leans down, capturing Shane's mouth in a kiss that is chaste, and sweet, and reverent, all in one go. And then, just because he can - because he loves Shane - he kisses him once, twice, three times more. Shane feels it all the way down to his toes.

"Better?" Ilya teases.

"A little," Shane grumbles.

"You and your kisses, hm?" Ilya murmurs, before kissing Shane again. On the mouth, then both cheeks, then his forehead, and then his nose. "Is okay now?"

"I guess," Shane admits.

He can feel Ilya's attention on him turn curious, and before his cheeks have the time to flush pink Shane burrows his face into Ilya's neck. As Ilya's arms wind around his waist Shane melts into the touch, clutching at Ilya's t-shirt like he can't bear to let him go. And the thing is, even after all this time, he *can't*.

Since the summer Shane signed with the Centaurs, he and Ilya have been almost inseparable. They sit together on the plane, their stalls are next to each in the locker room, they room together when they're on the road. They live together, and travel together, and spend basically every single possible moment together.

It still doesn't feel like it could ever possibly be enough.

They could live to be a hundred years old and it still wouldn't feel like enough time to love Ilya in all the ways he deserves.

"What is it?" Ilya asks, his breath tickling Shane's ear.

"Nothing," Shane mumbles into the soft skin of Ilya's neck.

"Baby. Moya lyubov."

Ilya's hands find their way to Shane's face, cradling either side of it as he tilts his head back and forces Shane to look at him. His eyes scan Shane's face like they're taking in every little detail, and Shane doesn't miss the way Ilya lingers on his freckles for a moment, before he finally looks into his eyes.

"What is it?"

"I don't want you to leave without kissing me," Shane confesses. "I hated it that time, when..."

He stops himself before he goes any further. It feels like it's too much, too revealing, which is a little bit insane given the matching rings on their fingers and over a decade of love between them. But still. Shane hesitates. He doesn't feel embarrassed around Ilya anymore - he hasn't in years. Not about his wants, or needs, or his too big feelings or his too soft heart. Ilya loves him endlessly, unflinchingly.

And yet.

For some reason, Shane still feels the need to protect that past version of himself. To keep that young, vulnerable, cracked-open and hollowed-out version of himself safe. Not from Ilya - *never* from Ilya - but from the humiliation; from being caught in the desperate act of wanting something he couldn't have.

"When...?" Ilya prompts him, his thumbs softly stroking back and forth over the flush on Shane's cheeks.

"Vegas."

"Vegas? What do you...*oh*." Ilya sighs, and then, "Sweetheart."

He kisses him.

He kisses him and kisses him and kisses him.

Shane can feel it in the press of their lips, in the way Ilya holds him, in the way it feels like their hearts are beating as one, like two halves of a whole. He knows exactly what Shane is talking about. They've never even discussed it, and yet a decade later Ilya still remembers it too. So maybe it was never as inconsequential as Shane had forced himself to accept. It had mattered.

Everything between them has always mattered.

“I love you, Shane. I love you, I love you, I love you,” Ilya murmurs between kisses, both in English and in Russian. “I will kiss you always, whenever you want.”

“I know it’s stupid,” Shane says. “It was so long ago, and-“

“-and it hurt you,” Ilya finishes for him. “It hurt me too. I’m sorry. Nothing you feel is ever stupid.”

There’s so much sadness in Ilya’s eyes - so much pain, and guilt, and regret. Shane shakes his head. Kisses Ilya on his mouth and his jawline, down his neck, and then the hollow of his throat.

His lips brush against the chain around Ilya’s neck as he says, “You don’t have to apologise to me, Ilya. It wasn’t your fault. We were kids; we were scared.”

Ilya tilts Shane’s head back again, his hazel eyes locking onto Shane’s brown ones in a way that makes him feel so entirely *seen*, so appreciated, so loved.

“We are not scared now.” Ilya says it like it’s a promise, then kisses him again.

Because no, they’re not scared now. They haven’t been in a long time. Shane has never felt braver or more powerful than he does with Ilya by his side. He feels ten feet tall, like he could take on the whole world because he knows he’s not alone in it...in *anything*.

Ilya has always felt like freedom for Shane, right from that very first moment when their eyes had met and their palms touched, and Shane’s heart had started to race.

It had felt like letting go - like dropping the wall around him just enough to let Ilya see inside...see the truth.

Even through the fear, and the anxiety, and the hiding and the secrecy, Shane has never been more himself than he is with Ilya. He doesn’t have to be Shane Hollander the hockey superstar, or Shane Hollander the gay athlete. He can be neurotic, and compulsive, and silly, and gentle. He can be insecure. He can be vulnerable. With Ilya, he’s always just been Shane. *Ilya’s Shane*. A man who gets to love and be loved in return.

And a man who gets to kiss his husband whenever he wants, for the rest of his life.

End Notes

i've loved these books for years but seeing hudson and connor bring my babies to life finally forced me into writing for them<3

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